



International Journal of Textual and Translation Analysis  
in Islamic Studies

Journal homepage: <http://ttaais.akhs.bou.ac.ir/>



## Comparing Human and ChatGPT 3.5 Translation Strategies for Hidden Proverbs in the Qur'ān

Fatemeh Rajabi Fakhrabadi<sup>1</sup> and Ebrahim Davoudi Sharifabad<sup>\*2</sup>

1. Department of English Language, Imam Reza International University, Mashhad, Iran

2. Department of English Language, Baqir Al-Olum University, Qom, Iran

\* Corresponding author: e.davoudi@bou.ac.ir

<https://doi.org/10.22081/ttaais.2024.69968.1035>

### ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received: 28 October 2023

Revised: 30 November 2023

Accepted: 25 December 2023

Keywords:

GPT 3.5 Translation,  
Hidden Proverbs of The Qur'ān,  
Human Translation,  
Translation Strategies.

### ABSTRACT

The Qur'ān is not only rich in linguistic construction but also deeply embedded with cultural and religious meanings, making its translation a challenging task. Among the many intricate linguistic features of the Qur'ān, proverbs, especially hidden proverbs, present one of the most significant challenges for translators. These proverbs carry culture-specific meanings that are often difficult to render accurately in other languages and are hidden due to their indirect nature, which can be challenging for readers to understand (Esmaeili, 1986). This study aims to identify and analyze hidden proverbs in the Qur'ān through translations generated by artificial intelligence (GPT-3.5) and by a human translator, Qarai's English translation. The research adopts a descriptive-qualitative method, analyzing twenty-one Qur'ānic verses containing hidden proverbs. These 21 hidden proverbs were extracted from a technical source on Qur'ānic proverbs (Esmaeili, 1986). The study evaluated the translation strategies used by both GPT-3.5 and Qarai, examining how effectively each approach conveys the figurative and cultural meanings of the proverbs. Through comparative analysis, this research investigated the strengths and limitations of AI-generated translations versus human translations in handling cultural-specific linguistic elements. The findings reveal that GPT-3.5 demonstrated strong performance in applying Beekman and Callow's (1974) translation strategies, particularly in cases where the source language proverbs were untranslatable and required a non-figurative explanation. Compared to the human translator, GPT-3.5 provided more consistent and contextually appropriate solutions to the challenge of translating hidden proverbs. These results highlight the growing potential of AI-assisted translation tools in addressing complex linguistic and cultural challenges, suggesting promising advancements in the field of Qur'ānic translation.

How to cite this article: Rajabi Fakhrabadi, F. and Davoudi Sharifabad, E. (2024). Comparing Human and ChatGPT 3.5 Translation Strategies for Hidden Proverbs in the Qur'ān. *International Journal of Textual and Translation Analysis in Islamic Studies*, 2(1), 104-118. doi: 10.22081/ttaais.2024.69968.1035

© 2024 The Authors. Published by Ākhünd-e Khorāsāni Center for Graduate Studies affiliated with Baqir al-Olum University of Qom.

This is an open access article under the CC BY license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).



## 1. Introduction

The Qur'ān, the holy book of Islam, is considered the word of God as revealed to the Prophet Muhammad. It contains numerous proverbs and sayings that hold deep cultural, religious, and moral significance for Muslims. Translating these proverbs into other languages, including English, is essential for non-Arabic speakers to understand and appreciate the teachings of the Qur'ān. With advancements in technology, ChatGPT (Generative Pre-trained Transformer) translation has emerged as an alternative to human translation. Proverbs, which are among the most challenging and culture-specific language elements, are particularly difficult to translate. These proverbs are also considered rhetorical features in linguistic expression. Today, computer-assisted translation tools and powerful online platforms have become popular and widely used. The advent of ChatGPT and other artificial intelligence tools represents an important development. Utilizing this chatbot in the translation of highly sensitive texts, such as the Holy Qur'ān, holds significant potential for expanding accessibility and understanding.

The research problem to be investigated is the capability of ChatGPT in translating proverbs, which are among the most challenging linguistic elements, particularly within the Qur'ān as a unique text. This study will analyze whether ChatGPT translates these linguistic elements accurately according to the theoretical framework provided by Beekman and Callow's (1974) translation strategies for proverbs.

The significance of this study lies in demonstrating ChatGPT's potential as an advanced technological tool for translating the Qur'ān, a text regarded as timeless and universally relevant. The researcher assumes that the Qur'ān's unique nature presents a considerable challenge, even for the most advanced translation technologies.

This research aims to compare the strategies used by ChatGPT and a human translator in translating Qur'ānic proverbs. Given ChatGPT's reputed impact on various facets of human life, including language translation, it is important to assess the extent of its effectiveness in handling sensitive and complex texts. To meet the research goals, the study applies Beekman and Callow's (1974) model for translating proverbs, which includes the following strategies: 1) introducing the words following the proverb as its intended meaning; 2) substituting with an equivalent proverb in the target language; and 3) providing a straightforward, non-figurative explanation of the proverb.

## 2. Review of the Literature

### 2.1. Translating the Holy Qur'ān

Various Qur'ānic scholars have deliberated on the challenges of translating the Holy Qur'ān into other languages. Certain verses within the Qur'ān emphasize the uniqueness and originality of its Arabic text. Based on these verses, some scholars in Qur'ānic studies argue that the Qur'ān is an unparalleled and essentially untranslatable text (Malmkjaer & Windle, 2011).

