

Various Problems And Solutions In Translating Between Arabic And Indonesian

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ABSTRACT

This research examines the challenges and strategies involved in translating Arabic texts, particularly Quranic verses, into Indonesian. Given the significant linguistic and cultural differences between Arabic and Indonesian, translation efforts face numerous obstacles, including issues related to morphology, syntax, semantics, and cultural context. These challenges are compounded by the complexity of translating polysemous words, synonyms, idioms, and metaphors. This research employs qualitative methods, focusing on the translation processes, and offers solutions grounded in established translation techniques. By analyzing selected Quranic verses and creatively crafted Indonesian examples, the research highlights the importance of maintaining grammatical integrity, adapting idioms appropriately, and addressing untranslatability and collocations to ensure that translations are accurate and culturally relevant.

Keywords: Translation challenges, Arabic to Indonesian translation, Quranic translation

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INTRODUCTION

Translation serves as a bridge connecting two different languages, the source language (SL) and the target language (TL), allowing users of both languages to mutually understand the meanings present in both languages (Fadhillah et al., 2019). Thus, it is evident that translation aims to transfer meaning from the SL to the TL (Bassnett, 2013). However, in addition to transferring meaning between the SL and TL, translation also aims to convey messages (Bartlet et al., 1988). Translation is performed on texts, with the text using the SL referred to as the source text (ST) (Shuttleworth, 2014), while the text using the TL is called the target text (TT).

Translation between Arabic and Indonesian presents unique challenges. These two languages not only differ in grammatical structure but also exhibit significant differences in cultural aspects, idioms, and stylistic features. Arabic, as a member of the Semitic language family, has a complex morphology and is often inflectional. In contrast, Indonesian, belonging to the Austronesian language family, has a simpler morphology and frequently relies on additional words to convey complex meanings. These differences often make it difficult for translators to find accurate equivalents between the two languages, whether in formal or informal texts.

In addition to these differences, translating from Arabic to Indonesian also faces challenges in semantic and pragmatic aspects. Arabic is known for its richness in synonyms and connotations, which can vary depending on the context of use. In contrast, Indonesian tends to have limitations in terms of synonyms and meaning variations, often leading to

simplification or even distortion of meaning during the translation process. Translators often have to choose between fidelity to the ST and the acceptability and readability of the TT, creating a unique dilemma.

Burnett, as cited in (Faizin, 2011), notes that the first translation of the Quran into a language other than Arabic, specifically Latin, was done by Robert of Ketton in Toledo. This translation by Robert served as a foundation for subsequent translators who translated the Quran into various European languages (Faizin, 2011). However, translations produced by later translators contained numerous errors and significant distortions of meaning and message, as Fatani points out in (Faizin, 2011). This was because these translators did not translate the Quran directly from Arabic but from Latin. Additionally, they included their personal biases against Islam, which led several Muslim figures to undertake their own translations of the Quran (Baihaki, 2017).

Nurtawab, as cited in (Baihaki, 2017), reports that there was a historical rejection of translating the Quran into Indonesian during the times of Sanusi and Mahmud Yunus. This resistance was based on the paradigm that the Quran must always be preserved in its original Arabic language, and therefore should not be translated. However, this paradigm could not be sustained as it impeded the understanding of Muslims who did not speak Arabic. Eventually, Islamic scholars issued a *fatwa* (an official statement or order from an Islamic religious leader) allowing the translation of the Quran, but with the condition that translators must possess a thorough understanding and mastery of Arabic, as noted by Shihab in (Baihaki, 2017). Nevertheless, it is crucial to remember that a translation of the Quran is not a new sacred text to be revered but rather a means to facilitate understanding of Islamic teachings (Syihabuddin, 2017).

