Assessing the Quality of Hidden Proverbs Translation in the Holy Qur'ān: Human vs. Artificial Intelligence English Translations

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ABSTRACT

Linguistic issues are important in the textual analysis of translated texts. Among the most sensitive and significant texts translated into different languages, the Holy Qur'ān stands out. The text and texture of the Qur'ān are so unique that one cannot easily understand it without prior knowledge of its linguistic and extralinguistic aspects. One of the most challenging linguistic issues in the Qur'ān is proverbs, especially hidden proverbs that carry culture-specific meanings. The translator's role in explicating the meanings of these culture-specific items is crucial. This research aims to identify and analyze Qur'ānic hidden proverbs using a technical reference (Esmaeeli, 1986) and to assess translation quality with Na Pham's (2005) translation quality assessment model. In this study, two translation forms, AI and human (Qarai), were compared for their treatment of Qur'ānic hidden proverbs. Data collection and analysis followed a descriptive-qualitative design. Twenty-one verses containing hidden proverbs and their translations by GPT 3.5 and Qarai were analyzed. The study results indicated that, in terms of translation quality, GPT 3.5 performed better than Qarai.

1. Introduction

The Qur'ān is the holy book of Islam and is considered the word of God as revealed to the Prophet Muhammad. It contains numerous proverbs and sayings of significant cultural, religious, and moral value for Muslims. However, translating Qur'ānic proverbs into English is challenging due to linguistic and cultural differences. With technological advancements, ChatGPT has emerged as an alternative to human translation. This research aims to investigate the translatability and quality of Qur'ānic proverbs in English by comparing human and ChatGPT translations.

Conflicting viewpoints exist regarding the translatability of the Qur'ān. Al-Kharabshesh and Al-Azzam (2008) argue that successful Qur'ānic translation requires translators skilled in both linguistics and religious studies; without such expertise, results may be unsatisfactory. A proficient Qur'ān translator should master both source and target languages, possess linguistic expertise, and have knowledge of contrastive analysis. Understanding the linguistic features and stylistics of the source text helps convey the word of Allah as naturally as possible. Qur'ān translators must strive for authenticity in the target language; without meeting these criteria, translations may be inappropriate (Sajjadi, 2005; Shahsavandi, 2006).

As ChatGPT claims that it can translate the most difficult and challenging texts (according to ChatGPT 3.5), it is worth researching whether this claim is true for translating an ancient but resonant text like the Qur'ān. Since Qur'ānic proverbs are considered among the most culture-specific and difficult elements to translate, it is noteworthy to test the hypothesis that ChatGPT and Artificial Intelligence can translate such a rhetorical and multi-dimensional text. The degree and quality of ChatGPT's ability to translate Qur'ānic proverbs can serve as a useful test to determine if such an application is able to handle challenging linguistic elements effectively. Assessing the translation quality of ChatGPT could provide valuable insights into its potential future advancements in translation studies and the profession. By comparing the quality of ChatGPT's translations with Qarai's (2004) English translation of the Qur'ān, this research aims to evaluate whether the claims about ChatGPT's capabilities hold true.

Assessing translation quality and testing new technologies in translation, as well as comparing new technologies' translation quality with human translation, is significant. ChatGPT is claimed to be a high-tech application capable of translating the most difficult texts. This research considers it important to apply this chatbot to Qur'ānic proverbs—one of the most challenging linguistic elements and figures of speech—to assess the translation quality of ChatGPT compared with human translation (specifically Qarai's 2003 translation) so that the translatability of Qur'ānic proverbs by ChatGPT is tested.

This research aims to assess the quality of Qur'ānic proverbs translated by ChatGPT as a new technological chatbot compared with human translation. Since ChatGPT is claimed to have ushered in a transformative shift in human life and can handle different tasks with high quality, it is essential to examine how advanced this chatbot is in translating sensitive and culturally significant texts. Thus, evaluating ChatGPT's translation quality compared to human translation is a central objective of this research. Another purpose is to investigate the translatability of Qur'ānic proverbs by ChatGPT compared with human translation. The human translation is Qarai's English version, which uses a phrasal and idiomatic approach to the Qur'ān and is therefore valuable for examining the translation of Qur'ānic proverbs (Qarai, 2004).

2. Literature review

2.1. Translating proverbs

Due to the difficulties and challenges of translating Qurʾānic proverbs, translators need to understand how to translate these expressions according to relevant models for translating proverbs. Such studies can draw translators' attention to the most effective methods for translating proverbs by introducing applicable models and frameworks. Classe (2000, cited in Thalji, 2015) suggests that differences between the source and target cultures can lead to translation loss, particularly when certain contextual aspects unique to the SL culture are absent in the target culture. These aspects may include distinct lifestyles or habits specific to certain communities.

Newmark (1988, cited in Thalji, 2015) categorizes foreign cultural expressions into ecological, material, and social categories, encompassing aspects such as social organizations, politics, religion, art, gestures, and habits. These cultural nuances are embedded in various linguistic elements like proverbs, collocations, phrasal verbs, and figures of speech, including metaphors. Translating cultural texts poses challenges, requiring translators to be culturally aware of both the source and target cultures. Proverbs, with their cultural intricacies, can be particularly challenging for translators (Thalji, 2015). Baker (1992) highlights the challenges translators face in dealing with cultural expressions, proverbs, metaphors, collocations, and religious terms. Translating goes beyond conveying meaning; it involves navigating cultural nuances, including unfamiliar concepts in the target language. The translator's role extends to bridging cultural gaps to ensure accurate and culturally sensitive communication.

