



Comparing English and Persian Translations of Culture-Specific Items in the Surah Al-An'am

Elham Yazdanmehr^{1*} , Toktam Motahari¹

1. Attar Institute of Higher Education, Mashhad, Iran

* Corresponding author: yazdanmehr@attar.ac.ir

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ABSTRACT

Each culture encompasses unique concepts that can be challenging for outsiders to grasp, often due to their deep-rooted connotations within the source language and culture. Various strategies exist for translating culture-specific items. This descriptive-comparative study examines the strategies employed in the Arabic-to-Persian and Arabic-to-English translations of Surah Al-An'am. This surah is one of the Tiwal suras, which are seven lengthy surahs in the Holy Qur'an. Its complete recitation in one sitting, known as *Khatme Anaam* (complete recitation of Al-An'am Surah), is a common practice in Iran, performed with the hope of having one's prayers answered by God. The Persian translation analyzed in this study was by Mohammad Mehdi Fooladvand, one of the top eight translators of the Holy Qur'an, recognized for his balanced approach between literal and content-based translation. The English version studied was by Mustafa Khattab, a Canadian-Egyptian translator renowned for *The Clear Qur'an*. The translation strategies for culture-specific items were evaluated using frameworks proposed by Vinay and Darbelnet, Newmark, and Nida. The analysis identified 50 culture-specific items in the surah. The findings revealed that both translations predominantly employed the strategy of literal translation, while footnotes and modulation were the least utilized. Statistical tests, including log-likelihood for significance and Bayes Factor for effect size, indicated significant differences between the two translations regarding the use of seven strategies. Notably, the strategies of borrowing and functional equivalence provided strong evidence against the null hypothesis.

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1. Introduction

Translating content from one language to another inherently involves culture, as each language is deeply intertwined with its cultural context (Nagar, 2018). Culture-specific items (CSIs) are words or phrases that convey unique concepts, meanings, or functions within a particular culture, making them challenging to translate accurately (Baker, 1992). These CSIs often reflect cultural phenomena tied to a population's distinctive characteristics, national identity, and historical background, often lacking direct equivalents in other languages (Vlakhov & Florin, 1990). Beyond their lexical function, CSIs contribute to creating a specific atmosphere within a unique context (Borysenko et al., 2024). To operationally define CSIs in Islamic texts, a frequently referenced source is *The Dictionary of Islamic Words and Expressions* by Mohammad Saleh (2011).

The importance of translating CSIs has been recognized across various fields, including science, education, and media (Aldahesh, 2016). As noted by Hatim and Mason (2016), when translators convert content from a source language to a target language, they are not merely transferring words but also culturally embedded concepts. These intercultural differences can present significant challenges, as deeply rooted cultural ideas often resist straightforward translation (Ayyad et al., 2020). In literature and religious texts, accurately translating CSIs becomes even more critical, as using an inappropriate strategy can mislead readers or alter the intended meaning (Moradi & Sadeghi, 2014).

When translating the Holy Qur'ān, unique sensitivities arise due to its sacred nature, and many question the credibility of translated versions (Siddiek, 2012). Some scholars and believers even argue that the Qur'ān is fundamentally non-translatable, emphasizing that its divine essence cannot be fully conveyed in another language (Moir, 2009; Abdul-Raof, 2018). Despite these challenges, others, such as Abdul-Raof (2001), contend that translating the Qur'ān can foster cross-cultural understanding, enriching both the source and target cultures. As previously mentioned, translating sacred texts presents unique challenges, particularly when dealing with CSIs (Tabrizi & Mahmud, 2013). The primary difficulty stems from the lack of direct one-to-one equivalents for many CSIs in the target language and culture. Translators must therefore carefully select the most appropriate method to convey the intended meaning to readers (Ayyad & Mahadi, 2019). To assist with this, various dictionaries clarify CSIs and help ensure accurate translations (Ali et al., 2012). In the context of the Qur'ān, mistranslating CSIs can lead to significant distortions of meaning, making a deep understanding of both cultures essential (Obeidat & Mahadi, 2019). As Al-Azzam et al. (2015) suggest, effective translation strategies can help convey meanings that closely align with the original text, preserving cultural themes and intent.