This perspective rests on the idea that any attempt to translate the Qur'ān, thereby substituting the original Arabic divine text with other languages, could be seen as distorting or altering Allah's Word. This stems from the inherent complexity and binding nature of the Qur'ānic text and structure. The culture-specific concepts embedded within religious texts present a considerable challenge for translators, as achieving true equivalence is often

impossible, making it difficult to convey the precise meaning of Qur'ānic words in the target text. Therefore, both the content and the context of the Qur'ān contribute to the formidable difficulty of translation (Abdul-Raof, 2001; Siddiek, 2012; Long, 2005).

Siddiek (2012) asserts that translating the Qur'ān into other languages is impractical because complete substitution of Allah's words is unattainable. Revealed in Arabic to the Prophet Muhammad, the Qur'ān has a unique eloquence and linguistic beauty that cannot be fully replicated in other languages. As a result, Qur'ānic translations primarily serve to aid non-Arabic speakers in understanding the meaning of the text, rather than capturing its full linguistic essence.

By examining various translations of the Qur'ān that recognize the challenge of untranslatability, it becomes clear that titles are carefully chosen to emphasize meaning rather than direct translation of the Glorious Qur'ān. For example, Yusuf Ali's (2010) English translation is titled *The Meaning of the Holy Qur'ān*, and Al-Hilali and Muhsin Khan's (2000) version is referred to as *The Translation of the Meanings of the Noble Qur'ān in the English Language*.

The primary goal of Qur'ān translators is to convey the meanings of the Holy Qur'ān without attempting to substitute it, aiming for an approximation of the source text meanings in the target language. This approach potentially legitimizes Qur'ān translation efforts. However, due to the Qur'ān's sensitive nature, translators must make every effort to minimize errors, being aware of both the textual and contextual challenges in the translation process. According to Abdul-Raof (2001), the limitations of translating the Qur'ān include "style, stylistic mechanisms of stress, word order, cultural voids, problems of literal translation, syntactic and semantic ambiguity, emotive Qur'ānic expressions, disagreements among translators, different exegetical analyses, and morphological patterns" (p. 1). He further asserts that the most significant challenge for a Qur'ān translator is "linguistic and historical Qur'ān-specific texture" (p. 1). Abdul-Raof (2005) argues that the Holy Qur'ān possesses a unique discourse, marked by textual standards such as explicit coherence and intertextuality, which are evident across narrative, descriptive, and argumentative sections. Cohesion, informativity, intentionality, and acceptability are all intrinsic to the Qur'ānic text as well.

## 2.2. *Qur'ānic Proverbs*

Proverbs are widely regarded as one of the most important intellectual tools for expressing life experiences, including grief, happiness, hardships, and more. As such, they reflect cultural elements that embody the depth of human thoughts and behaviors (Al-Zein, 2009, as cited in Hassan and Lutfi Hossein, 2021). According to Mieder (2004), "A proverb is a short, generally known sentence of the folk that contains wisdom, truth, morals, and traditional views in a metaphorical, fixed, and memorable form, handed down from generation to generation" (p. 3, as cited in Hassan and Lutfi Hossein, 2021).

### 2.2.1. Al-Mathal (Proverbs of the Qur'ān)

As Hassan and Lutfi Hossein (2021) explain, Arabic dictionaries note that the word *mathal* (مثل) has multiple meanings, including analogy, equivalence, example, simile, and similitude. Additionally, derivatives from the root letters *م/ث/ل* are used in various contexts. Common derivatives of this root include *mithlu* (مثل), *mithaalun* (مثال), and *mathalun* (مثال).

According to Fayrouzabadi, *mithlun* denotes something similar, analogous, or an equivalent. *Mithaalun* means a model, quality, mode, pattern, or example, while *mathalun* signifies a condition, state, case, or a description by way of comparison (Ibn Mandhour, 1999, p. 49, as cited in Hassan and Lutfi Hossein, 2021). He also notes that the root verb *mathala* (مَثَلَ) means to resemble, imitate, or compare one thing to another. *Mithl* (مِثْل) means likeness or resemblance, and *mathal* (مِثَال) is a noun meaning parable, likeness, similitude, comparison, or proverb (p. 43).

Saeed (2006, as cited in Khalaf, 2016) highlights *mathal* as a text type in which a literal interpretation is not intended. It encompasses meanings such as likeness, simile, similitude, analogy, or parable. The Qur'ān frequently employs *amthal* (the plural of *mathal*) using vivid images and anecdotes, drawing comparisons with familiar elements like ants, spiders, or flies to convey abstract concepts. This use of parables is referenced in a Qur'ānic verse (14:25), where Allah presents parables for reflection. The aims of these parables include fostering reverence, reminding believers of Allah's knowledge and power, and promoting harmony. Additionally, Qur'ānic parables illustrate the spiritual relationship between individuals and their Lord and serve to affirm the truth of revelation and the Prophethood of Muhammad (PBUH), aiding in convincing unbelievers. The nuanced meanings associated with *mathal* and *amthal* will be further examined in the data analysis to reveal the variety of senses conveyed in Qur'ānic verses.

### *2.3. Issues on human vs. artificial intelligence translation*

Machine translation and translation studies have evolved as separate fields for much of their histories. Early in both disciplines, some researchers attempted to explain translation through formal linguistic frameworks, setting the stage for potential automation, as demonstrated by Catford (1965). However, the 'cultural turn' in TS shifted the field away from linguistic focus and beyond the initial scope of machine translation. In the 1990s, both fields developed a shared interest in empirical data, with a focus on corpora—especially parallel corpora—although their objectives remained distinct. For example, empirical findings from studies on translation practices in academia, such as those by Baker (1988), had limited influence on machine translation development.

