

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF COLOR CONNOTATIONS ACROSS TRANSLATED VERSIONS OF THE HOLY QURAN

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Abstract: *The Noble Quran, a rich source of color symbolism, uses colors to address various aspects of human existence and life after death. These colors convey positive and negative undertones, aesthetic or moral lessons, and symbolic implications. This paper compares the color connotations across the various translations of the Holy Quran; it shows how the linguistic and cultural differences hint at the varied interpretations that may differ in presenting the symbolic meanings or theological concepts to readers. This study delves into the intricate world of translation strategies, examining the approaches of four prominent translators in rendering the nuanced connotations of colors into English. The study compiled a corpus of Colors in the Holy Quran from Pickthall (1930) and Sahih International (1997) translations, representing Muslim Translation and non-Muslim translations by Arberry (1955) and Dawood (2014). The study highlighted the frequency of explicit colors in the Holy Quran and compared the four translations and the strategies used in rendering the connotations of colors. The study addressed the following question: How do different translation strategies impact Muslim and non-Muslim translators' rendering of color symbolism in the Noble Quran? It was found that white is the most frequent color, followed by green, black, yellow, blue, and red. Translators employed literal translation, addition, free translation, domestication, and omission. The study also revealed an intertextual reference to the Old Testament in Dawood's translation, adding another layer of complexity to the analysis. This paper contributes to understanding how translation strategies, including literal translation, domestication, and intertextual references, influence interpretation related to color symbolism in the Quran and bring cultural and religious nuance to the text.*

Keywords: *Translation strategies, colors in the Quran, Muslim translations of the Quran, non-Muslim translations of the Quran, connotations of colors*

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Introduction

Symbolism emerges as a consequence of the advancement and evolution of civilization. Therefore, the significance of each color varies across different countries and religions based on the geographical origin of the culture. Colors profoundly impact our interactions with the environment and our perception of it, providing us with a vivid and comprehensive understanding of our surroundings. This assumption is exemplified in our everyday actions, such as donning vivid attire, inhabiting walls adorned with paintings, and conforming to the hues of the rainbow. Nevertheless, we typically overlook the inherent characteristics of colors and their influence on our existence (Al-Shraideh & El-Sharif, 2019; Al-Taher & El-Sharif, 2021).

Our understanding of color and its impact is based on its categorizations and connotations. It is a visual perception attribute combining chromatic and achromatic contents, such as black, green, red, pink, etc. Colors convey meanings beyond only the colors themselves, reflecting the traditions of their respective countries (Dou & Liu, 2023; Al-Taher, 2014). Colors are used to give sense in many languages. There are several expressions where color is pivotal in each language. Sometimes, the intended meaning is lost when translated, especially when there is no equivalent in the other languages. The meaning and language frequently shift, so the translation of colors is challenging due to their vast connotations (Al-Shaikhli, 2012).

Numerous implications and meanings have been attached to color terminology, many of which are not necessarily a result of straightforward and obvious color denotation. Therefore, color descriptors have a more significant role than just describing an object's physical look in attributive implications; they also play a role in creating symbols for messaging and cultural ideas that can be universal or culture-specific and express abstract impressionistic characteristics (Al-Shraideh & El-Sharif, 2019; Sahan & Abdulkadhim, 2021).

Color-based expressions encompass idiomatic and proverbial phrases that are associated with specific hues. These expressions are difficult to understand due to their intertextuality, as their language structure and proposition are irreconcilable (Sahan & Abdulkadhim, 2021). Therefore, the translator must pick the most appropriate strategy when translating color expressions. Accurate translation strategies may only be considered after proper recognition, comprehension, and analysis of color expression. Because their literal meaning may not always be obvious, the ability to recognize color expressions is crucial. Before considering a translation, the translator must determine the sentence's intended meaning containing the color expression (Al-Shraideh & El-Sharif, 2019). For instance, the clothing we wear can convey signals or codes. In some cultures, ladies wear black clothes at funerals to signify their mourning or white to signify happiness. These universal interpretations of color show

how important color is in expressing traditional codes, pedagogic ideas, and ideological statements (Sharpe, 1974). For instance, we perceive that white denotes innocence, holiness, cleanliness, and purity; green – nature, calmness, and security; red – love, passion, and rage; black – mystery; and blue – dignity, poise, and reserve (Al Bzour, 2015; Taha & Abdel-Azim, 2012).

The use of color in a language or culture highlights its distinctiveness. For instance, red relates to love and passion in some cultures but danger and fury in others. Black refers to skin color and other connotations and uses, such as black night, while white refers to light and purity. Additionally, in the stock market, the Chinese use red for price hikes while green for the slowdown, which contrasts with the colors of the stock market in the UK (Al-Shaikhli, 2012; Meqdad et al., 2023). Therefore, it is crucial to be conscious of the cultural associations of colors while translating from one culture to another (Khodjayeva, 2021; Salim & Mehawesh, 2013).

Some linguists and translators find it preferable to leave color terms in a text omitted, which might be seen as an accepted proper translation strategy practice, rather than searching for an adequate translation equivalent that may remain misleading (Uusküla, 2019). Despite the translator's best efforts, it might have a different cultural meaning in the target language (Uusküla, 2019). Lyons (1981) emphasized that it is hard to translate color terminology using word-for-word between languages because no word in one language exactly matches a phrase in the other. Finding acceptable equivalents in the target and source languages that neatly correspond to each other is challenging because color is frequently a culture- and language-specific term (Khodjayeva, 2021; Almahasees & Al-Taher, 2021).

Likewise, Davies (1997) indicated that although culture might impact how people name colors, we perceive the world similarly. Color may create a different degree of mental cognition. This symbolism derives from contemporary and cultural surroundings. On the other hand, green may also represent fortune, wealth, and greed – all of which have nothing to do with greenery.