Several strategic frameworks have been proposed to address the challenges of CSI translation and mitigate the risk of losing cultural meaning. This study employs frameworks developed by Vinay and Darbelnet (1995) and Newmark (1988), which share some common approaches. Ten translation strategies were analyzed in this research, including footnotes, explication, generalization, literal (direct) translation, modulation, functional equivalents, cultural equivalents, borrowing, definitions, and descriptions. These strategies are briefly defined below. These strategies can be used alone or in combination in translating culture specific items from one language to another (Braçaj, 2015).

Table 1. Translation strategies of culture specific items adapted from Braçaj (2015) and Ayyad et al. (2021)

Translation strategies for CSIs	Description
Footnote	use of statements of different length always connected to more or less definite parts of the text and usually found printed down the page
Explicitation	a shift in translation from what is implicit in the source text to what is explicit in the target text
Generalization	use of any linguistic element, ranging from a word to a paragraph or even a discourse to convey a meaning that is more general, vaguer or broader into the target text than that in the source text
Literal translation	a word-for-word translation with no lexical word or structure alterations
Modulation	a variation of the form of message, obtained by a change in the point of view
Functional equivalence	a type of equivalence reflected in the target text which seeks to adapt the function of the original to suit the specific context for which it was produced
Cultural equivalence	replacing the CSI in the source language with a CSI in the target language
Borrowing	taking a word from the source language and maintaining it in the target language
Definition	reducing the unknown to the known and the unshared to the shared
Description	use of generic terms (not culturally loaded elements) to convey the meaning of a CSI.

Given the intricate relationship between language and culture, as well as the need to carefully consider cultural concepts and local interpretations in translation, this study aims to examine the strategies employed in translating CSIs in the Holy Qur'ān. The significance of this research is twofold. First, there is a limited body of work focusing on the translation of CSIs in sacred texts, particularly the Holy Qur'ān. Second, the specific sura under investigation holds significant importance and popularity in Iranian religious contexts. This sura is frequently recited, studied, and reflected upon in both religious and public gatherings in Iran, highlighting the need for an in-depth analysis of its translation. The widespread recitation of Surah Al-An'am in Iran underscores the necessity of closely examining its translations. Furthermore, the absence of prior academic research on the translation of CSIs in this sura provided strong motivation for conducting this study. Notably, the researchers extended their analysis beyond Arabic-to-Persian translation, also exploring Arabic-to-English translation. They then compared the prevalence of CSI translation strategies in both contexts. Based on this scope, the following research questions were formulated:

✓ RQ1: What is the distribution of CSI translation strategies in the Arabic-to-Persian translation of Surah Al-An'am?

✓ RQ2: What is the distribution of CSI translation strategies in the Arabic-to-English translation of Surah Al-An'am?

✓ RQ3: Is there a statistically significant difference in the use of CSI translation strategies between the Arabic-to-Persian and Arabic-to-English translations of Surah Al-An'am?

The first two research questions are exploratory, while the third is analytical and comparative. For the third question, a null hypothesis is proposed: There is no statistically significant difference in the use of CSI translation strategies between the Arabic-to-Persian and Arabic-to-English translations of Surah Al-An'am.

2. Literature review

The cultural shift in translation studies over recent years (Bassnett & Lefevere, 1990; Bassnett, 2007) has emphasized the importance of considering not only the source and target languages but also the cultural nuances embedded within them (Venuti, 1995). Various approaches have been proposed to address linguistic and cultural challenges in fields such as translation studies, ethnolinguistics, and linguo-culturology (Mizin et al., 2021; Mizin et al., 2023). In translated texts, it is essential to consider both the denotative meaning of terms and their cultural connotations. Therefore, both researchers and translators focus on the processes involved in conveying culturally specific information encoded within terms (Cómitre Narváez & Valverde Zambrana, 2014; Muñoz, 2019; Newmark, 1988; Valeišaitė, 2022; Slavova & Vozna, 2022).

Although significant research has been conducted on CSIs across various types of texts, there remains a notable lack of empirical data on their translation in Quranic verses, particularly in comparative studies. The Qur'ān, the central religious text of Islam, was originally revealed in Arabic and has since been translated into numerous languages, including Persian, English, French, and Spanish, to convey God's message and promote the religion (Peachy, 2013). Translators of the Qur'ān strive to remain faithful to the source language, resulting in translations that are predominantly source-language oriented (Al-Qinai, 2012).