Baker (1992) outlines the difficulties encountered when translating idioms or fixed expressions as follows:

The lack of the TL equivalence because an idiom could be culture specific as well as the difference between the source and the target language in expressing the meaning; it could be expressed by a single word, fixed expression or fixed idiom. 2- The availability of the SL idiom in the TL but its use in context may be different; the two expressions may have different connotations. 3- Both literal and idiomatic senses of the SL idiom are important simultaneously, so it can be rendered successfully if the TL idiom is similar to SL idiom both in form and meaning. 4- The very convention of using idioms in written discourse, the context in which they can be used, and their frequency of use may be different in the source and target languages (pp. 68-70)

According to Kemppanen, Janis and Belikova (2012, cited in Thalji, 2015), there are strategies for translating idioms and proverbs through two main approaches: domestication and foreignization.

Domestication:

1.   Rendering foreign phenomena into familiar ones:

o Translate the source language idiom into a target language idiom with a similar meaning, even if it is not a direct, literal match.

2.   Specification:

o   Adapt the target language idiom or proverb by replacing general elements with more specific ones, ensuring it aligns closely with target cultural nuances.

3.   Intensification:

o   Adjust the target language idiom to make it more relevant to the target culture, enhancing certain elements to better resonate with the audience.

4.   Adding aesthetics:

o   Enrich the expression of the target language idiom by incorporating additional figures of speech, aiming for an aesthetically pleasing and culturally resonant version that reflects folk culture.

Foreignization:

1.   Maintaining foreign phenomena as familiar:

o   Preserve the information from the source language idiom by translating it into a target language idiom that conveys a similar meaning, even if it is not directly equivalent.

2.   Specification:

o   Keep the specific details of the source language idiom, avoiding simplification or generalization when translating into the target language.

3.   Intensification:

o   Retain any modifications from the source language idiom that enhance its cultural context, even if they challenge conventional norms in the target language.

4.   Adding aesthetics:

o   Include additional figures of speech that respect the cultural expression of the source language, preserving the aesthetic and wisdom of the original.

These strategies highlight the translator's role in balancing cultural fidelity and linguistic adaptation when working with idioms and proverbs.

2.2. Translation quality assessment

Translation quality assessment is conducted using various methods. Major approaches to translation assessment include "anecdotal and subjective methods, neo-hermeneutic approaches, response-oriented approaches, and text-based approaches" (House, 2001, cited in Baker, 1998, p. 197). Practical translators, philologists, philosophers, and writers have primarily proposed anecdotal and subjective approaches to translation assessment. Advocates of this approach focus on the translator themselves, asserting that the quality of a translation depends on the translator's knowledge, intuition, and artistic competence (p. 197). House (2001) notes that the main shortcoming of this approach is its failure to operationalize abstract translation concepts such as faithfulness to the source language text. The neo-hermeneutic school of thought (Stolze, 1992, cited in House, 2001) has also followed this subjective approach to translation quality assessment. According to Stolze

(1992), a good translation is produced when the translator fully identifies with the target text. However, whether such identification guarantees high translation quality and how this quality could be evaluated remains unclear (House, 2001, cited in Baker, 1998).

House (2001) argued that response-oriented approaches to translation quality assessment, which focus on the target language response to the translated text, align with Nida's (1964) concept of dynamic equivalence. Nida proposed that an ideal translation should achieve broad communicative effectiveness, an understanding of intention, and an equivalent response from the target readers. However, House criticized this approach for overlooking the role of cognition in the translation process. While emphasizing the importance of reader response, she suggested that a complete assessment should also consider the cognitive aspects involved in translation, highlighting the limitations of relying solely on the target language response's effectiveness (House, 2001, cited in Baker, 1998).

House (2001) developed a third category, text-oriented approaches, for translation quality assessment. In her research, a text-oriented model is used to analyze ellipsis in selected English translations. These approaches, supported by linguistic and functional models and comparative literature, apply linguistically based methods for assessing translation quality, focusing on syntactic, semantic, pragmatic, and stylistic features. Reiss's functional approach, Wilss (1982), Koller (1992), and Reiss and Vermeer's (1984) skopos theory are among the text-oriented approaches discussed. Wilss (1982) emphasizes the importance of analyzing source language text and target language text norms, warning that deviations may lead to translation shortcomings. Koller (1992) outlines three phases for translation assessment: analyzing the source text, comparing translations, and evaluating the translation. The primary assessment methods in this study involve comparing and evaluating translations (Reiss, 1978; Wilss, 1982, cited in House, 2001; Koller, 1992).

House (2001) asserted that her model of translation quality assessment is functional-pragmatic, grounded in pragmatic and linguistic theories. In her model, translation types serve as the foundation, consisting of overt and covert translations. Overt translation occurs when the source culture significantly influences the source language. Conversely, covert translation occurs when the source text is not heavily dependent on the source culture (House, 2001).