Quality is widely recognized as a key criterion for translation assessment, though it is a relative concept that requires contextualization or alignment with purpose, as noted within translation studies. For instance, Mateo (2014, as cited in Siu, 2023), building on Nord (1997), defines quality as the appropriateness of a translated text to meet a communicative purpose. In translation quality assessment, translations are often rated comparatively as 'very good', 'satisfactory', or 'unacceptable', with criteria generally tied to functional or pragmatic relevance (Siu, 2023). In machine translation evaluation, on the other hand, assessment focuses on comparing systems by output quality, often using ordered categories such as 'better than' or 'indistinguishable'. As the field has progressed, metrics have been developed to correlate with human ratings or rankings (Siu, 2023), supported by ongoing research within the machine translation community.

## **3. Methodology**

### *3.1. The Corpora of the Study*

According to Esmaeeli (1986, p. 643), Qur'ānic proverbs are classified into three categories: Saereh (سائره), Wadihah (واضحہ), and Kamineh (کامنہ). Saereh proverbs are those commonly used in everyday conversations and correspondences. Wadihah proverbs, or proverbial similes, are explicitly identified as similes through the use of the letter kaf at the beginning of the proverb. Kamineh or hidden proverbs, on the other hand, are implied rather than explicitly stated as proverbs, requiring deeper interpretation to recognize their proverbial nature. This research focuses on analyzing the hidden proverbs, which, according to Esmaeeli (1986), amount to 21 instances in the Qur'ān. The proverb corpus for this study is drawn from this classification. The rationale for selecting Kamineh proverbs is that they are implicitly presented, making it more challenging to recognize them as proverbs, both for human translators and AI chatbots. Consequently, analyzing the quality of translation for these hidden proverbs offers a more effective means of assessing translation accuracy.

### *3.2. Chat GPT Chatbot (3.5)*

As introduced in the application, the ChatGPT chatbot is based on the GPT-3.5 architecture developed by OpenAI. This version of the chatbot has 175 billion parameters, which are internal variables used by the model to generate responses. Its training involved learning from a wide range of internet texts. The researcher has chosen GPT-3.5 for this study because it possesses the capabilities required for the research and is readily accessible. Other versions of the chatbot are not as easily obtainable. Therefore, due to the availability and suitability of GPT-3.5 for this research, it has been selected for use.

### *3.3. Procedures*

The researcher followed a systematic approach to conduct this study. The hidden proverbs were extracted from the Qur'ān based on the technical list of Qur'ānic proverbs provided by Esmaeeli (1986), who thoroughly analyzed the linguistic and interpretational aspects of these proverbs in his work. Below, each proverb is accompanied by a description of the related issues concerning its interpretation, as outlined by Esmaeeli (1986). Following this, the English translations of each verse, provided by both Qarai and ChatGPT 3.5, are presented. The translation strategies from Beekman and Callow's (1974) model are then applied and analyzed by the researcher. The findings from the analysis are compared with related studies, discussing both the strengths and limitations of each translation. Finally, the conclusions drawn from the study are presented.

### *3.4. The theoretical frameworks*

The researcher followed a systematic approach to conduct this study. The hidden proverbs were extracted from the Qur'ān based on the technical list of Qur'ānic proverbs provided by Esmaeeli (1986), who thoroughly analyzed the linguistic and interpretational aspects of these proverbs in his work. Below, each proverb is accompanied by a description of the related issues concerning its interpretation, as outlined by Esmaeeli (1986). Following this, the English translations of each verse, provided by both Qarai and ChatGPT 3.5, are presented. The translation strategies from Beekman and Callow's (1974) model are then applied and analyzed by the researcher. The findings from the analysis are compared with related studies, discussing both the strengths and limitations of each translation. Finally, the conclusions drawn from the study are presented.

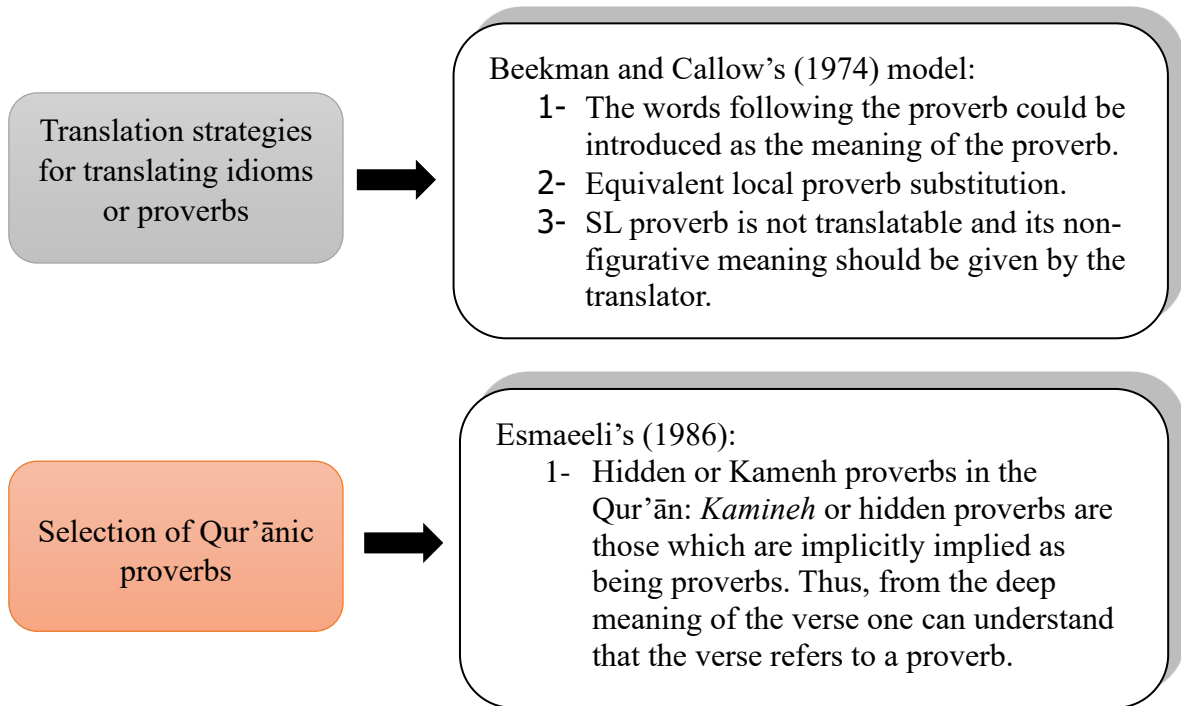


Figure 1. The theoretical framework of the study

### 3.5. Data analysis

A limited number of verses, along with their analyses, are presented here as samples.