We identified several prior studies that were useful in identifying research gaps. First, studies focusing on translation between Arabic and Indonesian have been conducted by (Perdana et al., 2017), (Hanifah et al., 2018), and (Anis et al., 2022). The difference between their research lies in the focus of their studies; Perdana emphasized the importance of understanding collocation in both Arabic and Indonesian before a translator uses these languages as a translation pair, employing Catford's theory of translation and Palmer's theory of collocation. Hanifah, on the other hand, focused on the importance of teaching Arabic-to-Indonesian translation. Her research began with the role of translation in human civilization, provided an overview of Arabic-to-Indonesian translation—largely based on Islamic studies—and covered the significance of teaching translation from Arabic to Indonesian, the objectives of such instruction, the teaching materials used, and the methods of teaching Arabic-to-Indonesian translation.

Meanwhile, Utama & Masrukhi focused on analyzing translation techniques from Arabic to Indonesian. They used religious sermons delivered by Habib Umar bin Hafiz, which were translated into Indonesian by the YouTube channel "Al Murid Ahbab", as the object of their research. The theory they employed for analyzing their subject was the translation techniques outlined by Molina & Albir. Their research found that the object of their research contained two instances of the established equivalent technique, five instances of the amplification technique, two instances of the description technique, four instances of the literal translation technique, and one instance of the reduction technique.

Secondly, qualitative research on the intersection between Arabic and Indonesian has been conducted by (Jannah et al., 2024) and (Riswanda & Subakti, 2022). Both studies utilized literature reviews to analyze their research subjects. The difference between their studies lies in their perspectives on the research subject. Jannah & Herdah approached their research from a lexicographical perspective. They began by discussing the origins of the Arabic language, then moved on to examine Arabic loanwords in Indonesian, classifying them into four categories.

First, loanwords that retain both the pronunciation and meaning of the original Arabic words. Second, loanwords that have different pronunciations but the same meanings as the original words. Third, loanwords that share similar pronunciations with the original Arabic words but have different meanings. Fourth, loanwords that differ in both pronunciation and meaning from the original Arabic words.

Meanwhile, Riswanda & Subakti focused on the Indonesian public's understanding of Arabic loanwords, specifically those related to death. They began by discussing the history of Islam's arrival in Indonesia, from Gujarat, Mecca, to Persia. They then presented Herskovits' views on the differences in meaning involved in acculturation and cultural change. Finally, they discussed ethics from both philosophical and Islamic perspectives, emphasizing the importance of empathy and sympathy. Their research concluded that Indonesian Muslims exhibit empathy when hearing about the death of a relative by reciting *istigfar* (أستغفر الله العظيم) /*ʔastayfir ʔalla:h alʕaḏʕi:m*/, faithful translation (FT): I seek forgiveness from Allah, the Most Great) and *istirja* (إنا لله وإنا إليه راجعون) /*ʔinna: lilla:h wa ʔinna: ʔilajhi ra:dʒiʕu:n*/, FT: Indeed, we belong to Allah, and indeed to Him we will return), phrases commonly spoken in response to a calamity.

We derived three key points from these previous studies. First, these studies focused on specific aspects such as collocation, education, and translation techniques. However, they did not provide a holistic view of translation between Arabic and Indonesian. Second, the previous research adopted a limited perspective, focusing primarily on loanwords and religious contexts, thereby leaving gaps in understanding the broader cultural challenges in translation. Third, there is a need for more applied research on practical translation issues beyond theoretical discussions, including case studies and real-world examples.

In this research, we present four major points of novelty. First, unlike Perdana's (2017) research, which focused on collocation in translation, our research will explore a broader range of linguistic issues in translation. Second, while (Anis et al., 2022; Hanifah et al., 2018) delved into specific areas of education and translation techniques, our research will investigate the practical challenges faced by translators. Third, building on the studies of (Anis et al., 2022; Riswanda & Subakti, 2022), our research will examine how cultural nuances can influence translation between Arabic and Indonesian. Fourth, our research will provide solutions to address theoretical and practical challenges, translation techniques, and cross-cultural understanding.