The act of translating the Qur'ān has sparked considerable debate among Islamic scholars. Allaithy (2014) emphasized the immense challenge this task poses for linguists and translators. Nida and Reyburn (1981) described this challenge as "formal overloading," while Moir (2009) argued that translation could compromise the authenticity and authority of the Qur'ān. Abdul-Raof (2018) suggested that achieving a non-Arabic version parallel to the original is feasible but remains imperfect. The Qur'ān's distinctive linguistic and stylistic features present significant hurdles for translators (Ali et al., 2012). As Rahman (1988) asserted, translations of the Qur'ān into other languages are unlikely to fully capture its essence.

Dastjerdi and Jamshidian (2011) also contended that the Qur'ān's content is inherently untranslatable. According to Saeed (2008), this untranslatability stems from the Qur'ān's divine nature and unique linguistic style, which defies replication. Even within its original Arabic, paraphrasing is considered impossible. Consequently, while translations serve as valuable tools for conveying meaning, they can never replace the original text (Aldahesh, 2014).

Moradi and Sadeghi (2014) examined the strategies employed in translating CSIs in three English translations of the Holy Qur'ān, focusing on the frequency of these strategies. The study analyzed terms related to Islamic law in the original Arabic text, using Khoramshahi's

strategic model. These terms were compared with their equivalents in the English translations by Shakir, Yusuf Ali, and Pickthall. Data collection involved randomly selecting chapter thirty of the Qur'ān, identifying CSIs within this chapter, and comparing them to their English counterparts to determine the translation strategies used. The frequency analysis revealed that the most common strategies were literal translation, definition, and borrowing, respectively.

Chalak et al. (2019) investigated the role of CSIs in the English translation of the Holy Qur'ān by Irving, focusing on the strategies applied in translating these items. This descriptive study drew data from the longest surah, *Al-Baqarah*. Venuti's domestication and foreignization model served as the theoretical framework for the analysis. The study utilized descriptive statistics to report the frequency and percentage of each strategy. Results indicated that domestication was the predominant strategy used by the translator for rendering CSIs. The findings offer valuable insights for translation studies students and practitioners, highlighting effective strategies for translating culture-specific concepts.

Ayyad et al. (2021) explored the strategies used in translating CSIs from Arabic to English in the Holy Qur'ān, aiming to identify the most frequently applied strategies. Their study focused on CSIs from *Surah Al-Ma'idah* and examined their English translation by Abdullah Yusuf Ali. They identified ten translation strategies, including functional equivalents, cultural equivalents, modulation, borrowing, definition, generalization, description, footnotes, and explicitation. The findings revealed that the most frequently used strategy was definition, while generalization and explicitation were the least employed.

More recently, Roodashsty et al. (2023) conducted research on the translation of CSIs in the *Al-Baqarah*, *Ali 'Imran*, and *An-Nisa* surahs of the Qur'ān. They analyzed these translations using Ghazala's (2008) model of translation strategies, which is based on Newmark's (1988) framework. This study involved translations by English speakers from different linguistic backgrounds—British, Persian, and Arabic. The most commonly applied strategy across all translations was cultural equivalence. Despite this, the researchers noted that inadequate paratextual references could lead to subtle shifts in meaning, even when cultural concepts were successfully conveyed. Their results highlighted how the translators' linguistic backgrounds influenced their approaches to translating religious texts.

What sets the present study apart from previous research is its comprehensive scope. Firstly, it considers both Arabic-to-Persian and Arabic-to-English translations, making it comparative-analytic rather than merely descriptive. Secondly, the study focuses on translations by some of the most renowned translators of religious texts, particularly the Holy Qur'ān. Thirdly, the chosen sura holds exceptional cultural and religious significance in Iran, where families often hold special recitation gatherings dedicated to this sura at regular intervals. This unique context underscores the importance of accurately conveying its cultural and linguistic nuances.

3. Methodology

In light of the above-mentioned review of literature, the present study aimed to explore the distribution of strategies used to translate CSIs in Arabic-to-Persian and Arabic-to-English translations of *Al-An'am* sura, and compare the two to find where the statistically significant divergences. The design of study, material and data collection and analysis are introduced here.