Symbolism of Colors in Cultures

The significance of color symbolism in diverse cultures is substantial and exhibits considerable variation on a global scale. The utilization of colors holds significant importance in the representation of emotions, beliefs, and societal conventions. For example, red, frequently linked to passion and excitement in Western societies, can symbolize fortune, attractiveness, and affluence in Eastern and Asian cultures. Conversely, in Latin America, it is associated with emotion and religious beliefs (Buether, 2017). Likewise, blue, commonly associated with trust and tranquility, can symbolize immortality and restoration in Eastern/Asian societies, security and safeguarding in the Middle East, and

the sky and liberty in Latin America. The different interpretations of colors globally are highlighted by the numerous cultural variances and variations in color symbolism. Furthermore, it is worth noting that hues such as yellow, white, black, green, and purple possess unique symbolic significance within many cultural contexts. Yellow epitomizes vitality, joy, and peril, embodying bravery and affluence in Eastern/Asian societies and affluence and spirituality in Latin America. In Western civilizations, white is commonly linked to purity and tranquility, but in most Eastern cultures, it is associated with death and grief. Black, commonly associated with refinement and formality in Western societies, can represent age and manhood in Africa. In most cultures, green is associated with nature and can have contradictory connotations, such as luck and progress in the Western world. In contrast, in South America, it denotes death. The color purple, commonly linked to monarchy in Western societies, can represent affluence in Eastern civilizations (Alharbi, 2023).

The Holy Quran and Translation

The Holy Quran is the sacred book of Muslims, revealed from Allah to His Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings be upon him) through the angel Gabriel. It was initially revealed in Arabic, and at a later stage, it was written at the time of the prophet's companions, Abu Baker, Omar, and Othman, and then translated into several languages, as among which English. It is organized into 114 chapters reflecting Allah's message to humankind (World Civilization, 2023).

Translating and interpreting the meaning of the Quran has long been necessary to spread the message of Islam to humanity. Prophet Muhammad's companions spread Islam to the populace when He was alive. The need for a translation of the Quran is a logical outcome of the growing Muslim population and the spread of Islam throughout the world (Qassem, 2021; Almahasees et al., 2022). Since the sixteenth century, there has been an increasing interest in translating the meaning of the Quran. Alexander's first English translation was done in 1649, followed by George Sales in 1734, J.M. Rodwell in 1861, and A.Y. Ali in 1934. Additionally, Muslim and non-Muslim translators have recently produced many translations of the Quran's meaning (Mohammed, 2022).

IslamAwakened (2023) lists the translations of the Holy Quran over the last 100 years. It shows 66 complete translations of the meaning of the Holy Quran into English. This study has chosen four translations by Muslims and non-Muslims as the corpus of the current study.

According to IslamAwakened (2023), there are sixty-six accepted translations conducted by Muslims, and non-Muslims or Orientalists did ten translations. The study has chosen two of the most popular translations of the Holy Quran by Muslims and two by non-Muslims. The two translations by Muslims are *The*

Meaning of the Glorious Quran by Marmaduke Pickthall in 1930 and *Sahih International* by Abul Qasim Publishing House in Saudi Arabia in 1997. These are considered the most common translations by Muslims (Qudah-Refai, 2014). The other translations were Arthur John Arberry's *The Koran Interpreted* (1955) and Nessim Joseph Dawood's *The Koran* (2014).

Literature Review

The relationship between the Arabic language and Arabic culture is prevalent in the discourse of the Quran. Muslims consider the Quran the holy book of the all-powerful God, Allah, who revealed it to the Arab Prophet Muhammad in Arabic to guide humanity. The Quran contains many instructions regarding the laws of Islam, moral principles, and accounts of the creation and history of ancient civilizations. As a result, the Quran has several themes and issues that are explained verbally to followers who are reading or listening (Sharpe, 1974).

The literature on the meanings and connotations of colors in the Quran has primarily concentrated on the semantic analysis of color terminology and their meanings and connotations (Al-Domi, 2015; Al-Bzour, 2015). Almost no study thoroughly analyzes the translation of color connotations by Muslims and non-Muslim translators. The fact that there are so many studies in which colors are examined should motivate researchers to investigate how these colors are perceived and explained, as well as what functions they play as sign systems in the Quran's discourse. Even though numerous studies have looked at the semantics of color terminology in the Quran, this study provides a meticulous translation of connotations in the Holy Quran. Therefore, the study addressed the frequencies of colors in the Holy Quran by compiling a simple corpus and the translation strategies used by Muslim and non-Muslim translators to render the connotation of colors in the Holy Quran.

Al-Shawi (2014) investigated the usage of color in the Holy Quran. He indicated explicit and implicit references in the Holy Quran to colors. He showed that the Holy Quran uses colors in symbolic ways to convey aesthetic or moral goals, and these uses have significant implications. Since colors have a variety of roles in both sensuous and ethical contexts, the most well-known colors are referenced in verses (Ayat). They have many connotations that influence how the audience perceives them. The findings indicate that the translator uses the domestication and foreignization strategies almost equally while translating ST into TT. Al-Domi (2015) also investigated the translation of colors in the Holy Quran. He indicated that colors are used in the Quran to show the significance of colors, draw attention to diversity and difference, and spread throughout the universe to encompass everything around us, even skin hues. When reviewing

colors in Islam, Bin Abu Bakar (2015) indicated that green, white, and black are the primary colors that reflect innocence, purity, and holiness.