2.3. Computer assisted translation

The journey of computer-assisted translation (CAT) has evolved significantly since the 1966 ALPAC report, which initially criticized machine translation. This critique, however, paved the way for developing practical computer aids for translators. The redefined approach to machine translation not only led to the creation of CAT tools but also infused new dimensions into machine translation itself. Rather than replacing human translators, the focus shifted toward enhancing their knowledge and skills to produce high-quality translations. Concurrently, corpus-based and statistical machine translation has become a cornerstone of linguistic research worldwide. As we stand at this crossroads, predicting the future trajectory of machine translation remains challenging. Its continued development as part of CAT systems is evident, yet it's conceivable that all CAT tools will eventually transition fully to the cloud, adopting a subscription-based model. This shift is driven by the flexibility of cloud tools and subscription plans, along with the benefit of seamless software updates, which challenge traditional software distribution methods. Consequently, it seems logical to anticipate that even major industry players will migrate to the cloud for long-term sustainability (Munday, 2009).

CAT tools excel in translating technical and specialized texts, such as medical content, due to their effective use of segmentation, where text is broken down sentence by sentence for translation. This method yields optimal results for content-rich sentences, making it more suited to literal translation than free translation. In contrast, literature and poetry often require a broader context than, for instance, a technical manual. The structured approach of CAT tools can make it challenging for translators to achieve a sense-for-sense translation, which disregards the syntax of the source language. Instead, these tools tend to favor a sentence-by-sentence approach, which works well for specialized texts. When an inexperienced translator uses CAT tools to translate a novel, the translation may retain most of the original meaning but may lack the stylistic nuances, leading to an awkward reading experience (Munday, 2009).

2.4. Technology and translation

Since the 1990s, translation has evolved into a global commercial enterprise, outpacing the growth rate of world trade. This evolution is a direct result of globalization in trade. The rapid expansion of the internet has been pivotal, allowing even small enterprises to promote and sell products internationally. At the same time, growing consumer demand for product information, software, user manuals, games, educational materials, and more in native languages has further intensified the need for translation (Munday, 2009).

3. Methodology

3.1. Corpus

Qarai's translation, developed in collaboration with the Centre for Translation of the Holy Qur'ān as a translation consultant, is renowned for its faithfulness and fluency. The language is clear, straightforward, and dignified, avoiding both the archaisms and modernisms found in other English translations of the Qur'ān. Qarai's distinctive paraphrasing style enables readers with basic knowledge of Qur'ānic Arabic to grasp the meaning of the original text. The translation, which has been revised and republished several times, incorporates the perspectives of classical commentators, drawing on both Sunni and Shia works.

3.2. Sampling and data collection

According to Esmaeeli (1986), the total number of hidden proverbs is 21. Therefore, the researcher will analyze all the samples based on proverbial and translational issues. Since the entire population of hidden proverbs listed in the Qur'ān by Esmaeeli (1986) consists of 21 cases, which is sufficient for investigation, the researcher has analyzed the entire population.

3.3. Procedures

The researcher followed the procedures outlined below to carry out the research:

•   The hidden proverbs are extracted from the Qur'ān based on the technical list of Qur'ānic proverbs provided by Esmaeeli (1986). All linguistic and interpretational aspects of these proverbs are analyzed in his book.

•   The data are presented below, along with a description of the related issues for interpreting these data, based on Esmaeeli (1986).

- The English translations of each verse by Qarai and ChatGPT 3.5 are provided below the verses, and translation quality assessment models (Na Pahm, 2005) are applied and analyzed by the researcher.

- The discussion of the obtained and analyzed data is compared with other related studies, and the positive and negative aspects are discussed. Finally, conclusions are drawn.

3.4. The theoretical frameworks

The theoretical framework of the study consists of two models: translation quality assessment and the selection of Qur'ānic proverbs. The translation quality assessment model by Na Pham (2005) is shown in Figure 1. His error analysis model includes linguistic, comprehension, and translation errors. This model is applicable to both subject-oriented error analysis research, where a group of translators is assessed, and product-based research, such as this study. Since this research focuses on translation quality assessment, the translation model by Na Pham (2005) is used, which includes the following error types:

- **Pragmatic errors**: These are related to the contextual and paratextual factors involved in transferring source text proverbs to the target text.

- **Omission**: This occurs when the translator fails to understand or render the entire proverb, causing part of the proverb to be omitted. Omissions may occur for various reasons: forgetting to translate a part of the source text, failing to comprehend or interpret part of the source text, inability to find the appropriate word, or intentionally skipping a part of the proverb in the translation.

- **Addition**: This is not necessarily an error unless incorrect or unnecessary information is added to the translation. In such cases, the translator may add information to the proverbs in the TT that misleads the reader, making the translation clumsy and unnatural.

- **Inaccurate rendition of individual lexical items**: This refers to the translator's incorrect rendering of a lexical item from the source text to the target text. It indicates the translator's failure to preserve the meaning of the source text while making a structural translation shift.

- **Distorted meanings**: This happens when the translator "dramatically changes the intended meaning of the source text, which can impede the reader's comprehension" (p. 214). Such errors may result in a translation that presents a different message than the original, causing a severe misunderstanding for the reader.

- **Too literal translation**: This occurs when the translator "focuses only on the surface structure and translates each word or sentence from the source text" (p. 216).

- **Too free translation**: This happens when the translator tries "to rewrite or improve the original message in a too creative way". If this results in a change in meaning, it is considered an error. "This can (a) destroy the flow, (b) change the emphasis of the sentence, or (c) obscure the author's intent" (p. 217).