3.1. Research design

In line with the purpose of research, a quantitative study was designed to explore the strategies of translating CSIs in two versions of the translated sura. Descriptive statistics were used to report the distribution of translation strategies. To this aim, frequency and percentage were used. Besides the descriptive design, the present study was also analytic-comparative in that it tried to find where the statistically significant differences between the two versions of translation lay (i.e., Arabic-to-Persian vs. Arabic-to-English). Among the three categories of analyzing source texts suggested by Holmes (1972), that is product-based, descriptive translation studies, function-based descriptive translation studies and process-based descriptive translation studies, the present study was of the product-based category as it dealt with describing translations, comparing two translations of the source text and describing the larger corpora of translation.

3.2. Corpus

In the present study, the translation of Al-An'am sura was analyzed. This surah is one of the Tiwal suras, which are seven lengthy surahs in the Holy Qur'an. Its complete recitation in one sitting, known as *Khatme Anaam* (complete recitation of Al-An'am Surah), is a common practice in Iran, performed with the hope of having one's prayers answered by God. In the present study, two translations of Surah Al-An'am were analyzed and compared. The Arabic-to-Persian translation was by Muhammad Mahdi Fooladvand, recognized as one of the top eight translations of the Holy Qur'an. His translation style strikes a balance between verbatim accuracy and content-based interpretation. The English translation selected was by Mustafa Khattab, a renowned Canadian-Egyptian translator known for his *The Clear Qur'an* series, celebrated for its accessible and contemporary approach to rendering the Qur'an's message.

3.3. Data collection and analysis

The data for this study were collected at a micro level. According to Saldanha and O'Brien (2013), micro-level data focus on individual elements, such as words or specific texts, and may involve examining the use of particular translation strategies or measuring the time required to render a text. In this study, the data were sourced from *Surah Al-An'am* in the Holy Qur'an, with its Persian and English translations serving as the target texts. To operationally define CSIs, the *Dictionary of Islamic Words and Expressions* (Saleh, 2011) was consulted. Additionally, a native Arabic speaker with 40 years of experience residing in Iran was consulted to validate the selection of CSIs. The identified CSIs were then transliterated using the tool available at <https://transliterate.arabicalphabet.net/>, as illustrated in Table 2.

For the analysis, frameworks proposed by Vinay and Darbelnet (1995) and Newmark (1988) were employed, given their complementary nature and overlapping strategies. In total, ten translation strategies for CSIs were analyzed: footnote, explicitation, generalization, literal (direct) translation, modulation, functional equivalent, cultural equivalent, borrowing, definition, and description, as outlined in Table 1. Descriptive statistics were utilized to analyze the data. The distribution of translation strategies in the Arabic-to-Persian and Arabic-to-English samples was presented in terms of frequency and percentage. To assess the statistical significance of differences between the two translations, the log-likelihood ratio was calculated, and the Bayes factor was estimated to evaluate the effect size, providing evidence against the null hypothesis.

4. Results

4.1. Overall analysis

The initial search for CSIs in the source text, conducted by the present researchers with the assistance of a native Arabic speaker residing in Iran, resulted in the identification of 50 CSIs including 31 unique CSIs, some appearing multiple times. These items were then reviewed in both the Persian and English translations. Table 2 presents the CSIs identified in the source text.

Table 2. CSIs in the Surah Al-An'am

CSI	Frequency	CSI	Frequency
أَجَل	3	غَدَاه	1
قِرطاس	2	عَشَى	1
وَلَى	2	حُكْم	3
أُمِرْتُ	1	مَفَاتِحُ الْغَيْبِ	1
يَوْمَ عَظِيمٍ	1	مَوْتٍ	1
لَلْبَسْنَا	1	وَكِيلٍ	3
يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ	1	حَدِيثٍ	1
الْكِتَابِ	10	شَيْطَانٍ	1
النَّارِ	1	صَلَاةٍ	3
دَارُ الْآخِرَةِ	1	صُورٍ	1
نَبَا	1	أَصْنَامٍ	1
صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ	2	نُبُوَةٍ	1
السَّاعَةِ	1	أُمُّ الْقُرَى	1
مُرْسَلِينَ	1	دَارُ السَّلَامِ	1
خَزَائِنِ	1	سَيِّئَةٍ	1

As shown in Table 2, the frequency of CSIs ranged from 1 to 10. The most frequent CSI in Surah Al-An'am was the word “الكتاب” referring to the “Holy Qur'an”. Various translation strategies were applied to render this word in different verses of the Surah. The same approach was taken for other CSIs that appeared multiple times. Table 3 illustrates the distribution of strategies used to translate these CSIs, along with the frequency and percentage of each translation strategy in both the Persian and English versions.