METHOD

We chose Quranic verses as examples of Arabic text for two reasons: our familiarity with the Quran and our desire to highlight the challenges of translating these verses into Indonesian. For the Indonesian examples, we creatively composed original text. This research

follows a qualitative approach based on five characteristics outlined by Bogdan & Biklen. First, the researcher serves as the key instrument, emphasizing their expertise in the subject. Second, the research is descriptive, focusing on words and images rather than numbers. Third, it prioritizes process over outcome, with data collection continuing until it is deemed sufficient. Fourth, data analysis is conducted inductively, and finally, the research emphasizes understanding the meaning behind observable phenomena. The research steps began by identifying potential translation issues between Arabic and Indonesian. We then selected relevant Quranic verses and crafted Indonesian examples when necessary. Finally, we proposed solutions to translation challenges using techniques from our literature review.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Morphological Problems

There are several issues related to the morphology of both languages we have chosen as our objects of research, namely Arabic and Indonesian. As these languages have different origins, translators need to be astute in recognizing the morphological differences between them. The most crucial aspect is the need to be aware of the incongruities at the sentence level involving variations in word order. For example, consider the verb *فعل* /faʕala/ in the following excerpt from Quran Surah Al-A'raf: 155: ... *أَتُهْلِكُنَا بِمَا فَعَلَ السُّفَهَاءُ مِنَّا*.... /ʔatuhlikuna: bima: faʕala ʔassufaha:ʔ minna:/.

This verb in the verse excerpt cannot be directly translated as *mengerjakan* (FT: to do) because it is a perfective verb and is bound to the third-person plural human pronoun. To translate this, we propose two solutions. First, maintain its form as a verb, translating the phrase as *apakah Engkau membinasakan kami atas apa yang telah orang-orang bodoh kerjakan di antara kami?* (FT: will You destroy us for what the foolish among us have done?). Second, transform it into a nominal form, translating it as ... *perbuatan orang-orang bodoh*.... (FT: ... the actions of the foolish....).

1. Syntactic Problems

Particles

a. Interrogative

In Arabic, there are interrogative particles that can be faithfully translated into Indonesian, found in various verses of the Quran. For example, *هل* /hal/ meaning *apakah* (literal translation (LT): do/did) in Surah Al-Ma'idah: 59-60, *متى* /mata:/ meaning *kapan* (LT: when) in Surah Al-Baqarah: 214, *كيف* /kajfa/ meaning *bagaimana* (LT: how) in Surah Al-Baqarah: 28, and *أين* /ʔajna/ meaning *di mana* (LT: where) in Surah Al-An'am: 22. However, there are also particles that appear to be interrogative but are not, such as *ما* /ma:/ in Surah Al-Baqarah: 26. Meanwhile, Indonesian translators aiming to translate sentences into Arabic must exercise caution when encountering the interrogative particle *apa* (LT: what) as it is bound to the word class that follows. For instance, if one wants to translate *kamu ingin makan apa?* (FT: what do you want to eat?), it can be rendered as *ماذا تفضل من الأطعمة* /ma:ða: tufadʕdʕil minalʔatʕima/. However, if one wants to translate *kau sedang menanam pohon apa?* (FT: what kind of tree are you planting?), it can be translated as *ما الشجرة زرعتها* /ma: ʔaffadzara zaraʕtaha:/.

2. Negation and Affirmation

In Arabic grammar, there is a particle that functions to both negate and affirm, namely لا /la:/. A translator intending to translate a sentence containing the particle لا /la:/, such as in Surah Al-Baqarah: 2 or Surah Al-Baqarah: 6, must carefully observe what follows this particle. If the particle precedes a noun and renders it accusative, as in Surah Al-Baqarah: 2, the particle will mean *tidak ada* (LT: there is no). However, if the particle precedes a verb without altering its mood, as in Surah Al-Baqarah: 6, the particle will mean *tidak* (LT: not).