- **Wrong lexical choice**: This involves selecting incorrect words in the translation. Choosing the most appropriate word among similar options is a challenging issue for translators.

- **Wrong focus of attention**: "The emphasis and focus of attention from the original text should be preserved in the translation. If the translator changes the word order so much that it alters the author's intended meaning, this is considered a wrong use of attention" (p. 223).

The study focuses on analyzing hidden Qur'ānic proverbs, with a total of 21 cases identified in the Qur'ān according to Esmaeeli (1986). These verses are as follows: 2:68, 2:260, 4:100, 4:123, 17:7, 29:6, 99:7, 4:111, 7:163, 2:216, 9:47, 10:39, 12:64, 17:110, 19:75, 22:4, 25:67, 71:27, 2:156, 109:6, and 53:39.
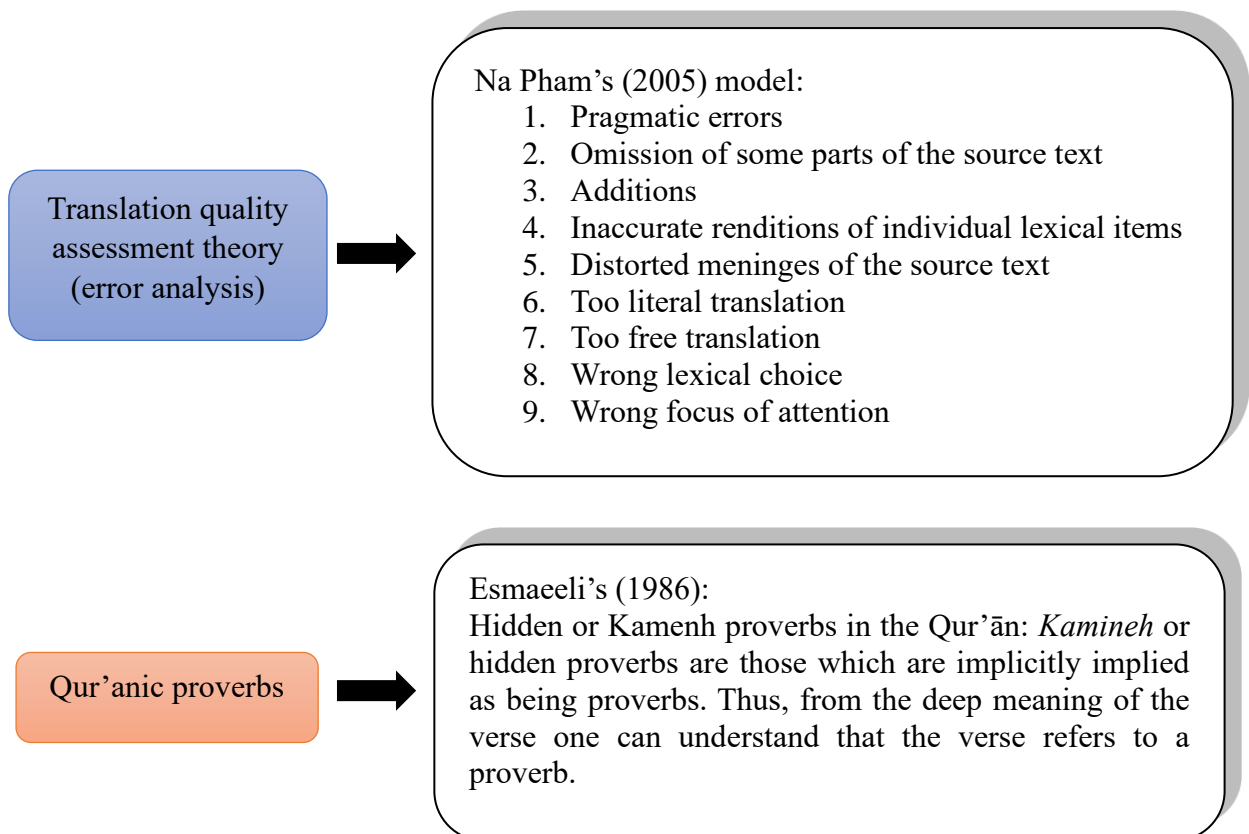
Translation quality assessment theory (error analysis) →

Na Pham's (2005) model:
1. Pragmatic errors
2. Omission of some parts of the source text
3. Additions
4. Inaccurate renditions of individual lexical items
5. Distorted meninges of the source text
6. Too literal translation
7. Too free translation
8. Wrong lexical choice
9. Wrong focus of attention

Qur'anic proverbs →

Esmaeeli's (1986):
Hidden or Kamenh proverbs in the Qur'ān: *Kamineh* or hidden proverbs are those which are implicitly implied as being proverbs. Thus, from the deep meaning of the verse one can understand that the verse refers to a proverb.