The first column on the left lists the ten strategies for translating CSIs. The middle column displays the frequency and percentage of each strategy used in the Arabic-to-Persian translation. The column on the right presents the frequency and percentage of each strategy applied in the Arabic-to-English translation. This data is essential for addressing the first and second research questions. The following figure shows a horizontal bar chart comparing the distribution of CSI translation strategies between the Arabic-to-Persian and Arabic-to-English translations.

Table 3. Distribution of translation strategies in Arabic-to-Persian and Arabic-to-English content

Translation strategies	Frequency in Arabic-to-Persian	Frequency in Arabic-to-English
Footnote	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Explication	2 (4%)	1 (2%)
Generalization	4 (8%)	3 (6%)
Literal translation	24 (48%)	26 (52%)
Modulation	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Functional equivalence	6 (12%)	15(30%)
Cultural equivalence	3 (6%)	1 (2%)
Borrowing	8(16%)	0 (0%)
Definition	2 (4%)	3 (6%)
Description	1 (2%)	1 (2%)
Total	50 (100%)	50 (100%)

Figure 1 clearly highlights the differences between the two translation samples in terms of the strategies used. As shown, literal translation was the most commonly applied strategy for translating CSIs in both the Arabic-to-Persian and Arabic-to-English groups. Footnote and modulation strategies were not used in either sample. Therefore, out of the ten strategies, only eight were utilized in translating CSIs into Persian and English. This study addressed three research questions, and their answers are presented below.

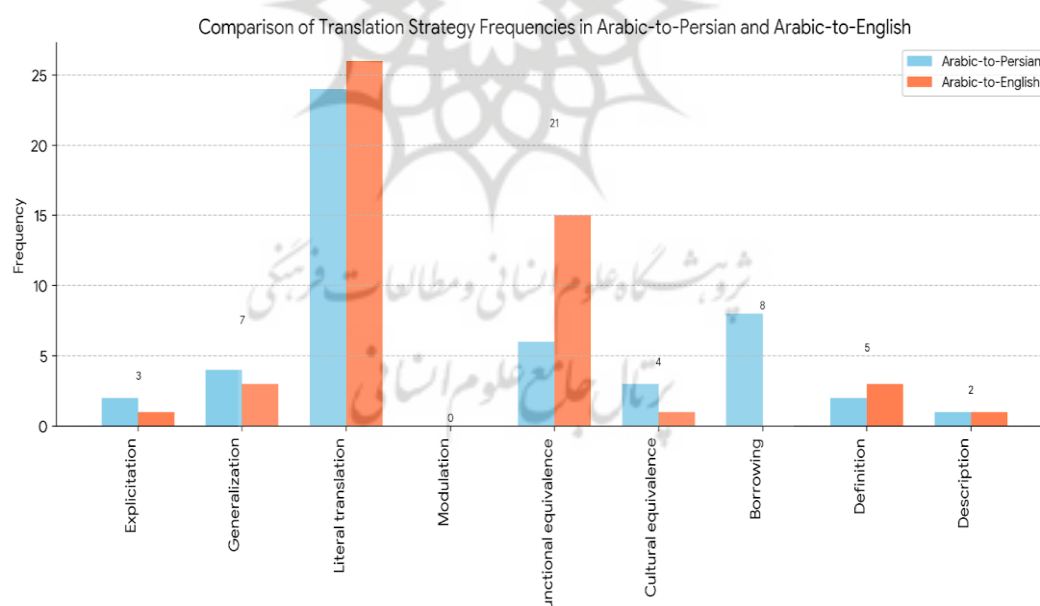


Figure 1. Translation strategies in Arabic-to-English and Arabic-to-Persian content

4.2. Answer to the first research question

The initial research question examined the distribution of CSI strategies employed in translating the Arabic version of Sura Al-An'am into Persian. To address this inquiry, reference can be made to Table 3, as well as Figure 2, which presents a pie chart illustrating the distribution of CSI translation strategies within the Arabic-to-Persian translation sample.