*Example #1 (Surah Al-Baqarah: 68):*

قَالُوا اذْعُ لَنَا رَبِّكَ يُبَيِّنْ لَنَا مَا هِيَ قَالَ إِنَّهُ يَقُولُ إِنَّهَا بَقَرَةٌ لَا فَارِصٌ وَلَا بَكْرٌ عَوَانٌ بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ فَافْعَلُوا مَا تُؤْمَرُونَ

**Qarai's translation:** They said, 'Invoke your Lord for us that He may clarify for us what she may be.' He said, 'He says, she is a cow, neither old nor young, of a middle age. Now do what you are commanded.'

**GPT-3.5:** They said, 'Call upon your Lord for us to make clear to us what it is'. [Moses] said, [ Allah] says, 'It is a cow which is neither old nor virgin, but median between that', so do what you are commanded'

According to Esmaeeli (1986), the hidden proverb in this verse is “لا فَارِصٌ وَلَا بَكْرٌ”, which means “neither old nor young, but in between”. This proverb originates from a story involving Bani Israel. During the time of Prophet Moses, a man from Bani Israel named A'mil proposed to a woman, who accepted his proposal. However, his cousin also proposed to her, but she rejected him. Out of jealousy, the rejected cousin killed A'mil. To uncover the murderer, the people asked Prophet Moses to intervene. Allah revealed to Moses that, in order to identify the killer, they needed to slaughter a cow. When they inquired about the specific type of cow, Moses instructed them to find one that was neither too old nor too young. Following this guidance, they slaughtered the cow, took its tail, and touched A'mil's body with it. A'mil momentarily came back to life, identified his killer, and then died again.

Prophet Moses then administered justice, calling for the punishment of the guilty. This story gave rise to the hidden proverb “neither old nor young but in between”, symbolizing moderation. It is often invoked to emphasize balance. Following this guidance, they slaughtered the cow, took its tail, and touched A’mil’s body with it. A’mil momentarily came back to life, identified his killer, and then died again. Prophet Moses then administered justice, calling for the punishment of the guilty. This story gave rise to the hidden proverb “neither old nor young but in between”, symbolizing moderation. It is often invoked to emphasize balance.

This Qur’ānic proverb also inspired other sayings, such as “خير الامور اوسطها”, meaning “the best action is moderation”, Similarly, Amir al-Mu’minin Ali ibn Abi Talib (A.S) said, “الجاهل اما مفرط اما مفرط”, meaning “an ignorant person is either excessive or neglectful”. In Persian poetry, Sa’di also advised moderation with the line: “نه چندان بخور کز دهانت برآید / نه چندان که از / ضعف جانت برآید”, which translates as “Eat moderately so that you neither overeat nor weaken yourself from hunger”. Many similar expressions on the theme of moderation are derived from this verse. In terms of translation, based on Beekman and Callow’s (1974) model, both Qarai and GPT-3.5 provided a literal translation of the proverb without clarifying the underlying message of moderation. A more explicit translation might have included an explanation to highlight this theme, as the proverb is meant to convey the importance of moderation rather than its literal meaning alone.

*Example #2 (Surah Al-Baqarah: 260):*

وَ إِذْ قَالَ اِبْرٰهٖمُ رَبِّ اَرِنِيْ كَيْفَ تُحْيِي الْمَوْتٰى قَالَ اَوْ لَمْ تُؤْمِنْ قَالَ بَلٰى وَّ لٰكِنْ لِّيَطْمَئِنَّ قَلْبِيْ قَالَ فَخُذْ اَرْبَعَةً مِّنَ الطَّيْرِ فَصُرْهُنَّ اِلَيْكَ ثُمَّ اجْعَلْ عَلٰى كُلِّ جَبَلٍ مِّنْهُنَّ جُزْءًا ثُمَّ ادْعُهُنَّ يٰتٰىنِكَ سَعِيًّا وَاَعْلَمَنَّ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيْمٌ

**Qarai’s translation:** And when Abraham said, ‘My Lord! Show me how You revive the dead,’ He said, ‘Do you not believe?’ He said, ‘Yes indeed, but in order that my heart may be at rest.’ He said, ‘Catch four of the birds. Then cut them into pieces, and place a part of them on every mountain, then call them; they will come to you hastening. And know that Allah is all-mighty and all-wise.’ (2:60)

**GPT-3.5:** And [mention] when Abraham said, ‘My Lord, show me how You give life to the dead’. [Allah] said, ‘Have you not believed?’ He said, ‘Yes, but [I ask] only that my heart may be satisfied’. [seeing is believing] [Allah] said, ‘Take four birds and commit them to yourself. Then [after slaughtering them] put on each hill a portion of them; then call them - they will come [flying] to you in haste. And know that Allah is Exalted in Might and Wise’.