Figure 1. Theoretical framework of the study

3.5. Data analysis

The verses containing hidden proverbs were analyzed, with the original verses presented alongside their English transliterations and translations. The analysis of these hidden proverbs was based on a technical examination of Qur'ānic interpretations (Esmaeeli, 1986). Subsequently, the translations were analyzed and compared according to the theoretical framework of the study. In analyzing the hidden proverbs, the researcher first identified instances of proverbs and interpreted them based on the contextual meanings and supporting evidence from the verses, as well as authentic sources. The researcher also referred to reliable exegeses of the Holy Qur'ān to ensure a valid and accurate analysis (Esmaeeli, 1986). In the second phase, concerning the translations, the researcher examined the translations of the relevant verses to determine which ones most accurately reflected the original text. To do so, the translators were expected to explicate the meaning. It is important

to note that the verses were listed and analyzed according to Esmaeeli's (1986) exegesis. The English transliterations (from Qarai's translation) were sourced from https://tanzil.net/.

In this section, only a few verses, along with their analyses are provided as samples.

Example #1 (Surah Al-A'raf: 163):

وَ سْـَٔلْهُمْ عَنِ الْقَرْيَةِ الَّتِي كَانَتْ حَاضِرَةَ الْبَحْرِ إِذْ يَعْدُونَ فِي السَّبْتِ إِذْ تَأْتِيهِمْ حِيتَانُهُمْ يَوْمَ سَبْتِهِمْ شُرَّعًا وَ يَوْمَ لَا يَسْبِتُونَ لَا تَأْتِيهِمْ كَذَلِكَ نَبْلُوهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوا يَفْسُقُونَ

Qarai's translation: Ask them about the town that was situated on the seaside, when they violated the Sabbath, when their fish would come to them on the Sabbath day, visibly on the shore, but on days when they were not keeping Sabbath they would not come to them. Thus, did We test them because of the transgressions they used to commit. (163)

GPT-3.5: And ask them about the town that was by the sea - when they transgressed in [the matter of] the sabbath - when their fish came to them openly on their sabbath day, and the day they had no sabbath they did not come to them. Thus, did We give them trial because they were defiantly disobedient.

According to Esmaeeli (1986), the Sabbath in Judaism is a defined practice in the religion of Prophet Moses and corresponds to Saturday. The name "Sabbath" is derived from the Hebrew word meaning rest and comfort, reflecting the tradition in which the Jewish people cease all work and rest. In the Holy Book of Tamuz, it is explained that the Jews observe this day by refraining from labor, as it is a day dedicated to rest. The commandment to observe the Sabbath is emphasized in the fourth of the Ten Commandments. This commandment is based on the belief that God sanctified and made the Sabbath day holy. It is outlined in the Torah (Exodus 20:8). The observance of the Sabbath is considered obligatory, as it commemorates the creation of the heavens and the earth. God created the world in six days and rested on the seventh, and as a result, Jews are prohibited from performing work on the Sabbath. Instead, they are encouraged to rest and honor this sacred day, reflecting the divine rest after creation.

It is clear that the Sabbath is a Jewish holiday, but the idea of God creating the heavens and the earth in six days and resting on the seventh is symbolic rather than literal. This concept is also mentioned in the Qur'ān, which states: "He who created the heavens and the earth in six days". However, these 'days' are not meant to be understood as literal 24-hour days, since the concept of day and night did not exist before the creation of the sun and the moon. Instead, the reference is to six stages or periods, each of which could have lasted thousands or even tens of thousands of years, according to interpretations that view these days as symbolic rather than literal. This understanding highlights that while the Sabbath is a sacred day in Judaism, Friday is designated as a day of significance in Islam. Although Friday is a special day for Muslims, marked by the congregational prayer (Salat), work is still permitted on this day. Therefore, the meaning of the Sabbath, as it is understood in Judaism, does not directly apply in the same way in Islam.

It is said that the number six, which holds significance in Judaism, is important among the Jewish people, while the number seven holds cultural significance in Iranian traditions. The Sabbath-breakers were a group of Jews living in a city called Aylah, located near the Iranian border. If they were to return to you, they would surely repeat their actions. Islam

does not accept the established tradition of observing the Sabbath. According to the Qur'ān, the Jews who were compelled to work on the Sabbath violated God's command. In the interpretation of verses 163-164 of Surah al-A'raf, it is stated: "Ask them about the town by the sea, when they transgressed in the matter of the Sabbath; when fish appeared to them on the Sabbath, floating on the water, but on days other than the Sabbath, the fish did not appear to them. Thus, We tested them because they were transgressing".

God describes the scene of the city near the sea and refers to the story of the Jews who were tested by the Sabbath laws. While some people relied on fishing for their livelihood, God wanted to test them by making fish appear abundantly on the Sabbath and disappear on other days. This temptation led them to break the Sabbath rule by catching the fish. As a result, they were punished for their transgression, having violated God's command. The belief in the Sabbath and its associated restrictions are not accepted in Islam. Islam, however, emphasizes Friday as a special day for communal prayer and remembrance of God, but it does not require complete rest from work as the Sabbath does for Jews.

The number six, referring to the six days of creation, holds special significance in Jewish tradition. However, in Iranian culture, the number seven is considered sacred. "Indeed, those among you who transgressed concerning the Sabbath, We said to them, "Be apes, despised". Thus, We made it an example for the cities around it and a warning to those who fear Allah". The law of the Sabbath is an important part of Jewish tradition, forbidding Jews from working on this day. Some proverbs derived from this verse include: "Whatever God wants, that will happen" (هر چه دلم خواست نه آن شد / هر چه خدا خواست همان شد), and "The boat sails wherever God wants; if the clothes fit, it's the captain's will" (برد کشتی آنجا که خواهد خدای / اگر جامه بر تن درد ناخدای). Regarding the translations of this hidden proverb, and based on the theoretical framework of the study and the errors identified by Na Pham (2005), it seems that both Qarai and GPT-3.5 ignored the contextual and paratextual factors involved in the transference of the source text proverbs to the target text. As a result, a pragmatic error occurred. However, one strength of GPT-3.5 is its ability to recognize some hidden proverbs in Qur'ānic verses and translate them into English based on the given prompt.