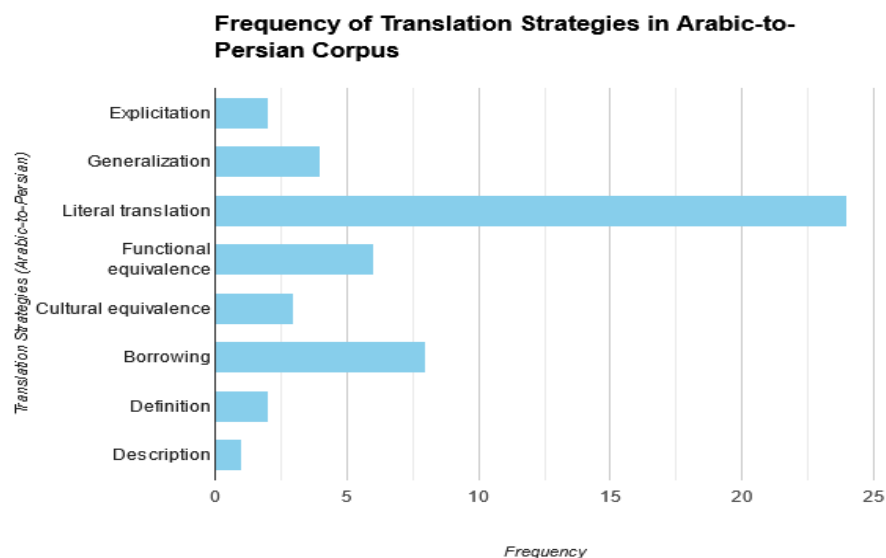


Figure 2. Translation strategies in the Arabic-to-Persian sample

As illustrated, literal translation emerged as the predominant strategy, applied in nearly half of the cases (48%) for translating CSIs. The following examples further demonstrate this approach:

موت (ST) → مرگ (TT)

يوم القيامة (ST) → روز قیامت (TT)

The second most frequently employed strategy for translating CSIs into Persian was borrowing, accounting for 16% of the cases. This strategy involves transferring a word directly from the source language into the target language while preserving its original form or pronunciation. The following examples from the translation of Sura Al-An'am illustrate the use of this approach:

الكتاب (ST) → کتاب (TT)

ولياً (ST) → ولی (TT)

Following literal translation and borrowing, functional equivalence was the third most frequently utilized strategy for translating CSIs in the Arabic-to-Persian sample, comprising 12% of the cases. This approach involves replacing a CSI with a term in the target language that performs a similar cultural or contextual function. The following examples from the Persian translation of Sura Al-An'am illustrate this strategy:

لَلْبَاسِ (ST) → مشتمه ساختم (TT)

السَّاعَةِ (ST) → رستاخیز (TT)

The next strategy employed in translating CSIs from Arabic to Persian was generalization (8%). This strategy involves using a broader term in place of a more specific word or expression from the source language. Below are two examples from the Arabic-to-Persian translations of Al-An'am:

أَجَل (ST) → مَدَّت (TT)

حديث (ST) → سخن (TT)

Cultural equivalence was the next strategy used in the Persian translation of Al-An'am, accounting for 6% of cases. This strategy involves replacing the CSI from the source language with a corresponding CSI in the target language. Below are two examples from the translation:

يوم عظيم (ST) → قیامت (TT)

قِرطاس (ST) → کاغذ (TT)

The next two strategies, each used in 4% of cases in the Persian translation of CSIs, were explicitation and definition. Explicitation involves making what is implicit in the source text explicit in the target text, while definition entails converting the unknown to the known and the unshared to the shared. An example of explicitation in the Arabic-to-Persian translation is "أم القرى" (ST) → "مکه" (TT), and an example of definition is "أجل" (ST) → "هنگام یا زمان معین" (TT). The use of other strategies was minimal and negligible.

4.3. Answer to the second research question

The second research question focused on the distribution of CSI strategies used in translating the Arabic version of Al-An'am sura into English. To answer this question, refer to Table 3 and Figure 3, which presents a pie chart illustrating the distribution of CSI translation strategies in the Arabic-to-English sample.

