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Translation Strategies for Lexical Verses of Mutasyabihat in Quran NU Online: A Semantic Study of Toshihiko Izutsu and the Ideology of Digital Islamic Translation in Indonesia

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Abstract

The digital transformation in Qur'anic studies has given rise to various platforms that provide the Qur'anic text along with translations and interpretations online. One platform widely used by Indonesian Muslims is Quran NU Online. This study aims to analyze the lexical translation strategies of mutasyabihat verses in Quran NU Online using Toshihiko Izutsu's Qur'anic semantic approach and to identify the underlying translation ideology. The research uses a qualitative method with a content analysis approach. The primary data consists of translations of mutasyabihat verses containing anthropomorphic vocabulary such as istawā, yad, wajh, and qabdah. The analysis is conducted through identifying basic meaning, relational meaning, syntagmatic and paradigmatic relationships, as well as the theological context that shapes the semantic field in the Qur'an. The results show that Quran NU Online applies a lexical translation strategy that tends to preserve the basic meaning of Arabic vocabulary in the translation text, but guides readers toward theological meaning through the tafsir (interpretation) feature. This strategy indicates a moderate translation ideology that aligns with the Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah paradigm. The findings show that the translation of mutasyabihat verses in digital media is not merely a linguistic activity, but also serves as a means of constructing religious understanding in Indonesia's digital public space.

Keywords: lexical translation, mutasyabihat, Quran NU Online, Qur'anic semantics, Toshihiko Izutsu.

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INTRODUCTION

The development of information technology has brought fundamental changes to the religious practices of contemporary Muslim communities. The Qur'an, which was previously accessed through printed copies (*mushaf*), is now available on various digital platforms offering many features, such as verse search, transliteration, translation, interpretation (*tafsir*), and audio recitation. The presence of these digital platforms has expanded public access to Islamic sources and transformed how Muslims interact with the sacred text.

In Indonesia, one of the most influential platforms is Quran NU Online, developed by Nahdlatul Ulama through its NU Online digital media. This platform provides the complete Qur'anic text with Indonesian translations, Latin transliteration, and interpretive

explanations that can be accessed online. The presence of these features shows that Quran NU Online does not only function as a medium for reading the Qur'an, but also as a medium for interpretation and the dissemination of religious understanding.

In Qur'an translation studies, one of the most complex issues is translating *mutasyabihat* verses. *Mutasyabihat* verses are those that have a relatively high level of ambiguity in meaning and open up opportunities for various interpretations. Islamic scholars since the classical period have given special attention to these verses because they relate to matters of faith and theology. Some examples of *mutasyabihat* verses can be found in verses describing God's attributes, such as the terms *istawā* (to settle/establish), *yad* (hand), *wajh* (face), and *qabdah* (grasp). Literal interpretation of these terms may create an anthropomorphic impression of God, so they require a careful interpretive approach.

The issue becomes more complicated when these verses are translated into Indonesian. Translators face a choice between keeping the lexical form of the source language or adjusting the meaning based on theological context. Each translation choice has consequences for the reader's understanding. Therefore, analyzing the lexical translation strategies used in Quran NU Online is important to understand how the meaning of the Qur'an is constructed in digital space.

This study uses Toshihiko Izutsu's Qur'anic semantic theory as the main analytical framework. According to Izutsu, the meaning of a word cannot be understood only based on dictionary definitions, but must be analyzed through its conceptual relationships with other words in the Qur'an's semantic system. This approach allows researchers to identify how a word builds the overall worldview (*weltanschauung*) of the Qur'an.

METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with content analysis to examine the lexical translation strategies of *mutasyabihat* verses in Quran NU Online. The qualitative approach is chosen because this research does not aim to measure phenomena statistically, but rather to understand, interpret, and explain linguistic phenomena that emerge in the process of Qur'an translation. According to Creswell (2022), qualitative research allows researchers to explore the meanings constructed by individuals or groups regarding social and cultural phenomena. In the context of this research, the phenomenon examined is the construction of meaning in *mutasyabihat* verses through digital translation practices.