Example #2 (Surah Al-Baqarah: 216):

كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْقِتَالُ وَ هُوَ كُرْهٌ لَكُمْ وَ عَسِي أَنْ تَكْرَهُوا شَيْئًا وَ هُوَ خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ وَ عَسِي أَنْ تُحِبُّوا شَيْئًا وَ هُوَ شَرٌّ لَكُمْ وَ اللّهُ يَعْلَمُ وَ أَنْتُمْ لا تَعْلَمُونَ

Qarai's translation: Warfare has been prescribed for you, though it is repulsive to you. Yet it may be that you dislike something, which is good for you, and it may be that you love something, which is bad for you, and Allah knows and you do not know. (216)

GPT-3.5: Fighting has been prescribed upon you while it is hateful to you. But perhaps you hate a thing and it is good for you; and perhaps you love a thing and it is bad for you. And Allah Knows, while you know not.

According to Esmaeeli (1986), what may seem harmful could actually be beneficial, and vice versa. Also, do not be jealous of others. The following poems are based on the proverb found in this verse.

✓   Perhaps what causes you pain is a remedy for you.

✓   What you think is an insult may be an honor.

✓   Because truth-seeking is a mercy:

 - O you in pain, the one causing your pain is actually your remedy (Rumi).

 - O you whose roar causes pain, it is you who are the remedy for the world (Sanai).

Regarding the translations of this hidden proverb, and based on the theoretical framework of the study and Na Pham's (2005) work, it seems that both Qarai and GPT-3.5 ignored the contextual and paratextual factors involved in the transference of source text (ST) proverbs to the target text. As a result, a pragmatic error occurred. However, one strength of GPT-3.5 is its ability to recognize some hidden proverbs in Qur'ānic verses and translate them into English based on the given prompt. The researcher believes that the English proverb "every cloud has a silver lining", meaning "you may not like something, but it has advantages for you", is a good equivalent for the hidden proverb in this verse.

Example #3 (Surah At-Tawbah: 47):

لَوْ خَرَجُوا فِيكُمْ ما زادُوكُمْ إِلاَّ خَبالاً وَ لَأَوْضَعُوا خِلالَكُمْ يَبْغُونَكُمُ الْفِتْنَةَ وَ فِيكُمْ سَمَّاعُونَ لَهُمْ وَ اللّهُ عَليمٌ بِالظّالِمِينَ

Qarai's translation: Had they gone forth with you, they would have only added to your troubles, and they would have surely spread rumors in your midst, seeking to cause sedition among you. They have some spies among you, and Allah knows best the wrongdoers.

GPT-3.5: If they had gone out among you, they would not have increased you except in confusion. And they would have been active among you, seeking [to cause] you fitnah. And among you are avid listeners to them. And Allah is Knowing of the wrongdoers

This verse contains a hidden proverb: "و فيكم سماعون لهم", which translates to "among you, some spies". In Qur'ānic Arabic, the word "سماع" figuratively means "spy". According to Esmaeeili (1986), this hidden proverb has served as the basis for other proverbs in both Arabic and Persian. The proverb "an ear on the wall' means that someone is eavesdropping. In Arabic, the proverb goes: "If you move at night, be cautious; if you stop, be silent. The ear on the wall hears slowly and answers every word it hears".

In Persian poetry and literature, there are many similar parables to this one:

1. The wall even has a mouse's ear. Saying secrets loudly is not good.

2. The parable of 'the ear on the wall' means that the wall listens.

Examples in Persian Literature:

✓   I said, everyone is as secretive as you / That the wall has an ear and hears our secrets. (Ferdowsi)

✓   They claim that her ear is like a wall, (Nizami Ganjavi)

✓   Although the lip is silent and the tongue is still / The ear on the wall listens to the desires and doubts.

Regarding the translations of this hidden proverb, and based on the theoretical framework of the study and the translation errors identified by Na Pham (2005), it seems that both Qarai and GPT-3.5 ignored the contextual and paratextual factors involved in transferring source text (ST) proverbs to the target text. As a result, a pragmatic error occurred. However, one strength of GPT-3.5 is its ability to recognize some hidden proverbs in Qur'ānic verses and, based on the given prompt, translate them into English. The researcher believes that the English proverb "the walls have ears", meaning "be cautious about what one says because others may listen to you secretly" is a good equivalent for the hidden proverb in this verse.

Example #4 (Surah Maryam: 75):

قُلْ مَنْ كانَ فِي الضَّلالَةِ فَلْيَمْدُدْ لَهُ الرَّحْمنُ مَدًّا حَتَّى إِذا رَأَوْا إِمَّا ما يُوعَدُونَ إِمَّا الْعَذابَ وَ إِمَّا السّاعَةَ فَسَيَعْلَمُونَ مَنْ هُوَ شَرٌّ مَكاناً وَ أَضْعَفُ جُنْداً

Qarai's translation: Say, 'Whoever abides in error, the All-beneficent shall prolong his respite until they sight what they have been promised: either punishment, or the Hour.' Then they will know whose position is worse, and whose host is weaker.