Meanwhile, particles that function to negate are highly dependent on the class of words that follows them, so translators intending to translate a sentence containing these particles must examine them carefully and cautiously. For example, the particle لن /lan/, meaning *tidak akan pernah* (LT: will never), always precedes an imperfective verb, as in Surah Al-Baqarah: 55, and this particle will put the verb in the subjunctive mood. Additionally, the particle لم /lam/, meaning *tidak* (LT: did not), always precedes an imperfective verb, as in Surah Al-Baqarah: 6, and this particle will put the verb in the jussive mood. Besides these two particles, there is also the particle ما /ma:/, meaning *tidak* (LT: not), which always precedes a perfective verb, as written in Surah Al-Baqarah: 57.

a. Word Order

A striking difference in sentences between Arabic and Indonesian lies in their word order. Although word order in Arabic can begin with the subject (S) followed by the complement (C), known as *جملة اسمية /dzumla ismijja/*, it can also begin with the verb (V) followed by S, known as *جملة فعلية /dzumla fi'lijja/*. Translators intending to translate Arabic sentences into Indonesian must be astute and cautious regarding the differences between these two types of sentences. Moreover, they must also alter the word order to produce a translation that is acceptable to the target readers. For example, if one wants to translate Surah Al-Haqqah: 4, *كذبت ثمود وعاد بالقارعة /kaḏḏabat ḥamu:du wa ʿa:d bilqa:riʿa/*, which begins with V, it can be translated as *kaum Samud dan 'Ad telah mendustakan hari kiamat* (FT: the people of Thamud and 'Ad denied the Day of Judgment). In addition to changing the word order, translators translating this verse also need to add *kaum* (LT: people of) because target readers may not be familiar with Thamud and 'Ad.

b. Adjectives

Adjectives in Arabic depend on whether the noun is definite or indefinite. If the noun is definite, the adjective will also be definite. However, if the noun is indefinite, the adjective will also be indefinite. Additionally, adjectives in Arabic are highly dependent on the gender and number of the preceding noun. First, if the preceding noun is masculine singular, the adjective for that noun will be masculine singular.

Second, if the preceding noun is feminine singular, the adjective for that noun will be feminine singular. Third, if the preceding noun is masculine plural, the adjective will be masculine plural. Fourth, if the preceding noun is feminine plural, the adjective will be feminine plural. Fifth, if the preceding noun is a non-human plural, the adjective will be feminine singular.

Furthermore, adjectives in Arabic also depend on the case of their nouns. First, if the noun is in the nominative case, the adjective will be in the nominative case. Second, if the noun is in the accusative case, the adjective will be in the accusative case. Third, if the noun is in the genitive case, the adjective will be in the genitive case.

These rules regarding adjectives in Arabic should make translators astute and cautious when translating from Indonesian into Arabic. For example, if one wants to translate the sentence *saya telah pergi ke Bogor bersama seorang mahasiswa yang rajin* (FT: i went to Bogor with a diligent male student), they must translate it as *ذهبت إلى بوجور مع طالب مجتهد* /ʔdahabtu ʔila: bu:dzu:r maʕa tʕa:libin mudztaħidin/.

c. Semantic Problems

Semantic problems arise when a word, phrase, or term cannot be understood directly and clearly due to misunderstanding or because it cannot be found in standard dictionaries. Below are some common semantic issues encountered in translation.

3. Polysemy

Polysemy refers to a linguistic phenomenon where a single form has multiple meanings. Falkum & Vicente, as cited in (Adebisi & ADEYEMI, 2023), argue that polysemy can typically be recognized when a single word form is associated with two or more meanings that are related to the word itself. For example, the verb *رشد* /*raʕad*/ and its derived forms have four meanings as outlined by Matsna in (Fajar & Sobari, 2022): *rasio* (LT: reason), *sadar* (LT: awareness), *dewasa* (LT: maturity), and *petunjuk* (LT: guidance). The issue of polysemy arises when a translator assumes that a word has only one meaning.