Alasmari, Watson, and Atwel (2017) argued that colors cause us to see and interact with the environment differently, making everything around us appear more vivid and plentiful. This idea is reflected in what we do every day, such as wearing colorful apparel, residing and working within painted walls, and even imitating the colors of the rainbow. But we rarely think about the nature of colors and why they have such an effect.

Rafiei Rad (2021) addressed translating the expressive meanings in the Holy Quran. The results of this study revealed that color expressions in the Quran carry deep symbolic meanings. For example, white in verse 106 of Surah Al-Imran symbolizes endurance and stability, while bright yellow in verse 69 of Surah Al-Baqarah conveys a sense of refreshment and joy. Blue (bold blue) in verse 102 of Surah Taha represents guilt, and black in verse 102 of Surah Al-Baqarah symbolizes remorse. Additionally, verse 187 of Surah Zumr and verse 106 of Surah Al-Imran describe how color expressions show lying and blasphemy in a person's face. In contrast, verse 17 of Surah Zukhruf reflects fury, and verse 41 of Surah Abbas emphasizes black's capacity to express melancholy.

Kassem and AlAnsary (2022) conducted a corpus analysis on the frequency, occurrences, and concordances of the colors in the Holy Quran using AntConc and a Simple Corpus Tool. They showed that the colors used in the Quran create harmony between the words and content of each verse. The Quran uses such color cues to communicate specific social or religious themes to the Muslim and Arab populations for whom it was revealed. Green has taken on a special significance since it evokes positive associations with wealth, abundant existence, happiness, and optimism.

Anis et al. (2022a) explored the ideology of translating from Arabic into English an Islamic moral text entitled Al-Hikam through the textual equivalence analysis of themes or old information and rhemes or new information. Previous research up to that moment has not addressed the ideological dimensions of translating Islamic religious texts. The data were based on close observations and focus group discussions with a professional translator and showed an intimate relationship between translation ideology, method, and technique. The results contribute to understanding how ideology shapes translation choices in Islamic Sufi texts.

Anis et al. (2022b) examined the role of understanding Arabic phrases in creative writing development, particularly in prose and poetry. It investigates how phrase construction in Arabic influences translation and explores three key areas: the relationship between phrase variants and creative writing, the translation techniques used for these phrases, and the strategies employed. Data

were collected from modern Arabic literature, including works by Zaidan and Adonis, and analyzed using Arabic phrase theory and phraseological features. The findings reveal various translation strategies, such as metaphorization and phrasal reconstruction, influencing the creative writing process. Unlike previous research, this study comprehensively analyzes translation techniques and strategies for Arabic phrases.

Elewa (2022) explored the meanings of color in the two distinct and unconnected languages of Arabic and English. He applied Peirce's semiotic model of sign interpretation to analyze the translation of colors from Arabic into English. The Quran's most fundamental colors are present, like in other languages. However, some colors have various semiotic meanings. According to the study, the surroundings and culture of the early Muslims who received the Quran directly from the Prophet are closely related to the colors in the Quran and Arabic in general. The source material may not allow these colors to be perceived favorably or adversely by users of other languages, depending on where they are positioned in their culture

The novelty of current research lies in comparing how Muslim and non-Muslim translators handle the subtlety of the implications involved in color symbolism in the Noble Quran. For the first time, it brings to the fore the various translation strategies each translator employs, such as literal translation, addition, domestication, and omission. It reveals intertextual references to the Old Testament in the non-Muslim translation to add another complexity. It thus presents a new insight into the cultural and religious implications of color in Quranic translation, which has not been widely pursued.

Methodology

Corpus Compilation

The corpus includes only Quranic verses explicitly mentioning color terms in this study. This corpus was compiled through a systematic search in the whole Quran to find and extract verses containing references to colors, such as white, black, green, red, yellow, and others. This search involved the Arabic Quranic text and four selected English translations to consider various perspectives. The four selected translations for this analysis are those of Dawood, Marmaduke Pickthall, Arberry, and Saheeh International. These translations were chosen because of their theological diversity, temporal range from classical to contemporary translations, and academic and religious relevance. The corpus was constructed by collecting all the verses explicitly mentioning the color terms in Arabic and their translations in English. Each verse was organized in a tabular form to facilitate comparison and analysis.

Data Selection

Data selected for this research were based on identifying all Quranic verses that directly relate to colors. These color terms were identified from the original Arabic text and compared with their translations in four English versions of the Quran. First, the verses with common colors such as white, black, green, red, yellow, and other symbolic colors were selected. The chief criterion was that the color should appear explicitly in the verse, whatever the context: related to physical objects, natural phenomena, or symbolic/metaphorical usages. Special attention is paid to those verses where colors bear considerable theological or symbolic weight since such cases present a translational dilemma between literal and functional approaches. The selection analyzed the colors that occur more frequently and the deeper nuances with which these colors have permeated the Quranic context.

Data Analysis

A qualitative comparison of selected verses of the four translations about how color connotations have been carried over in English was undertaken in this study. In particular, it was noted whether the translators chose a formal equivalent – that is, translating the color term literally, using the same meaning as in Arabic – or a functional equivalent, which would be the closest to the connotation of the color in the target language’s culture. Differing translation choices from the original symbolic meanings were underlined, as such shifts could reflect either cultural adaptation (domestication) or an attempt to preserve the source Arabic context through foreignization. Further, the consistency of such translation strategies across versions was explored, and any variation or pattern that may emerge was discussed, taking into account external religious or cultural influences, specifically from other sacred texts. The present exhaustive review, therefore, aimed at establishing how effective the translation strategies were in bringing out the intended meaning of the Quranic colors and if the translators’ choices contributed to or detracted from the overall comprehension of the text.