GPT-3.5: Say, 'Whoever is in error, let the Most Merciful extend for him a period [of time] until, when they see that which they were promised - either punishment [in this world] or the Hour [of resurrection] - they will come to know who is worse in position and weaker in soldiers.

As stated by Esmaeeli (1986), "Say to the listener: 'Whoever is in error'" This refers to the narration from Imam Sadiq (A.S), where the intended meaning of 'in error' is the failure to believe in the Wilaya of Amir al-Mu'minin Ali (A.S) and the Wilaya of our Imams. Therefore, they will say to him, 'Then let the Most Merciful grant him an extension,' so that he may live longer and God will grant him respite. This means extending his lifespan and granting him worldly desires. Here, if the word 'فَلْيَمْدُدْ' is understood as an imperative, the translation should reflect that.

The following idioms in the form of poems are taken from this verse both in Arabic and Persian:

✓   The ignorant person is not deprived, and the learned person is deprived.[1]

✓   Because ignorance causes disbelief and reason leads to faith. Therefore, perhaps one of the other opinions is:

The world is a prison for the believer and a paradise for the disbeliever – the world is the prison of the believer and the paradise of the disbeliever.[2]

And similar sayings in Persian: O' Lord you bestowed upon ignorant people and the wise people wander around the world.[3]

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[1] الجاهل مرزوق و العالم محروم

[2] الدنيا سجن المومن و جنت الكافر

[3] نعمت به سگان دادى و دولت به خران / پس ما به تماشاى جهان آمده‌ايم

As for the translation provided by both Qarai and GPT-3.5, the source language (SL) proverb is untranslatable, and its non-figurative meaning should be conveyed by the translator, based on the translation strategy model of this research, along with the provided literal translation, according to the translation quality model of the study. Of course, hidden proverbs in some verses, such as this one, are often too challenging for both the translators and the researcher to find an equivalent local proverb in the target language. Therefore, the researcher has no suggestion for this verse

4. Results

Table 1. shows the frequency of quality assessment of Qarai's English translation.

Table 1. The list and frequency translation strategies and quality assessment of Qarai's English translation

	Qarai's English translation	
	Verse/ chapter	Translation quality assessment (Na Pham, 2005)
1	2:68	Pragmatic errors
2	2:260	Wrong focus of attention
3	4:100	Pragmatic errors
4	4:123	(Too) literal translation
5	17:7	(Too) literal translation
6	29:6	(Too) literal translation
7	99:7	(Too) literal translation
8	4:111	Wrong focus of attention
9	7:163	(Too) literal translation
10	2:216	Pragmatic errors
11	9:47	(Too) literal translation
12	10:39	Pragmatic errors
13	12:64	Pragmatic errors
14	17:110	Pragmatic errors
15	19:75	(Too) literal translation
16	22:4	Pragmatic errors
17	25:67	Pragmatic errors
18	71:27	Pragmatic errors
19	2:156	Pragmatic errors
20	109:6	(Too) literal translation
21	53:39	Pragmatic errors

The qualities of translations, as directed by Na Pham's (2005) TQA model, reveal that in Qarai's translation, there are notable issues in rendering Qur'ānic hidden proverbs. He committed a pragmatic error 11 times out of 21 items (52.38%), focused attention incorrectly 2 times (9.5%), and provided literal or overly literal translations 8 times (38%). Therefore, based on Na Pham's models, Qarai's translation does not appear to be highly successful. To illustrate this more clearly, Figure 2 below presents Qarai's quality assessment.
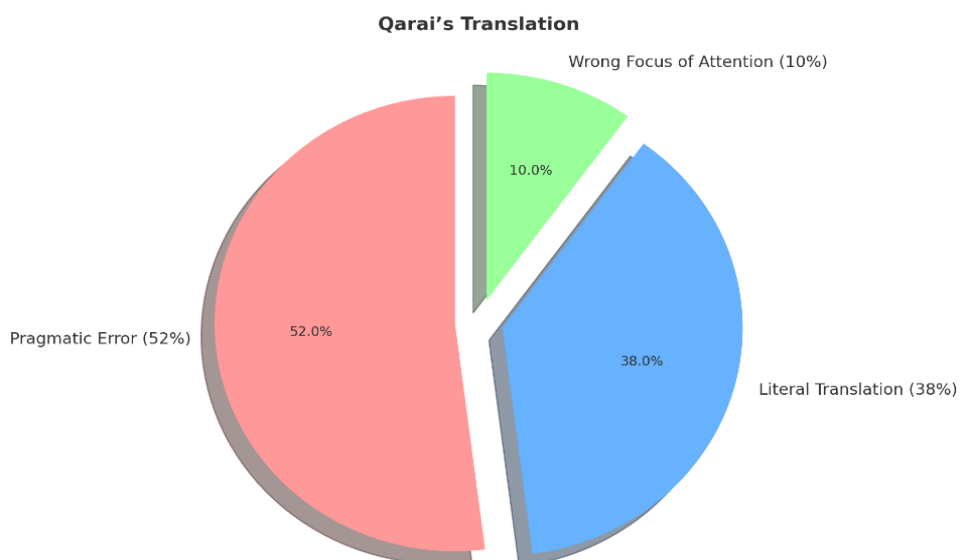
Figure 2. Qarai's Translation

Table 2 shows the list and frequency of quality assessment of GPT-3.5 English translation.

