

**Enhancing Naturalness in Translating
Quranic Imperative Verses**

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INTRODUCTION

- ❑ Reframing Translation: Beyond Linguistics
 - Translation is a dynamic, cognitive act—not merely linguistic substitution.
 - Focus has shifted from mere accuracy to naturalness and reader reception.
 - Key concern: How meaning, intent, and communicative effect are conveyed across cultures.
- ❑ Equivalence in Contemporary Theory
 - Classical view: one-to-one correspondence.
 - Modern scholars (Nida, Newmark, Larson): Equivalence = semantic, pragmatic, and cultural alignment.
 - Emergence of dynamic equivalence and communicative translation.
- ❑ Challenges in Religious Translation
 - Tension between fidelity and fluency is heightened in sacred texts.
 - Quranic imperatives present rhetorical and spiritual complexity.
 - Need for balance between doctrinal integrity and natural readability.

INTRODUCTION

- ❑ Challenges in Religious Translation
 - Techniques: literal, amplification, reduction, transposition.
 - Applied singly or in combination (e.g., couplet/triplet procedures).
 - Over-literalness risks unnatural TL output (Kendenan, 2015).
- ❑ Literalness vs. Naturalness
 - Literalness maintains doctrinal precision but may reduce clarity.
 - Naturalness ensures readability and contextual fit—not casualness, but culturally appropriate rendering.
 - Excessive literalness may hinder communication goals.
- ❑ Functional and Genre-Sensitive Translation
 - Consider text function: informative, vocative, aesthetic.
 - Quranic imperatives vary (commands, exhortations, moral appeals).
 - Strategy must align with communicative purpose and audience expectation.

INTRODUCTION

❑ Culture and Naturalness

- Language is inseparable from culture.
- Semantically correct TL phrases may still sound foreign.
- Domestication enhances naturalness but risks message distortion (Kianbakht, 2016; Al Farisi, 2018).

❑ Case Study: MORA vs. MT Translations

- MORA = formal, institutional tone.
- MT = interpretive, culturally embedded, domesticated style.
- These contrasting strategies shape translation naturalness and reader reception.

❑ Naturalness and Acceptability

- Naturalness is a core aspect of translation acceptability (Larson, 1998).
- A semantically accurate but awkward translation may fail to engage.
- Acceptability = clarity + accuracy + naturalness.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

❑ Research Aim

- Investigate how different translators handle Quranic imperative verses.
- Examine effects of strategy choice on naturalness and acceptability.
- Contribute to ongoing debates in religious translation studies.

❑ Research Approach and Design

- Descriptive-evaluative approach to analyze naturalness in Quranic imperative translations.
- Embedded case study design: translation viewed as both cognitive and linguistic product.
- Main analytical tool: qualitative content analysis.

❑ Corpus Selection

- Source: Al-Qur'an dan Terjemahnya (official MORA translation).
- Data selected purposively using Maktabah Syamilah 3.36.
- Focus: imperative verses with pragmatic functions (e.g., commands, requests, warnings).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

- ❑ Unit of Analysis
 - Analytical focus on micro-units: words, phrases, clauses, sentences.
 - Assessment criteria: idiomaticity, fluency, and contextual appropriateness in the TL (Bahasa Indonesia).
- ❑ Perceptual Data Collection
 - Supplementary data: questionnaire administered to 15 expert respondents:
 - 8 professional Arabic-Indonesian translators (≥ 2 published works).
 - 7 scholars of Indonesian linguistics.
- ❑ Evaluation Framework
 - Naturalness evaluation adapted from Yarahmadzahi, Beikian, & Nadri (2013).
 - Key dimensions assessed:
 - Stylistic fluency
 - Semantic appropriateness
 - Idiomaticity
- ❑ Integrated Analysis
 - Combines textual analysis and expert perception.
 - Aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of naturalness in Quranic imperative translation.
 - Seeks to identify translation strategies that optimize readability and fidelity.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

❑ Focus of Analysis

- Evaluated the naturalness of 10 imperative Quranic verses in MORA's Indonesian translation.
- Naturalness is critical for reader reception, especially in sacred texts (Fadaee, 2011; Putranti, 2018).

❑ Definition of Naturalness

- Naturalness: how well the translation reflects the idiomatic, syntactic, and stylistic norms of the TL.
- Should read as if originally written in Indonesian (Nida, 1964; Newmark, 1988).

❑ Naturalness Ratings (0-100 scale)

Quranic Verse	Score (%)
Highest: 2:201, 2:168	88.9
Middle: 31:17, 15:45–46, 1:6	77.8
Lowest: 14:30, 2:23, 67:13, 16:114, 23:107–108	55.6
Average Score	68.9

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

❑ Insights from High-Scoring Verses

- Effective word order, cultural familiarity, and lexical choices enhance fluency.
- Translators applied a balanced mix of techniques: literal + adaptive (e.g., transposition, modulation).

❑ Common Issues in Low-Scoring Verses

- Overly literal renderings lead to:
 - Syntactic interference from Arabic.
 - Awkward or redundant phrasing.
- Examples: unnecessary use of "kamu", rigid conjunctions, or forced clause order.

❑ Structural Interference Examples

- Arabic imperative with wāw al-isti'nāf rendered directly into Indonesian = unnatural transitions.
- Retention of Arabic clause order affects readability in Indonesian.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

❑ Translation Techniques and Impact

- Techniques observed:
 - Literal translation (as default).
 - Amplification - adds clarity, but may reduce fluency.
 - Reduction - omits unnecessary pronouns for smoother expression.
 - Transposition - shifts grammatical categories to fit TL norms.

❑ Case Example - Quran 31:17

- Less natural: Bersabarlah kamu menghadapi segala cobaan yang menimpamu.
- Improved: Bersabarlah terhadap apa yang menimpamu → omits redundant subject.

❑ Cultural and Lexical Adjustments

- Example: Quran 2:168 - min rendered as dari sounds literal.
- Better: sebagian makanan halal dan baik → avoids redundancy, adds clarity.

❑ Key Takeaways

- Naturalness is not optional: it's essential for readability and theological accessibility.
- Variability in scores signals inconsistent application of adaptive strategies.
- Thoughtful shifts in syntax and lexicon help bridge SL-TL gaps.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

❑ Key Conclusion

- Naturalness in translation goes beyond lexical accuracy.
- It requires deep sensitivity to the grammatical, stylistic, and cultural conventions of the target language (TL).

❑ Strategic Shifts Enable Naturalness

- Effective techniques:
 - Transposition
 - Amplification
 - Reduction
 - Other adaptive strategies

❑ Shifts as Constructive Adjustments

- These shifts are not distortions, but functional tools.
- Aim: preserve meaning and improve textual fluency in the TL.

CONCLUSION

- ❑ Avoiding Negative Transfer
 - Adaptive strategies help prevent structural interference from the source language (SL).
 - Promote fluidity, idiomaticity, and cultural resonance.
- ❑ Final Insight
 - Naturalness is a core component of high-quality religious translation.
 - Requires thoughtful linguistic and cultural negotiation, not mere word-for-word equivalence.