Content analysis is used because the research objects are texts — namely, the Arabic Qur'anic text and its translation in Quran NU Online. Content analysis allows the researcher to identify, classify, interpret, and extract meaning from the linguistic elements contained in the text. Through this method, the research seeks to reveal how certain lexical choices are used in translating *mutasyabihat* verses and how those choices represent certain ideological tendencies in Qur'an translation.

By design, this research is a library research (*kepustakaan*). Library research was chosen because all data are obtained from written documents, both primary texts and relevant secondary sources. The research does not involve field observations or interviews, but focuses on an in-depth study of texts and scholarly literature related to Qur'anic semantics, translation theory, *mutasyabihat* verses, and digital Islamic studies.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Semantic Analysis of the Word *Istawā* (استوى)

The word *istawā* is one of the most debated *mutasyabihat* vocabulary items in the history of Islamic *tafsir*. This word appears in several verses explaining God's relationship with the Throne (*Arasy*), such as QS. Ṭāhā [20]: 5, QS. Al-A'rāf [7]: 54, and QS. Yūnus [10]: 3.

Data 1

QS. Ṭāhā [20]: 5

الرَّحْمٰنُ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ اسْتَوٰى

Quran NU Online Translation:

"The Most Merciful is seated (*bersemayam*) upon the Throne."

Izutsu's Semantic Analysis

Component	Analysis
Key Word	*istawā*
Basic Meaning	To rise, to be high, to be perfect
Pre-Qur'anic Meaning	To sit or settle on a high place
Qur'anic Relational Meaning	Power, governance, cosmic dominion
Semantic Field	Throne (*Arasy*), Lordship (*Rububiyyah*), Dominion (*Mulk*), Governance (*Tadbir*)
Translation Strategy	Limited literal lexical translation
Ideology	Moderate-Asy'ari

According to Izutsu, a word acquires new meaning when it enters the Qur'an's conceptual system. Therefore, *istawā* in the context of divinity no longer merely refers to a physical action, but becomes a symbol of God's power over all creation. Izutsu's approach emphasizes the importance of the relationship between the word *istawā* and concepts such as *al-mulk* (kingdom/dominion), *al-rabb* (Lord/Sustainer), and *al-amr* (governance/command).

Quran NU Online Translation Strategy

Quran NU Online retains the word "*bersemayam*" (seated/established) as a representation of the basic meaning. However, this literal meaning is not left standing alone because it is further explained through *tafsir*. This strategy shows a combination of semantic translation and *tafsir*-assisted translation.

Semantic Analysis of the Word *Yad* (يد)

Data 2

QS. Al-Fatḥ [48]: 10

يَدُ اللهِ فَوْقَ أَيْدِيْهِمْ

Quran NU Online Translation:

"God's hand is above their hands."

Semantic Analysis

Component	Analysis
Key Word	*yad*
Basic Meaning	Hand
Pre-Qur'anic Meaning	Bodily limb for working
Qur'anic Relational Meaning	Power, support, protection
Conceptual Relations	Pledge of allegiance (*baiat*), help, victory
Translation Strategy	Literal lexical translation
Ideology	Moderate *Tafwidh*

In Izutsu's theory, the word *yad* undergoes a transformation of meaning when used in a divine context. The physical meaning changes into a symbolic concept related to strength and authority. The syntagmatic relationship of *yad* God with the event of the Pledge of Ridwan (*baiat Ridwan*) shows that the intended meaning is divine legitimacy and support for that covenant.

The choice to retain the word "hand" shows faithfulness to the source text. However, the presence of accompanying *tafsir* serves to prevent the reader from understanding the verse in an anthropomorphic way. This pattern shows a tendency toward the *Ahlussunnah* method, which combines *tafwid* (consigning the true meaning to God) and contextual interpretation.

Semantic Analysis of the Word *Wajh* (وجه)

Data 3

QS. Al-Qaṣaṣ [28]: 88

كُلُّ شَيْءٍ هَالِكٌ إِلَّا وَجْهَهُ

Quran NU Online Translation:

"Everything will perish except His face (*wajah-Nya*)."