Analysis and Discussion

The analysis of the Quranic verses that contain direct colors indicated that thirty-three recurrences of colors were mentioned in the Holy Quran. It is found that the most frequent colors mentioned in the Holy Quran are white, green, black, yellow, blue, and red, as shown in Figure 1 below. The color white has the most hits by eleven times. Blue and red are the least mentioned colors in the Holy Quran at one time each.

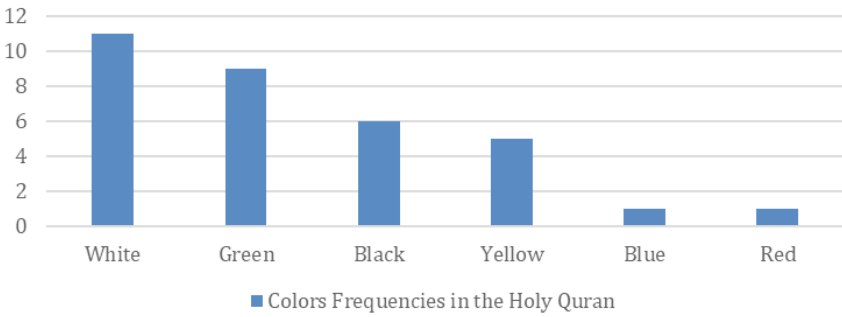


Figure 1. *The frequency of the explicit colors in the Holy Quran*

White

White stands out from other colors regarding its purpose, make-up, characteristics, and importance. Some Arabic culture-related proverbs and expressions refer to colors like white hands, a white face, and a white flag. They are examples of the relationship between color and human behavior. White is unique for its purpose, composition, nature, and symbolic significance. In the Arabic culture, the color white signifies purity, virtue, and good human attributes, as evidenced by different proverbs and sayings, including white hands, which means generosity; a “white face” means honor and dignity, while a white flag is raised to indicate peace or surrender. These cultural references further underline the intimate relationship between color and human behavior; white is used for positive traits and actions. White has different meanings depending on its context. In the Quran, white refers to the enlightened state of mind and is a sign of purity, honesty, happiness, cleanliness, optimism, kindness, friendship, peace, truth, fairness, and goodness.

(3:106) "يَوْمَ تُبْيَضُ وَتَسْوَدُ وَجوهٌ فَالَّذِينَ اسْوَدَّتْ وُجُوهُهُمْ أَكْفَرْتُمْ بِنِعْمَةِ رَبِّكُمْ فَكُفِرُوا الْعَذَابُ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْفُرُونَ"

Pickthall	"On the Day when (some) faces will be whitened, and (some) faces will be blackened; and as for those whose faces have been blackened."
Sahih International	"On the Day, [some] faces will turn white, and [some] faces will turn black. As for those whose faces turn black:"
Arberry	"The Day when some faces are blackened, and some faces whitened. As for those whose faces are blackened."
Dawood	"Grievous punishment awaits them on the Day when some faces will be bright with joy, and others blackened. The black-faced sinners will be asked."

Figure 2. *Example one of white color*

The above extract is from Chapter 3 (Family of Imran) of the Holy Quran. It depicts the state of humans on the Day of Judgment. The verse consists of two explicit colors: white and black. The white color refers to the faces of the believers in Allah. The white color symbolizes those who adhere to the commands of Allah, His Messenger Muhammad, and his Sunnah, while the black color symbolizes the state and face of the disbelievers (Muslim, 2023).

The four translations have rendered the colors differently. Three translated it literally into white ‘turn white’ or the verb ‘whitened.’ Looking at the ST’s

word ‘ضربت’ it is a verb form in which ‘whitened’ is the most applicable as it is in the verb form too. On the other hand, Dawood only uses ‘bright with joy.’ However, ‘bright with joy’ is a free translation as it goes beyond the surface meaning of the word ‘ضربت’ into the deep meaning of the verse.

"يَوْمَ نَبِّضُ وُجُوهًُا شَدِيدًا لِّجَهَنَّمَ بَاقًا الَّذِينَ اسْوَدَّتْ وُجُوهُهُمْ أَكْفَرْتُمْ بَعْدَٰٓ مَا مُنِّتُمْ أَنفُسَكُمْ فَتَلَّوُنَ" (3:106)

Pickthall	"On the Day when (some) faces will be whitened, and (some) faces will be blackened; and as for those whose faces have been blackened."
Sahih International	"On the Day, [some] faces will turn white, and [some] faces will turn black. As for those whose faces turn black."
Arberry	"The Day when some faces are blackened, and some faces whitened. As for those whose faces are blackened."
Dawood	"Grievous punishment awaits them on the Day when some faces will be bright with joy, and others blackened. The black-faced sinners will be asked "

Figure 3. Example two of white color

The above example has been extracted from The Cow chapter of the Holy Quran. The second example has two colors: white and black. The meaning of white ضارباً refers to the conditions of fasting during the Holy Month of Ramadan. Muslims should start their daily fasting from dawn (the light of the dawn that breaks the darkness of the night) until sunset. Three translations utilized literal translation. However, Dawood’s translation uses explication, too. The ST verse does not specify the dawn. Dawood’s translation explains that food, drink, and sexual intercourse are allowed until the ‘coming’ dawn. Although this is understood from the ST verse, the translation explicates the verse further.

"وَوَجَّهْنِي عَنَّهُمْ وَقَدْ يَا أَسْفَىٰ عَلَىٰ يُوسُفَ وَإِنِّي أَخْلِقُهَا مِنِّي عَيْنِي" (12:84)

Pickthall	"And he turned away from them and said: 'Alas, my grief for Joseph! And his eyes were whitened with the sorrow that he was suppressing.'
Sahih International	"And he turned away from them and said, "Oh, my sorrow over Joseph," and his eyes became white from grief, for he was [of that] a suppressor."
Arberry	"And he turned away from them and said, 'Ah, woe is me for Joseph!' And his eyes turned white because of the sorrow that he choked with in him."
Dawood	"And he turned away from them, crying: 'Alas for Joseph!' His eyes went white with grief, and he was oppressed with silent sorrow."