This verse is the origin of a proverb about inner satisfaction and certainty. Prophet Ibrahim desired to witness how the dead are brought back to life to satisfy his heart. Thus, he asked Allah for a demonstration of resurrection. Allah instructed him to take four birds, cut them up, mix the pieces, and place portions on different hills. When Ibrahim called them, the birds were miraculously restored to life and flew back to him. The hidden proverb in this verse comes from the phrase “لِيَطْمَئِنَّ قَلْبِي” (“so that my heart may be at ease”), which has inspired several proverbs in Arabic and Persian, such as “شنیدن کی بود مانند دیدن” (“hearing is not the same as seeing”) and “شنیدن چو دیدن نباشد درست” (Asadi), along with the Arabic proverb “الخبر يَحْتَمِلُ الصِّدْقَ وَ الكَذْبَ”, (“a report may be true or false”) (Esmaeeli, 1986). In terms of translation, based on Beekman and Callow’s (1974) model, Qarai’s translation remains

literal, introducing only the basic meaning of the phrase. However, GPT-3.5 offers a cultural equivalent by replacing the proverb with “seeing is believing”, capturing the intended nuance of the original.

*Example #3 (Surah Al-Isra: 7):*

لِئِنْ أَحْسَنْتُمْ أَحْسَنْتُمْ لَأَنْفُسِكُمْ وَإِنْ أَسَأْتُمْ فَلَهَا فَإِذَا جَاءَ وَعْدُ الْآخِرَةِ لِيَسُوءُوا وُجُوهَكُمْ وَيَدْخُلُوا الْمَسْجِدَ كَمَا دَخَلُوهُ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ وَ لِيُتَبَرَّوْا مَا عَلَوْا تَتَّبِرًا

**Qarai’s translation:** [saying,] ‘If you do good, you will do good to your [own] souls, and if you do evil, it will be [evil] for them.’ So when the occasion for the other [prophecy] comes, they will make your faces wretched, and enter the Temple just as they entered it the first time, and destroy utterly whatever they come upon.

**GPT-3.5:** If you do good, you do good for yourselves; and if you do evil, [you do it] to yourselves. Then when the final promise comes, [We will send your enemies] to sadden your faces and to enter the mosque as they entered it the first time, and to destroy what they had taken over with [total] destruction.

According to Kashf al-Asrar (as cited in Esmaeeli, 1986), “If you do good deeds, you have done them for yourself, and if you do bad deeds, you have inflicted harm upon yourself”. The majesty of honor and the fullness of glory belong solely to the Great Lord, who is entirely unaffected by the obedience of the obedient or the sins of the sinners. This verse highlights the impact of human actions, emphasizing that the effects of one’s deeds do not reach God. Instead, if someone acts for God, it benefits themselves, and if someone acts solely for themselves, it does not serve God. Every action ultimately returns to the doer, who alone will experience its results. The wise have often said that people can be divided into different types based on their motivations and goals. Some pursue desires and pleasures, others seek reputation and fame, while some remain ignorant or detached, choosing isolation and companionship in seclusion. The pure and sincere seekers follow the path of love, but those who act purely for God’s sake are few indeed. This verse conveys a similar message to the previous example, though it uses positive wording (“if you do good, you have done good to yourself”) as opposed to the previous phrasing (“if you do wrong to others, you have done wrong to yourself”). In translating this hidden proverb, both Qarai and GPT-3.5 provided a literal translation, following the theoretical framework of Beekman and Callow (1974). Although both translators included some explanatory notes, these additions do not directly pertain to the translation of the hidden proverb itself.

*Example #4 (Surah Yunus: 39):*

بَلْ كَذَّبُوا بِمَا لَمْ يُحِيطُوا بِعَلَمِهِ وَ لَمَّا يَأْتِهِمْ تَأْوِيلُهُ كَذَلِكَ كَذَّبَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ فَانظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الظَّالِمِينَ

**Qarai’s translation:** Indeed, they deny something whose knowledge they do not comprehend, and whose explanation has not yet come to them. Those who were before them denied likewise. So observe how was the fate of the wrongdoers!

**GPT-3.5:** But they denied the knowledge they could not encompass and its interpretation has not yet come to them. Thus did those before them deny. Then observe how was the end of the wrongdoers.



Ali bin Ibrahim (may Allah have mercy on him) stated that the verse “وَرَجِعُوا إِلَى آيَاتِ اللَّهِ” (“and they returned to the signs of Allah”) was revealed in reference to the belief in Raj’a (the return). According to the interpretation of this verse, Ibn Abu Umair reported from some of his companions, and Abu Basir also narrated, that Imam Sadiq (peace be upon him) said: “The return (Raj’a) is neither from this world nor solely the Hereafter; rather, it is the manifestation (al-Zuhur) of the Mahdi (peace be upon him), who is the Qa’im (the Riser). There is no difference between our belief and that of our opponents regarding the appearance of Imam Mahdi (peace be upon him). Our opponents agree with us on the appearance, but our distinction lies in the belief that the return occurs during the appearance of Imam Mahdi (peace be upon him), whereas our opponents believe it pertains solely to the Hereafter and Resurrection. The term ‘return’ specifically denotes this concept, distinguishing it from the term ‘appearance’”. (Esmaeeli, 1986). In 1351 AH, Shaykh Abdul Karim Haeri Yazdi (may Allah’s mercy be upon him) engaged in a discussion with Shaykh Hamza at his home regarding the belief in Raj’a. Shaykh Hamza posed several questions, to which Shaykh Abdul Karim Haeri responded, drawing on evidence from various sects to demonstrate that Raj’a is an essential belief, particularly within Shia Islam. He provided convincing proofs from the sayings of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and the Imams (peace be upon them) concerning Raj’a and related concepts (p.197). In this context, Imam Ali (peace be upon him) also remarked, “People are the enemies of what they do not know”.