a. Synonymy

Synonymy, according to Edmonds & Hirst in (Essraa & BERRIM, 2017), is one of the many fundamental linguistic phenomena that can affect the structure of the lexicon. Synonyms pose challenges related to the degree of closeness or the absolute identification of the meanings of synonymous words when compared to each other, either in the same language or across different languages (SL and TL). For example, the noun *kebaikan* (LT: goodness) has three meanings in the Quran. First, the noun *حسنة* /*ħasana*/, which appears 27 times (Hizbullah & Muta'ali, 2020); two of these are found in Surah Al-Baqarah: 201 (Hizbullah & Muta'ali, 2020). Second, the noun *خيرات* /*xajra:t*/, which appears nine times (Hizbullah & Muta'ali, 2020, p. 231); one of these is found in Surah Al-Mu'minin: 61 (Hizbullah & Muta'ali, 2020, p. 232). Third, the noun *طيبات* /*tʕajjiba:t*/, which appears 13 times (Hizbullah & Muta'ali, 2020, p. 231); one of these is found in Surah Al-A'raf: 157 (Hizbullah & Muta'ali, 2020, p. 233).

b. Idioms

In idiom, according to Mir as cited in (Nadhifah, 2023), is a combination of words whose meaning cannot be understood from the meanings of the individual words in the combination. Classes of words that have idiomatic meanings in the

Quran include noun-noun, verb-noun, noun-particle, verb-particle, and particle-noun combinations (Nadhifah, 2023). An example of a noun-noun combination is *ابن السبيل* /*ibn ṣassabi:l*/, which means *anak laki-laki di jalanan itu* (LT: son of the road) found in Surah Al-Baqarah: 177. Meanwhile, an example of a verb-noun combination can be found in Surah Al-Qasas: 13, *تقر عينها* /*taqarr ʿajnuha:l*/, which means *telah menyenangkan matanya* (LT: her eye became pleased). Another example is *أكيد كيدا* /*ʾaki:d kajdan*/, which means *aku sedang membuat rencana tipu daya yang sebenarnya tipu daya* (LT: I am devising a plot, which is indeed a plot) found in Surah At-Tariq: 16.

c. Metaphors

A metaphor is a combination of words that conveys meaning indirectly. Metaphors often pose challenges for translators. For example, *في قلوبهم مرض* /*fi qulu:bihim maradʿ*/, which means *ada sebuah penyakit di dalam hati mereka* (LT: there is a disease in their hearts) in Surah Al-Baqarah: 10. The metaphor in this verse is implicit, with the word *مرض* /*maradʿ*/, which means *sebuah penyakit* (LT: a disease), implying *kemunafikan* (LT: hypocrisy).

4. Solutions to Translation Problems

We all understand that every problem requires a solution. Identifying translation problems is futile unless solutions are provided. Without solutions to these problems, translators would cease their work. In our research, we propose solutions that are clear, logical, feasible, reliable, applicable, and contextual. The following are our suggested solutions to address translation problems, based on the categories below.

a. Untranslatability

The first translation problem from Arabic to Indonesian is untranslatability. This issue arises when a term or concept familiar in the SL community does not exist or is unknown in the TL community. This problem can be divided into four types: cultural, geographical, religious, and linguistic. To address this issue, we recommend the following approaches.

First, apply the addition translation procedure. For example, the two words in Surah Al-Haqqah: 4, “*ثمود وعاد*” /*ṯamu:d wa ʿa:d*/”, are unfamiliar to target readers, so translators should add the word *kaum* (LT: people). Second, apply the descriptive translation procedure. For instance, the word “*إرم*” /*ʾiram*/” in Surah Al-Fajr: 7 refers to an area inhabited by the people of Prophet Hud. When translating this verse, a translator should provide a brief description of Iram by adding (*ibu kota negeri kaum Nabi Hud*) (FT: the capital of the land Prophet Hud's people) or (*ibu kota negeri kaum 'Ad*) (FT: the capital of the land 'Ad people).

b. Translation of Idioms or Metaphorical Meanings

When a translator encounters a term containing an idiom or metaphorical meaning in the source language, they can choose one of three translation procedures. First, they can translate it faithfully (Dewi & Wijaya, 2021, pp. 82 and 86). Second, they can translate it using a metaphor or idiom from the TL (Dewi & Wijaya, 2021, pp. 83 and 87). Third, they can translate it semantically (Dewi & Wijaya, 2021, pp. 85 and 89).