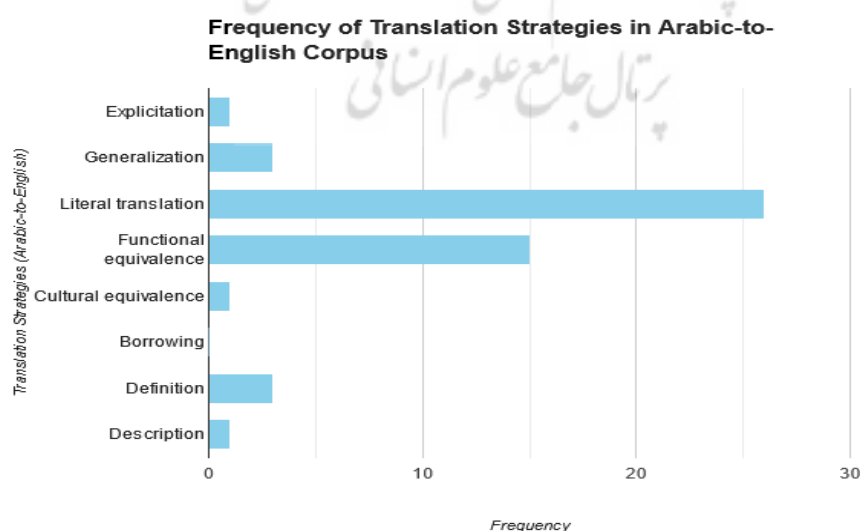


Figure 3. Translation strategies in the Arabic to English sample

As observed, the frequency of the ten strategies used in the Arabic-to-English translation follows this order: literal translation > functional equivalence > definition, generalization > explicitation, cultural equivalence, description. Three strategies were not used at all: footnote, borrowing, and modulation. Notably, in more than half of the cases (52%), literal translation was the most commonly used strategy for translating CSIs. Below are two examples from the translation of CSIs from Arabic to English:

اجل (ST) → death (TT)

يوم العظيم (ST) → tremendous day (TT)

The next common strategy was functional equivalence. It accounted for 30% of strategies used for translating CSIs in the Arabic to English sample. Here are two examples from the text:

الصور (ST) → trumpet (TT)

وكيل (ST) → keeper (TT)

Less than a quarter of the remaining CSIs were translated using the strategies of definition (6%), generalization (6%), explicitation (2%), cultural equivalence (2%), and description (2%). The corresponding examples for these strategies are as follows:

- **definition:** دار الآخرة (ST) → eternal home of the hereafter (TT)
- **generalization:** الكتاب (ST) → scripture (TT)
- **explicitation:** حكم (ST) → power (TT)
- **cultural equivalence:** يوم القيامة (ST) → day of judgment (TT)
- **description:** قرطاس (ST) → revelation in writing (TT)

As previously mentioned, three strategies were not used at all: footnote, modulation, and borrowing.

4.4. Answer to the third research question

The third research question investigated the differences in the use of CSI translation strategies between the two samples (i.e., Arabic-to-Persian vs. Arabic-to-English). To explore this, Figure 1 can be referenced again, which shows that only seven of the ten strategies are comparable between the two groups. Two strategies (footnote and modulation) were absent in both samples, and one strategy (description) was used to the same degree in both. The remaining seven strategies were present in different distributions, allowing for a comparison between the two translations. A null hypothesis was formulated, claiming that there was no statistically significant difference between the two samples in the use of CSI translation strategies. The significance of the frequency differences was tested using the loglikelihood method (Table 4). Significance and effect size (Bayes factor) were estimated using the SigEff.xlsx spreadsheet, which can be downloaded at this link. According to the

instructions, the critical value of LL for $p < 0.05$ is 3.84, and the effect size thresholds are interpreted as follows: 0–2: negligible; 2–6: moderate effect; 6–10: high effect; >10: very high effect.

Table 4. Log-likelihood analysis of differences in the distribution of translation strategies between Arabic-to-Persian and Arabic-to-English translations

Translation strategies	Frequency of data	
	Log-likelihood	Bayes factor
Explication	6.36	3.90
Generalization	7.01	4.72
Literal translation	4.87	1.74
Functional equivalence	13.64	20.13
Cultural equivalence	8.90	8.54
Borrowing	13.89	22.67
Definition	7.11	4.50

It can be concluded that the differences in the frequency of using the seven strategies were statistically significant. However, regarding the effect size of these differences, the evidence for rejecting the null hypothesis was very strong for functional equivalence and borrowing (Bayes factor > 10), strong for generalization and cultural equivalence (Bayes factor 6-10), moderate for explication, generalization, and definition (Bayes factor 2-6), and negligible for literal translation (Bayes factor 0-2).