Figure 4. Example three of white color

The above extract is taken from Joseph’s Chapter of the Holy Quran, which portrays the suffering of the Prophet Jacob; peace be upon him, who lost his sight for the loss of his sons Binyamin and Joseph, peace be upon them. The verse depicts Jacob’s sorrowful state, and the fact that his eyes turn white. The meaning of white in this verse refers to the sorrow and grief for the loss of loved ones and blindness. The four translations used a literal strategy; however, Pickthall’s translation uses the verb form of the color white. Sahih International used an adjective form ‘became white’ ‘ءاضى ب تحبصاً’ which is different from the ST form. On the other hand, the last two translations, Arberry and Dawood, applied a literal strategy by using the adjective form of the word ‘تضرباً’ instead of the verb form.

"يَأْتَانَهُمْ مِنْ شَرِينٍ 45 بَيْضَاءَ لَذَّةٍ لِلشَّارِبِينَ" (37:45,46)

Pickthall	"White, delicious to the drinkers."
Sahih International	"White and delicious to the drinkers."
Arberry	"White, a delight to the drinkers."
Dawood	"They shall be served with a goblet filled at a gushing fountain, white and delicious to those who drink it."

Figure 5. Example four of white color

Example four is an extract from the chapter on As-Saffat (Those Who Range in Ranks). The verses above depict the life of believers in paradise. They are served with a cup from Paradise Springs, which is white. The white color here refers to the paradise drinks, which are different from the worldly ones. The verse describes the color of heaven's wine, which is white and delightful to its drinkers. The word 'ءاضيب' is an adjective, and all translations utilize literal translation. Moreover, the Holy Quran uses white to describe Prophet Moses' miracle and the color of mountains, with eleven verses using the same connotations.

Verse	Translation	Translation Strategies	Signifier	Signified
"يَقُولُوا إِنَّمَا أَكَلُوا خُبْرًا ۗ لَوْ كُنُوا عَلِيمِينَ لَأَبْلَغُوا مِنْهُ بِمَنْزِلَةٍ كَثِيرَةٍ ۗ قُلُوا لَوْ كُنْتُمْ مُشْرِكِينَ" (2:187)	Pickthall	Literat	Light of dawn	Muslim fasting during Ramadan
	Sahih International	Literat		
	Arberry	Literat		
	Dawood	Literat, Expicitation		
"يَوْمَ نَبِّئُكَ بِمَا فَعَلَ أُكْتُوبُ إِذْ فَضَّرَعْتَ ذَا الْبَيْتِ أَشْرًا مِمَّا قَدْ كَانَتْ خُبْرًا ۗ أَفَلَا تُبْصِرُونَ" (3:106)	Pickthall	Literat	Face of believers	Scene of the Day of Judgment
	Sahih International	Literat		
	Arberry	Literat		
	Dawood	Free Translation, Addition		
"كُلُّ نَبِيٍّ مِمَّنْ بَدَأَتْ سَمَوَاتٌ مَعَهُ وَبَدَأَتْ بِهِنَّ أَرْضٌ ۖ وَكَانَ يُدْعَىٰ بِهِنَّ ۚ إِنَّهُ كَانَ مِنَ الْمُتَكَبِّرِينَ" (35:27)	Pickthall	Literat	mountains	diversity and difference of paths diversity and difference of fruits
	Sahih International	Literat		
	Arberry	Literat		
	Dawood	Literat		
"أَوَلَمْ يَجْعَلْ لَكُمْ فُجُورًا آيَةً ۚ إِنَّكُمْ تَعْتَدُونَ" (12:84)	Pickthall	Literat	Eyes	Jacob, peace be upon him, becomes blind due to the loss of his son Joseph.
	Sahih International	Literat		
	Arberry	Literat		
	Dawood	Literat		
"يَأْتَانَهُمْ مِنْ شَرِينٍ ۚ إِنَّهُمْ يَخْتَصِمُونَ" (20:22)	Pickthall	Literat	hand	white without leprosy and disease
	Sahih International	Literat		
	Arberry	Literat		
	Dawood	Literat		
"يَأْتَانَهُمْ مِنْ شَرِينٍ ۚ إِنَّهُمْ يَخْتَصِمُونَ" (27:12)	Pickthall	Literat	hand	white without leprosy and disease
	Sahih International	Literat		
	Arberry	Literat		
	Dawood	Literat		
"يَأْتَانَهُمْ مِنْ شَرِينٍ ۚ إِنَّهُمْ يَخْتَصِمُونَ" (28:32)	Pickthall	Literat	hand	white without leprosy and disease
	Sahih International	Literat		
	Arberry	Literat		
	Dawood	Literat		
"يَأْتَانَهُمْ مِنْ شَرِينٍ ۚ إِنَّهُمْ يَخْتَصِمُونَ" (37:45,46)	Pickthall	Literat	Cup	Scene from paradise when the believers are served crystal cups filled with white wine.
	Sahih International	Literat		
	Arberry	Literat		
	Dawood	Literat		
"يَأْتَانَهُمْ مِنْ شَرِينٍ ۚ إِنَّهُمْ يَخْتَصِمُونَ" (7:108-26:33)	Pickthall	Literat	Hands	Miracle of Moses
	Sahih International	Literat		
	Arberry	Literat		
	Dawood	Literat		

Figure 6. The meaning of white in the Holy Quran

Green

The color green has a specific meaning in the Holy Quran that is distinct from other colors. It represents goodness, joy, beauty, fertility, and sunlight (Al-Domi, 2015). The Almighty Allah has stated that Heaven’s inhabitants are essentially dressed in green silk and are reclining in beds while having a good time in paradise. The Prophet, peace be upon him, loved to dress in green, the color of the earth’s natural environment. As a result, if the trees and plants that had wilted and turned brown had dried, there would have been no estimation of life on Earth (Al-Domi, 2015). Green has been repeated nine times and is the second most frequent color in the Holy Quran. Its meaning is deduced from its context.