Semantic Analysis

Component	Analysis
Key Word	*wajh*
Basic Meaning	Face
Pre-Qur'anic Meaning	Front part of a human
Qur'anic Relational Meaning	God's Essence, God's eternality
Semantic Field	Eternality (*Baqa'*), Divinity (*Uluhiyyah*), The Hereafter
Translation Strategy	Lexical retention
Ideology	Interpretive moderation

According to Izutsu's analysis, the word *wajh* in the Qur'an does not only refer to a physical face. In many verses, this word becomes a symbol of God's presence, pleasure, and eternal existence. The paradigmatic relationship between *wajh*, *baqā'* (eternality), and God shows that the focus of meaning shifts from physical aspects toward ontological aspects.

Discussion

The translator retains the word "face" because it is considered closest to the Arabic form. However, the actual meaning is directed toward God's existence and eternality through the *tafsir* explanation.

Semantic Analysis of the Word *Qabdah* (قبضة)

Data 4

QS. Az-Zumar [39]: 67

وَالْأَرْضُ جَمِيعًا قَبْضَتُهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ

Quran NU Online Translation:

"The entire earth will be in His grasp (*genggaman-Nya*) on the Day of Judgment."

Semantic Analysis

Component	Analysis
Key Word	*qabdah*
Basic Meaning	Grasp/handful

Component	Analysis
Pre-Qur'anic Meaning	The action of holding something
Qur'anic Relational Meaning	Absolute power
Semantic Field	Day of Judgment, Power, Majesty
Translation Strategy	Literal with contextual adjustment
Ideology	Moderate Asy'ari

In the Qur'an's semantic system, the word *qabdah* builds a relationship with the concept of God's absolute power over the universe. This relationship makes the physical meaning secondary, while the theological meaning becomes primary.

Reconstruction of the Semantic Field of Mutasyabihat Verses

Based on the analysis of the four main key words, the semantic field can be reconstructed as follows:

Word	Basic Meaning	Relational Meaning
istawā	To sit/establish	To rule, to govern
yad	Hand	Power, help
wajh	Face	God's Essence and eternality
qabdah	Grasp	God's cosmic domination

These findings reinforce Izutsu's thesis that the meaning of the Qur'an is built through an interconnected conceptual network, not solely through dictionary meanings. Relational meaning is more dominant in understanding *mutasyabihat* verses compared to basic meaning.

Analysis of Quran NU Online's Translation Ideology

Based on all the data, three main characteristics of Quran NU Online's translation ideology were found:

1. **Religious Moderation Ideology**

The lexical choices used do not lead to extreme anthropomorphism nor extreme rationalization. The translation occupies a middle position between textual literalism and theological interpretation.

2. **Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah Ideology**

The translation strategy shows closeness to the Asy'ariyah-Maturidiyah theological paradigm, which is the religious foundation of Nahdlatul Ulama. The literal meaning is retained, but the final understanding is guided through *tafsir*.

3. Digital Da'wah (Islamic Outreach) Ideology

Quran NU Online does not only present translations but also builds a Qur'anic understanding ecosystem through the integration of text, transliteration, and digital *tafsir*. This model allows readers to gain more comprehensive access to the meaning of the verses.

CONCLUSION

The results of this research show that the lexical translation strategy of Quran NU Online can be categorized as **semantic lexical translation with theological guidance**. The translator retains the main lexical forms such as "*bersemayam*" (seated), "*tangan*" (hand), "*wajah*" (face), and "*genggaman*" (grasp), but the theological meaning is explained through the *tafsir* feature.

From the perspective of Toshihiko Izutsu's semantics, these *mutasyabihat* words undergo a transformation from basic meaning to relational meaning, forming the Qur'an's worldview (*weltanschauung*). Therefore, translating *mutasyabihat* verses cannot be done only with a dictionary approach but must consider the conceptual network that builds the Qur'anic worldview.

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however small, to the development of Qur'anic translation studies and the understanding of Islamic digital media in Indonesia.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

AA conceptualized the research and designed the overall study framework. BB collected the primary data from the Quran NU Online platform and documented the selected mutasyabihat verses. AA conducted the semantic analysis using Toshihiko Izutsu's theoretical framework, including the identification of basic meanings, relational meanings, and syntagmatic-paradigmatic relationships. BB performed the translation strategy analysis based on Peter Newmark's translation theory and interpreted the translation ideology underlying Quran NU Online. AA drafted the initial manuscript, prepared the tables, and wrote the literature review. BB reviewed, revised, and finalized the manuscript for submission. Both authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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