5. Discussion and conclusion

Given the intricate relationship between culture and language and the importance of translating religious texts, this study aimed to examine the translation of CSIs in Surah Al-An'am, one of the longest chapters of the Holy Qur'an. The research explored and compared the distribution of CSI translation strategies in both Arabic-to-Persian and Arabic-to-English translations. Notably, two strategies—footnotes and modulation—were not used in either translation. This aligns with findings from previous studies (e.g., Moradi & Sadeghi, 2014; Ayyad et al., 2021; Roodashsty et al., 2023), which also reported minimal use of these strategies. The limited use of footnotes may be due to the need for extended explanations, which could disrupt the reader's comprehension flow within the text. The avoidance of modulation might stem from its requirement to modify terms, a practice that could be contentious when translating sensitive religious texts such as the Qur'an.

Results revealed that literal translation was the most frequently employed strategy for CSIs in both the Arabic-to-Persian and Arabic-to-English versions, accounting for approximately half of the translated items. This finding aligns with Moradi and Sadeghi (2014), who also identified literal translation as the predominant strategy in three English translations of the Holy Qur'an. The widespread use of literal translation likely reflects its minimal alteration of the original terms, making it a safer choice given the sensitivity of translating the Qur'an (Saeed, 2008; Dastjerdi & Jamshidian, 2011). The frequency of other strategies was considerably lower in both the Persian and English translations, suggesting a preference for preserving the original meaning and structure as closely as possible when dealing with culturally loaded terms in sacred texts.

The broader use of literal translation is often justified by the translator's careful attention to conveying the immediate intended meaning of terms. For instance, translating “صلاة” as “prayer” is an appropriate choice. However, there are instances in both Arabic-to-Persian and Arabic-to-English translations where a literal translation could have been enhanced by a more clarifying approach for translating CSIs. For example, in Persian, “الكتاب” was translated in several instances as “کتاب” or “کتاب [آسانی]”, whereas it could have been more accurately translated as “قرآن”, which was implied. In the English translation, the 40th verse of the sura features “الساعة”, translated as “the hour”. This literal translation fails to convey the intended meaning, which refers to the time of death. The translator could have employed other strategies, such as explicitation or description, to better express the intended message.

Comparative findings revealed significant differences between the two translations in their use of various strategies. Strong evidence was found to reject the null hypothesis regarding the use of borrowing and functional equivalence strategies in the two study samples. Borrowing was not utilized at all in the English translation, while it appeared in 16% of CSI translations from Arabic to Persian. This discrepancy can be attributed to the greater similarities between Arabic and Persian compared to those between Arabic and English. The use of borrowing is justifiable when the two languages share many words or roots. In terms of functional equivalence, the results indicated that this strategy was employed much more frequently in Arabic-to-English translations than in Arabic-to-Persian. A closer examination revealed that when the Persian translator opted for borrowing, the English translator often preferred functional equivalence. For example, the Persian translator rendered “صور” as “صور”, while the English translator chose “trumpet”. Similarly, when the Persian translator used “وکیل” for “الوکیل”, the English translator opted for “maintainer” and “keeper”.

In conclusion, the translations of Al-An'am from Arabic to Persian and Arabic to English employed eight strategies for translating CSIs: explicitation, generalization, literal translation, functional equivalence, cultural equivalence, borrowing, definition, and description. However, literal translation was the most prevalent strategy in both samples. This dominance suggests that there are still significant reservations about translating religious texts, particularly the Holy Qur'an. Translators appear to have limited freedom in utilizing the variety of strategies available to convey the meaning of CSIs. Certain strategies, such as footnotes or modulation, are often overlooked, even though, according to Haroon (2019), they could enhance readers' understanding of the translated text. In this study, there were cases where more effective strategies than literal translation could have been employed to convey the intended meaning. The surah Al-An'am is a widely recited sura in Iran and is one of the longest suras in the Holy Qur'an. Given its frequent public recitation, it is crucial to convey the intended meaning of its content as effectively as possible. The sura contains numerous CSIs, some of which appear as many as ten times. Improving the quality of CSI translation is essential for enhancing the comprehension of the intended cultural connotations. Simply providing the denotative meaning of CSIs does not capture their deeper significance; therefore, a thoughtful and effective use of a wide range of strategies is necessary to convey the Lord's intended meaning in a manner that is accessible to readers.

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