﴿الَّذِي جُمِلَ لَكُمْ مِنَ الشَّجَرِ الْأَخْضَرِ نَارًا فَإِذَا أَنْتُمْ تُوقُونَ﴾ (36:80)

Pickthall	“Who hath appointed for you fire from the green tree, and behold! ye kindle from it.”
Sahih International	“[It is] He who made for you from the green tree, fire, and then from it you ignite.”
Arberry	“Who has made for you out of the green tree fire and lo, from it you kindle.”
Dawood	“He who gives you from the green tree a flame, and lo! you light a fire.”

Figure 7. Example one of green color

The above verse has been extracted from the Yasin Chapter. The context highlights Allah’s Might and Greatness in creating humans and His ability to resurrect them on the Day of Judgment. This verse reminds humans that Allah created plants and green trees and then changed them to become dry for fire. Historically, humans used to rub tree branches to start fires (Kathir, 2023). All translators rendered the above verse using a literal translation strategy.

﴿وَأُولَئِكَ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتٌ عَدْنٌ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهِمُ الْأَنْهَارُ يُحَلَّوْنَ فِيهَا مِنْ أَسَاوِرَ مِنْ ذَهَبٍ وَيُلبَسُونَ فِيهَا خَضِرًا مِنْ سُندُسٍ
وَإِسْتَبْرَقٍ مِثْلِينَ فِيهَا عَلَى الْأَنْزَالِ يُدْعَى النَّوَابُ وَخَسِبَتْ مُرْتَفَعًا﴾ (18:31)

Pickthall	“They will be given armlets of gold and will wear green robes of finest silk and gold embroidery.”
Sahih International	“They will be adorned therein with bracelets of gold and will wear green garments of fine silk and brocade.”
Arberry	“They shall be adorned with bracelets of gold, and they shall be robed in green garments of silk and brocade.”
Dawood	“They shall be decked with bracelets of gold and arrayed in garments of fine green silk and rich brocade.”

Figure 8. Example two of green color

The above extract is from the Al-Kahf (The Cave) chapter. The verse depicts the reward of those who believe in Allah and do good deeds. They will be placed in the Paradise of Eden and wear green garments of fine silk and shiny velvet (Kathir, 2023). Muslim and non-Muslim translations also render the green color literally.

Verse	Translation	Translation Strategies	Signifier	Signified			
"الَّذِي خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مِنَ الشَّجَرِ الْأَخْضَرِ لُزًا فَإِذَا أَنَّهُ مِنْهُ تُوقَدُونَ" (36:80)	Pickthall	Literal	trees	Allah's ability to turn green trees into fire			
	Sahih International	Literal					
	Arbery	Literal					
	Dawood	Literal					
"وَهُوَ الَّذِي أَنزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَخْرَجْنَا بِهِ ثَمَرَاتٍ مِّثْقَالُ ذَرَّةٍ شَيْءٌ فَأَخْرَجْنَا مِنْهُ خَضِرًا" (6:99)	Pickthall	Literal	Plants and trees	Allah's ability to create green plants from the land due to rain			
	Sahih International	Literal					
	Arbery	Literal					
	Dawood	Literal					
"وَقَالَ الْمَلِكُ إِنِّي أَرَىٰ سَبْعَ بَعْرَاتٍ سَعَانَ يَقْدَحْنَ سَعِجَ جَعْفَاقٍ وَسَبْعَ سَبِيلَاتٍ خَضِرًا" (12:43)	Pickthall	Literal	Green plants and Wheat spikes	The wheat spikes are multiplied due to Allah's bless			
	Sahih International	Literal					
	Arbery	Literal					
	Dawood	Literal					
"يَوْمَ نَبِّئُهَا الصَّابِقَ الْفَاتِي فِي سَبْعَ بَعْرَاتٍ سَعَانَ يَقْدَحْنَ سَعِجَ جَعْفَاقٍ وَسَبْعَ سَبِيلَاتٍ خَضِرًا" (12:46)	Pickthall	Literal	Green plants and Wheat spikes	The wheat spikes are multiplied due to Allah's bless			
	Sahih International	Literal					
	Arbery	Literal					
	Dawood	Literal					
"أُولَئِكَ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتٌ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ يُخَلِّدُونَ فِيهَا مِنْ أَسْوَدٍ مِنْ ذَهَبٍ وَاللُّبْسُونَ فِيهَا مِنْ خَضِرٍ أَوْ أَسْوَدٍ مِثْلُ نَضِيِّ زُرَّاقٍ" (18:31)	Pickthall	Literal	Clothes	The clothes of believers in the paradise			
	Sahih International	Literal					
	Arbery	Literal					
	Dawood	Literal					
"الَّذِي نَزَّلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَصَبَّحَ الْأَرْضَ مُخْضَرَّةً" (22:63)	Pickthall	Literal	Earth	Turning dry areas green			
	Sahih International	Literal					
	Arbery	Literal					
	Dawood	Literal					
	"لَهُمْ فِيهَا مِثْرَبٌ عَلَىٰ الْأَعْرَابِ وَمِنْهَا مِنْ أَسْوَدٍ مِثْلُ نَضِيِّ زُرَّاقٍ" (55:76)	Pickthall			Literal	Pillows	Green pillows for the believers in the paradise
		Sahih International			Literal		
Arbery		Literal					
"عَلَيْهَا ثِيَابٌ سَبْعُ مِثْرَبٍ خَضِرًا" (76:21)	Pickthall	Literal	Clothes	Green silk clothes for the believers in the paradise			
	Sahih International	Literal					
	Arbery	Literal					
	Dawood	Literal					
	Pickthall	Literal, Addition					
	Sahih International	Literal, Addition					
	Arbery	Literal, Addition					
Dawood	Literal						