We use the phrase *ابن السبيل* /*ibn ṣassabi:l*/ in Surah Al-Baqarah: 177 as an example of applying the faithful idiom translation procedure. If a translator chooses this approach, they can render the idiom as *orang yang berada dalam perjalanan* (FT: a person who is traveling). Meanwhile, the noun *مرحاً* /*marāḥan*/ (LT: with arrogance) in the verse *ولا تمش في الأرض مرحاً* /*wa la: tamṣi filʔardʔ marāḥan*/ from Surah Al-Isra: 37 serves as an example of applying the idiom-to-idiom translation procedure in the TL. In this case, the translator can translate it as *dan janganlah kamu berjalan di atas bumi ini dengan tinggi hati* (FT: and do not walk upon the earth with high horse). Additionally, it can also illustrate the semantic idiom translation procedure; if a translator wishes to translate it semantically, they might render it as *dan janganlah kamu hidup dalam keadaan sombong* (FT: and do not live arrogantly).

Meanwhile, we use *في قلوبهم مرض* /*fi: qulu:bihim maradʔ*/ in Surah Al-Baqarah: 10 as an example to illustrate the procedure for translating metaphorical meanings. First, if a translator aims to translate the metaphor faithfully, they might render it as *di dalam hati-hati mereka ada penyakit* (FT: there is a disease in their hearts). Second, if they wish to translate the metaphor using a metaphor from the TL, they could translate it as *mereka adalah orang-orang bermuka dua* (FT: they are two-faced). Third, if the translator opts for a semantic translation, they might translate it as *di dalam hati mereka ada kemunafikan* (FT: there is hypocrisy in their hearts).

c. Text Type

The type of text a translator is tasked with can also pose problems if it doesn't align with the translator's capabilities. For example, if the Quran is to be translated, the translator must meet several criteria. First, they should be a Muslim, as the Quran is the holy book of Islam, so they should be familiar with it. Second, they must be trustworthy, both in behavior and background, so that target readers have no doubts when reading their translation. Third, they must have a good understanding of the meaning, message, and grammatical rules of both the SL and TL to avoid misinterpretation in the translation. Fourth, they should have peers of equal or superior quality in the same profession to review their translation before publication.

d. Understanding Collocation

O'Dell and McCarthy, as cited in (Trang et al., 2021), argue that collocation refers to the natural combination of words, both semantically and syntactically, as used by native speakers of a language. Their definition of collocation suggests that if a translator lacks a good understanding of collocation, the resulting translation may be less acceptable to the target audience. For example, in Indonesian, the phrase *pria tampan* (FT: handsome man) is very familiar. However, if a translator were to translate this phrase into Arabic as *رجل جميل* /*radzul dzami:l*/, the translation would be less acceptable to the target audience. This is because the word *رجل* /*radzul*/, meaning *pria* (LT: man) in Arabic, typically collocates with the word *وسيم* /*wasi:m*/ . Thus, the translation would be more acceptable to the target audience if rendered as *رجل وسيم* /*radzul wasi:m*/.

CONCLUSION

The translation of Arabic to Indonesian presents various linguistic challenges, including morphological, syntactic, and semantic issues due to significant differences between the two languages, such as word order, the use of particles, and adjective placement. Additionally, translating polysemous words, synonyms, idioms, and metaphors adds complexity for translators. To address these challenges, it is essential to apply contextually appropriate translation procedures, maintaining the grammatical integrity of the source language (SL) or adapting idioms to match the target language (TL)'s cultural context. Furthermore, untranslatability and understanding collocations require careful attention to ensure the translation is both accurate and culturally relevant. Future research should focus on conducting corpus-based studies to identify common errors, investigating cultural nuances' impact on translation accuracy, and exploring the effectiveness of translation techniques for handling complex linguistic phenomena like polysemy and metaphorical language. Additionally, examining collocation awareness to improve translation acceptability and naturalness, and evaluating machine translation systems' ability to manage Arabic-to-Indonesian intricacies, could provide valuable insights for enhancing translation quality.

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