In standard Arabic, the word “جهل” (jahl) carries several meanings:

- ✓ Ignorance or lack of knowledge: “جَهْلًا وَّ جَهَالَةً” (He was unaware or ignorant).
- ✓ Foolishness or the act of behaving foolishly.
- ✓ Something ordinary or customary: “شَيْءٌ عَادِيٌّ وَّ مَأْلُوفٌ وَّ مُعْتَادٌ” (Something normal or familiar).

Typically, a person who lacks knowledge about something often develops hostility or aversion toward it (p. 197). Regarding the English translations produced within a theoretical translation framework, Beekman and Callow’s (1974) model suggests that both Qarai and GPT-3.5 have provided a literal translation without clarifying the implicit proverb. As a result, the underlying meaning of the proverb is only indirectly conveyed.

*Example #4 (Surah Yusuf: 64):*

قَالَ هَلْ آمَنُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ إِلَّا كَمَا أَمَنْتُكُمْ عَلَىٰ أَخِيهِ مِنْ قَبْلُ فَاللَّهُ خَيْرٌ حَافِظًا وَهُوَ أَرْحَمُ الرَّاحِمِينَ

**Qarai’s translation:** He said, ‘Should I not trust you with him just as I trusted you with his brother before? Yet Allah is the best of protectors, and He is the most merciful of merciful ones.’ (64)

**GPT-3.5:** ‘Shall I entrust you with him except [under coercion] as I entrusted you with his brother before? But Allah is the best guardian, and He is the most merciful of the merciful’.

The hidden proverb in this verse refers to the story of Prophet Joseph and his father Prophet Jacob when he trusted Joseph's brothers and let Joseph go with them to the desert and they tried to kill him and finally put him in a well. Many years later Joseph's brothers needed to take their brother Benjamin to Egypt so that they may be given wheat. This time when they went to their father to ask him let permit Benjamin to accompany the caravan to Egypt, Prophet Jacob said in response, "Shall I entrust you with him (Binyamin)?" A rhetorical question indicating denial. He meant: "I do not entrust you with him, but Allah is the best protector." This was after they said: "If he (Binyamin) is a thief, so indeed a brother of his (Yusuf) has stolen before." Then Yaqub turned away from them while in pain and said: "Alas, my grief for Yusuf!" His eyes turned white from sorrow, for he was indeed a suppressor of grief. He can be called a protector because he knows best who to guard and who not to guard. It is better for people to trust God for protection and preservation from any harm. Therefore, after every effort, I trust Him with my affairs and leave my matters to Him, for He is the Most Merciful of the merciful and the most forgiving of the forgivers. Thus, trust in Him (Esmaeeli, 1986). Other proverbs taken from this Qur'anic hidden proverb are:

"A believer is not stung twice from the same hole".

"To get bitten twice by the same snake from the same hole". This means that a believer is not deceived twice by the same trick. Once, Abu Umar Al-Jahmi betrayed the Prophet (peace be upon him) and broke his promise, causing grief. Then he asked for another chance, which was granted. Again, he broke his promise, causing even more grief. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said that a believer is not deceived twice by the same person. Abu Umar's fate was sealed, and he died a miserable death, cursed by God (p. 700).

Farsi Proverbs:

1. Nobody falls into the same hole twice.
2. Once burned by hot milk, next time will blow on cold water.
3. People who learn from their mistakes won't get hurt twice.
4. A person falls into a hole only once.
5. He who is cautious won't fall twice.
6. You can cross a river only once; next time, find a different path.

In analyzing the translations provided for the hidden proverb within the verse "Shall I trust you again with your brother?" it is clear that identifying the underlying proverb can be challenging. According to Beekman and Callow's (1974) model, both Qarai and GPT-3.5 have rendered a literal translation of the phrase without clarifying the implied proverb. Consequently, the meaning of the proverb is merely presented rather than fully explicated.

#### **4. Results**

As shown in Table 1, Ali Qoli Qarai's translation approach, based on the theoretical frameworks examined in this research, does not align with the second type of strategy for translating idioms and proverbs, as defined by Beekman and Callow (1974). According to their model, there are three strategies for translating idioms and proverbs:

1. Adding an explanation following the proverb to clarify its meaning.
2. Replacing the source language proverb with an equivalent proverb in the target language.
3. Providing the non-figurative meaning of the source language proverb when it is untranslatable.

In this case, Qarai's approach diverges from the second strategy and employs methods outside these prescribed types.

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

	Verse: chapter	Translation strategies
1	2:68	Proverb meaning explained in text
2	2:260	Non-translatable proverb explained literally
3	4:100	Proverb meaning explained in text
4	4:123	Non-translatable proverb explained literally
5	17:7	Non-translatable proverb explained literally
6	29:6	Non-translatable proverb explained literally
7	99:7	Non-translatable proverb explained literally
8	4:111	Non-translatable proverb explained literally
9	7:163	Non-translatable proverb explained literally
10	2:216	Proverb meaning explained in text
11	9:47	Non-translatable proverb explained literally
12	10:39	Proverb meaning explained in text
13	12:64	Proverb meaning explained in text
14	17:110	Proverb meaning explained in text
15	19:75	Non-translatable proverb explained literally
16	22:4	Proverb meaning explained in text
17	25:67	Proverb meaning explained in text
18	71:27	Proverb meaning explained in text
19	2:156	Proverb meaning explained in text
20	109:6	Non-translatable proverb explained literally
21	53:39	Proverb meaning explained in text

In Qarai's translation, the researcher analyzed 21 verses, revealing the following distribution of translation strategies:

- **11 instances (52.3%)** used the strategy of appending an explanation to convey the meaning of the proverb.
- **0 instances (0%)** applied the strategy of replacing the source language proverb with a locally equivalent proverb, which is considered the most natural and dynamic translation approach.
- **10 instances (47.6%)** involved translating the source language proverb as non-translatable, providing only its non-figurative meaning.