Figure 9. The meaning of green in the Holy Quran

Black

Black is the third most frequently used color, mentioned seven times in six verses. The meaning of black is interpreted differently across cultures and religions. In Islam, Black is connected with sin, bad deeds, and evil. In the Quran, it is linked with the time between day and night (dawn), the face of the disbelievers, and the color of mountains.

"وَيَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ نَرَى الَّذِينَ كَذَبُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ وُجُوهُهُم مُّسْوَدَّةٌ أَلَيْسَ فِي جَهَنَّمَ مَثْوًى لِّلْمُتَكَبِّرِينَ" (39:60)

Pickthall	“And on the Day of Resurrection thou (Muhammad) sees those who lied concerning Allah with their faces blackened. Is not the home of the scorners in Hell?”
Sahih International	“And on the Day of Resurrection, you will see those who lied about Allah [with] their faces blackened. Is there not in Hell a residence for the arrogant?”
Arberry	“And upon the Day of Resurrection thou shalt see those who lied against God, their faces blackened; is there not in Gehenna a lodging for those that are proud?”
Dawood	“On the Day of Resurrection, you shall see their faces blackened, those who -uttered falsehoods about God. Is there not in Hell a home for the haughty?”

Figure 10. Example one of black color

The above example has been extracted from Az-Zumar (Troops) Chapter. The extracted verse depicts the face of the disbelievers on the Day of Judgement. It is found that all translations applied literal translation.

"وَإِذَا بُعِثَ رَاحَتُهُمْ بِمَا صَرَبَ لِلرَّحْمَنِ مُنَادٍ أَطْلُ وَجْهَهُ مَسْوُودًا وَهُوَ كَظِيمٌ" (43:17)

Pickthall	“And if one of them hath tidings of that which he likeneth to the Beneficent One, his countenance becometh black, and he is full of inward rage.”
Sahih International	“And when one of them is given good tidings of that which he attributes to the Most Merciful in comparison, his face becomes dark, and he suppresses grief.”
Arberry	“And when any of them is given the good tidings of that he has likened to the All-merciful, his face is darkened, and he chokes inwardly.”
Dawood	“Yet when the birth of a girl is announced to any of them, his countenance darkens, and he is filled with gloom.”

Figure 11. Example two of black color

This verse has been taken from the chapter Az-Zukhruf, meaning ‘The Ornaments of Gold’, depicting the reaction of some people when they get the news of having a baby girl instead of a boy. It is told, “Then his face became dark with grief over (the tidings of) a female.” Their faces darken, which tells of their grief and distress because of the birth of a daughter. On the contrary, Islam treats women as precious gems, and this verse is a criticizing pre-Islamic Arab tradition. It explicitly denounces the killing of infants, especially the cultural preference that favored sons over daughters, which Islam abandoned once and for all with its message of dignity and equality for women (Kathir, 2023). It is found that there is inconsistency among the four translations, although the black color mentioned in the two verses represents the face of those who express their grief for having a daughter, not a boy. All translations use the adjective ‘dark’ instead of black. Conversely, Pickthall and Sahih International use ‘dark’ in one translation and ‘black’ in the other. The explicit ‘black’ is a literal strategy,

while ‘dark’ is a more dynamic equivalent. The word ‘dark’ is suitable because it is politically correct and can reflect the intended meaning of the verse. This choice excludes people of black skin from the description in the verse.

Verse	Translation	Translation Strategies	Signifier	Signified
وَإِذَا سَأَلَ أَخَاهُمْ بِالْأُنثَىٰ عَلَيْهَا وَجْهًا سَوَدًّا ۖ وَأَخُو كَثِيمٌ (16:58)	Pickthall	Modulation	Face	Grief and agony
	Sahih International	Modulation		
	Arberry	Modulation		
وَيَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ تَرَى الَّذِينَ كُنْتُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ وَجُوهُهُم مُّسْوَدًّا ۖ يَكْفُرُونَ فِي جَهَنَّمَ أَلَمْ يَكْفُرُوا (39:60)	Pickthall	Literal	Face	Grief and agony
	Sahih International	Literal		
	Arberry	Literal		
	Dawood	Literal		
وَإِذَا سَأَلَ أَخَاهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوا لِلَّهِ لَمَّا كَانُوا عَلَيْهَا وَجْهًا مَّسْوَدًّا ۖ وَأَخُو كَثِيمٌ (43:17)	Pickthall	Literal	Face	Grief and agony
	Sahih International	Modulation		
	Arberry	Modulation		
	Dawood	Modulation		

Figure 12. *The meaning of black in the Holy Quran*

Yellow

Of all the colors in the rainbow, yellow is the most luminescent. More than any other color, it draws our attention. In the natural world, yellow is the color of canaries and bees, egg yolks and lemons, and sunflower seeds. In the Quran, yellow is the fourth most frequently mentioned color. It is mentioned five times in five Quranic chapters.