Table 2. The list and frequency translation strategies and quality assessment of GPT-3.5's English translation

	GPT-3.5 English translation	
	Verse/ chapter	Translation quality assessment (Na Pham, 2005)
1	2:68	Pragmatic errors
2	2:260	No error
3	4:100	No error
4	4:123	No error
5	17:7	(Too) literal translation
6	29:6	(Too) literal translation
7	99:7	(Too) literal translation
8	4:111	No error
9	7:163	(Too) literal translation
10	2:216	Pragmatic errors
11	9:47	(Too) literal translation
12	10:39	Pragmatic errors
13	12:64	Pragmatic errors
14	17:110	Pragmatic errors
15	19:75	(Too) literal translation
16	22:4	No error
17	25:67	No error
18	71:27	Pragmatic errors
19	2:156	Pragmatic errors
20	109:6	(Too) literal translation
21	53:39	Pragmatic errors

The qualities of translations based on Na Pham's (2005) TQA theory are applied to evaluate GPT-3.5's translation performance. Specifically, when rendering Qur'ānic hidden proverbs, GPT-3.5 made pragmatic errors 8 times out of 21 items (38%), provided literal or overly literal translations 8 times (33%), and made no translation errors for 6 verses (28%). Based on Na Pham's model, GPT-3.5 demonstrates significant progress toward achieving high standards of quality translation. In fact, it outperforms human translators in this regard. However, there is still room for improvement to reach optimal standards in TQA, especially for translating Qur'ānic hidden proverbs. To provide a clearer overview, Figure 3 below presents the quality assessment of GPT-3.5.
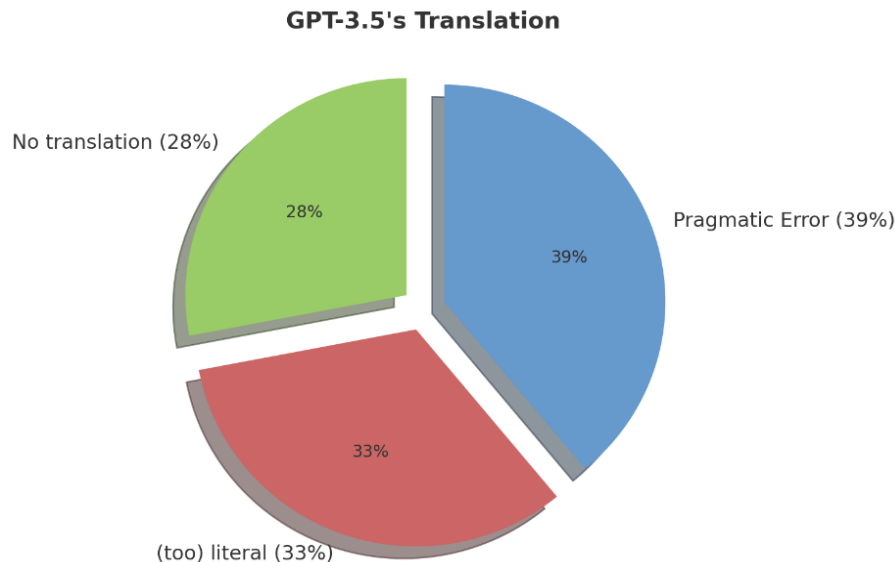

Figure 3. GPT-3.5's Translation

5. Conclusion

The translation of the Qur'ān holds great significance due to the sanctity of the text, and today, many people prefer to engage with these texts through new technologies like GPT bots. Studies such as the current one aim to draw attention to the complex linguistic issues in the Qur'ān, analyze existing translations, and highlight areas where translators need to address challenges like hidden proverbs. The goal is to present more accurate, natural, and authentic translations. In this context, a widely respected and readable translation of the Qur'ān by Ali Qoli Qaraee was compared with the latest technology, GPT-3.5. While comparisons between these translations should be conducted with careful consideration of the unique intricacies of each, the results of this study reveal how distinct and effective the two translations are, based on Na Pham's (2005) TQA framework. Among the parameters in Na Pham's model, pragmatic errors and (too) literal translations were common to both Qarai and GPT-3.5, while "wrong focus of attention" and "no translation error" differed between the two.

When comparing the frequency of errors, Qarai's translation had a pragmatic error rate of 52.38%, while GPT-3.5's rate was 38%. In other areas, (too) literal translation in Qarai's work was 38%, compared to 33% in GPT-3.5. Qarai's translation showed a "wrong focus of attention" error rate of 9.5%, while GPT-3.5 exhibited no such error and instead had a 28% rate of no translation errors.

The study concludes that, although there is still significant progress to be made in translating hidden proverbs and culture-specific items, GPT-3.5 has made substantial strides. The technology has been able to partially identify and translate hidden proverbs. Therefore, aside from refining the technical prompts given to GPT-3.5, greater emphasis should be placed on the research objectives so that ChatGPT can further improve its capabilities in producing higher-quality translations. Contrary to some scholars' predictions that culture-specific items and texts like the Qur'ān are challenging for GPT, the findings of this research suggest that, with continued investment and development, such technologies could overcome these boundaries in the near future.

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