These findings indicate that Qarai's translation strategies lean toward a more formal approach. This method either emphasizes the proverb's non-translatability or conveys only its figurative meaning without directly rendering the proverb. A limitation of this approach is that, while it signals the existence of a hidden proverb to both reader and translator, it does not fully capture its deeper or nuanced meanings. Figure 2 visually represents the distribution of Qarai's translation strategies for clarity.

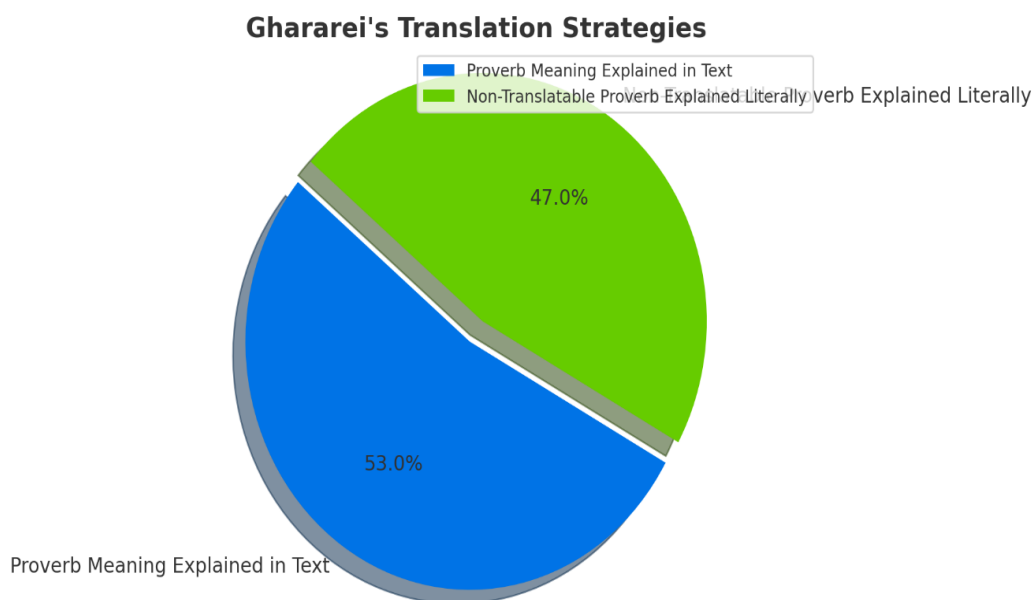


Figure 2. Qarai's translation strategies

Table 2 based on the theoretical frameworks studied in this research, outlines the translation strategies employed by GPT-3.5 in rendering idioms and proverbs, as defined by Beekman and Callow (1974). Their model identifies three primary strategies for translating idioms and proverbs:

1. Introducing the words following the proverb to clarify its meaning.
2. Replacing the source language proverb with an equivalent local proverb.
3. Conveying the non-figurative meaning directly when the source language proverb is untranslatable.

In the analysis of 21 Qur'ānic verses, the researcher identified the following distribution of translation strategies used by GPT-3.5:

- **9 instances (42.8%)** used the strategy of introducing the following words to explain the proverb's meaning.
- **6 instances (28.5%)** replaced the SL proverb with an equivalent local proverb, regarded as the most natural and dynamic strategy.
- **6 instances (28.5%)** conveyed the non-figurative meaning directly, treating the proverb as untranslatable.

Table 2. The list and frequency of translation strategies of GPT-3.5 English translation

	Verse: chapter	Translation strategies
1	2:68	Proverb meaning explained in text
2	2:260	Equivalent local proverb substitution
3	4:100	Equivalent local proverb substitution
4	4:123	Equivalent local proverb substitution
5	17:7	Non-translatable proverb explained literally
6	29:6	Non-translatable proverb explained literally
7	99:7	Non-translatable proverb explained literally
8	4:111	Equivalent local proverb substitution
9	7:163	Non-translatable proverb explained literally
10	2:216	Proverb meaning explained in text
11	9:47	Non-translatable proverb explained literally
12	10:39	Proverb meaning explained in text
13	12:64	Proverb meaning explained in text
14	17:110	Proverb meaning explained in text
15	19:75	Non-translatable proverb explained literally
16	22:4	Equivalent local proverb substitution
17	25:67	Equivalent local proverb substitution
18	71:27	Proverb meaning explained in text
19	2:156	Proverb meaning explained in text
20	109:6	Proverb meaning explained in text
21	53:39	Proverb meaning explained in text

These findings suggest that GPT-3.5, unlike Qarai's more formal approach, demonstrates a capacity for dynamic translation by substituting source language proverbs with equivalent local proverbs in 28.5% of cases. This is significant, as Qarai did not employ this strategy at all when translating implicit proverbs. Additionally, GPT-3.5 displayed an enhanced ability to detect implicit proverbs within the Qur'an, using the "non-translatable" strategy less frequently than Qarai (28.5% for GPT-3.5 versus 0% for Qarai). These differences may be attributed to the complexity of the verses and the prominence of certain proverbs within search engines or training datasets. To illustrate these findings, the pie chart below shows the distribution of translation strategies employed by GPT-3.5.

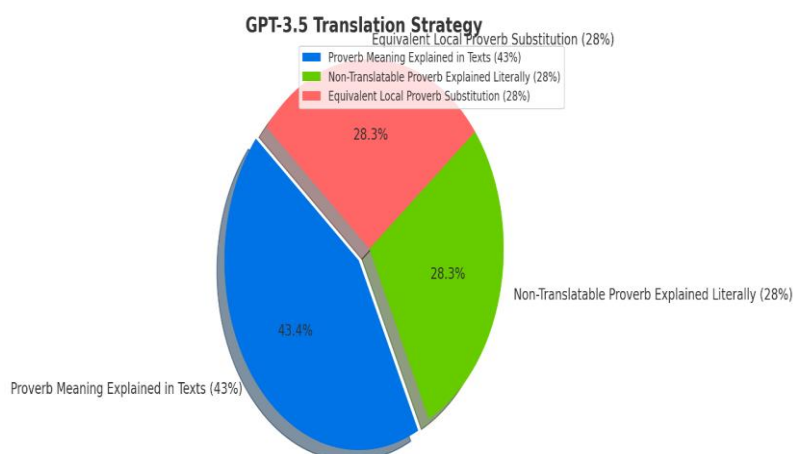


Figure 3. GPT-3.5's translation strategies

## 5. Conclusion

As presented in Table 1, Beekman and Callow's (1974) model for evaluating translation strategies consists of three key parameters. To establish a connection between this model and the dynamism of translation, the most effective strategy is one that resonates with the reader's emotions, making it easier for them to understand and connect with the culture of the source text. Looking at Beekman and Callow's model, it becomes evident that replacing the source language proverb with an equivalent local proverb aligns most closely with dynamic equivalence and localization strategies. Among the other two strategies proposed by Beekman and Callow, which are more aligned with literal translation theories, replacing the SL proverb with an equivalent local proverb proves to be the most effective for translating Qur'ānic hidden proverbs.

In the comparison between Qarai's translation and GPT 3.5, it was found that Qarai used the strategy of rendering the SL proverb's non-figurative meaning 47.6% of the time, while GPT 3.5 employed this strategy only 28.5% of the time. On the other hand, Qarai used the strategy of introducing words following the proverb to explain its meaning 53% of the time, whereas GPT 3.5 used this approach in only 28.5% of cases. The most significant finding, however, was that GPT 3.5 excelled in replacing the SL proverb with an equivalent local proverb, doing so 28.5% of the time, while Qarai did not employ this strategy at all. The study's results confirm that GPT 3.5, a machine translation tool, outperformed Qarai, the human translator, in several aspects. As indicated by the research questions, and based on the analysis of translation strategies and quality, GPT 3.5 demonstrated remarkable progress compared to Qarai in rendering hidden proverbs from the Qur'ān. Among the three translation strategies examined, the strategy of replacing the SL proverb with an equivalent local proverb—which is crucial for translating culture-bound items—was employed much more effectively by GPT 3.5 than by Qarai.

Regarding the comparison between GPT 3.5 and human translation (Qarai) in translating hidden proverbs, it can be concluded that although GPT 3.5 still has a long way to go in fully translating culture-specific items and hidden proverbs, it has made notable strides. The application has shown the ability to partially identify and translate hidden proverbs. However, further development is necessary to enhance its capacity for producing higher-quality translations. In terms of translation strategies, GPT 3.5 has proven more effective than Qarai in using more natural, dynamic strategies for translation. Hidden proverbs in the Qur'ān are among the most challenging and cultural-specific items to identify and translate, making this progress all the more significant. The most important contribution of this research lies in its exploration of new technologies applied to the translation of one of the most sensitive and ideologically significant texts for Muslims. Investigating the potential of new technologies in Qur'ān translation is invaluable for testing their capacity to handle such complex texts.

## References

- Abdul-Raof, H. (2005). *Consonance in the Qur'ān: A conceptual, intertextual and linguistic analysis*. Munich, Germany: Lincom Europa.
- Abdul-Raof, H. (2001). *Qur'ān translation: Discourse, texture and exegesis*. Great Britain: Curzon Press.

- Al-Hilali, T. D., & Muhsin Khan, M. (2000). *Translation of the meanings of the noble Qur'ān in the English language*. Kingdom of Saudi Arabia: King Fahad Complex for the Printing of the Holy Qur'ān.
- Baker, M. (Ed.). (1998). *Routledge encyclopedia of translation studies*. London & New York: Routledge.
- Beekman, J., & Callow, J. (1974). *Translating the Word of God, with Scripture and topical indexes*. United States: Zondervan Publishing House.
- Catford, J. C. (1975). *A linguistic theory of translation*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Esmaeeli, E. (1986). *Amthal Al-Qur'ān*. Tehran, Iran: Osveh Publications.
- Hassan, M. M., & Lutfi Hossein, A. (2021). Semantic analysis of didacticism in Al-Mathal of Quranic verses. *South Asian Research Journal of Arts, Language and Literature*, 3(3), 41–50.
- Khalaf, M. H. (2016). *Translation of explicit Quranic proverbs and their rhetorics into English* (Unpublished dissertation). University of Sains Malaysia.
- Long, L. (Ed.). (2005). *Translation and religion: Holy untranslatable?* Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters Ltd.
- Malmkjaer, K., & Windle, K. (2011). *The Oxford handbook of translation studies*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Nord, C. (1997). *Translation as a purposeful activity*. Manchester, UK: St. Jerome.
- Siddiek, G. A. (2012). Viewpoints in the translation of the Holy Quran. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics & English Literature*, 1(2), 18–25.
- Siu, S. C. (2023). ChatGPT and GPT-4 for professional translators: Exploring the potential of large language models in translation. *ResearchGate*, 1–37.
- Yusuf Ali, A. (2010). *The meaning of the Holy Qur'ān*. USA: Madison Park.