فَالْوَاغِ لَنَا رَبِّكَ يُبَيِّنُ لَنَا مَا تَوَيْبًا قَالَ إِنَّهُ يَقُولُ إِنَّهَا بَقَرَةٌ ۖ سَفَرَاءٌ فَاقِعٌ لَّوْثِيهَا تَشْبُهُ الشَّاطِرِينَ" (2:69)

Pickthall	"They said: Pray for us unto thy Lord that He make clear to us what color she is. (Moses) answered: Lo! He saith: Verily, she is a yellow cow. Bright is her color, gladdening beholders."
Sahih International	"They said, "Call upon your Lord to show us what is her color." He said, "He says, It is a yellow cow, bright in color - pleasing to the observers."
Arberry	"They said, Pray to thy Lord for us, that He make clear to us what her color may be.' He said, 'He says she shall be a golden cow, bright her color, gladdening the beholders."
Dawood	"Call on your Lord,' they said, 'to make known to us what her color shall be.' He replied: 'Your Lord says: "Let the cow be yellow, a rich Yellow, pleasing to those that see it."

Figure 13. *Example one of yellow color*

The verse mentioned comes from the second chapter of the Quran, Al-Baqarah (The Cow). It recounts the story of the Israelites and the killing of a man from among them. To identify the murderer, Allah commanded them to slaughter a cow – any cow, without specifying. However, they complicated the matter by asking numerous questions. Eventually, Allah instructed them to slaughter a specific yellow cow (Kathir, 2023).

It is found that three translations of the color ‘yellow’ rendered it literally. However, Dawood used ‘gold’ instead of ‘yellow’ in two verses out of the five occurrences. The use of gold is an intertextual reference found in the Old Testament. The golden cow refers to an idol that the Hebrews worshiped in the time of the Exodus from Egypt in the 13th century BC and the 10th century BC under the rule of Jeroboam I, king of Israel (Britannica, 2023; Kathir, 2023). In both Islam and Judaism, the story of the Golden Calf represents a significant episode of idolatry and disobedience to God. While both narratives involve the creation of an idol, they serve different theological and cultural purposes. The Golden Calf incident in Exodus 32 depicts the Israelites’ rebellion and idolatry during Moses’ absence, leading to severe consequences and divine punishment. In contrast, the Quranic reference to a yellow cow (Surah Al-Baqarah) is part of a broader narrative emphasizing obedience and faithfulness, focusing on different moral lessons.

(77:32-33) "إِنَّمَا تُرْمَىٰ بِضَرٍِّ كَالْفِصْرِ ۚ ۚ كَالَّذِي جَاءَهُ جَمَلٌ مُّطَهَّرٌ"

Pickthall	"(Or) as it might be camels of bright yellow hue."
Sahih International	"As if they were yellowish [black] camels."
Arberry	"Sparks like to golden herds."
Dawood	"Throwing up sparks as huge as towers, as bright as yellow camels!"

Figure 14. Example two of yellow color

The above verse has been extracted from the Holy Quran’s Al-Mursalat (The Emissaries) chapter. It portrays the fire of Hell. The fire is massive, sparking out flames like huge castles. The flames are yellow. The word *yellow* refers to the color of the camels (MaarifUL-Quran, 2023), while Kathir (2023) shows that yellow in this verse refers to the black flame of the fire.

The translations of the above verse utilized literal translation except for Arberry, who used golden herds instead of yellow, and Sahih Internation used an addition strategy. The translation is domesticated to its target readers as it favors the gold color over the yellow color mentioned in the ST verse to facilitate the meaning to the target reader.

Verse	Translation	Translation Strategies	Signifier	Signified
قَالِ إِنَّهُ يَحْكُمُ لَكُمْ فِي الْغَنَاءِ وَالْفَقَارِ فَهِيَ لَكُمْ فِي الْغَنَاءِ وَالْفَقَارِ (2:69)	Pickthall	Literal	A cow	Choosing a specific cow to fulfill the requirement of the cow
	Sahih International	Literal		
	Arberry	Domestication		
	Dawood	Literal		
كَمْ يَبِيعُ كَرَاهٍ مُصْتَوًى كَمْ يَبِيعُ كَرَاهٍ مُصْتَوًى (57:20)	Pickthall	Literal	Plants and crops	Dry crops
	Sahih International	Literal		
	Arberry	Literal		
	Dawood	Literal		
كَمْ يَبِيعُ كَرَاهٍ مُصْتَوًى كَمْ يَبِيعُ كَرَاهٍ مُصْتَوًى (39:21)	Pickthall	Literal	Plants and crops	Dry crops
	Sahih International	Literal		
	Arberry	Literal		
	Dawood	Literal		
كَمْ يَبِيعُ كَرَاهٍ مُصْتَوًى كَمْ يَبِيعُ كَرَاهٍ مُصْتَوًى (32)	Pickthall	Literal	Camels	Scene of the Hell on the Day of judgment
	Sahih International	Literal, Addition		
	Arberry	Domestication		
	Dawood	Literal		
كَمْ يَبِيعُ كَرَاهٍ مُصْتَوًى كَمْ يَبِيعُ كَرَاهٍ مُصْتَوًى (30:51)	Pickthall	Literal	Plants and corps	Spoiling of the corps
	Sahih International	Literal		
	Arberry	Literal		
	Dawood	Literal		

Figure 15. The meaning of the yellow color in the Holy Quran

Blue

Blue is the color of the water and the sky. In the Quran, it is also used to describe the horrifying state of criminals on the Day of Judgment. Blue is the fifth most frequent color mentioned in the Holy Quran. It is mentioned once to indicate the state of criminals.

"يَوْمَ يُبْعَثُ فِي السُّورِ وَيُخْشَى الْفَجْرِيْنَ بِرُؤْيَا" (20:102)

Pickthall	"The Day when the Trumpet is blown. On that Day, we assemble the guilty white-eyed (with terror)."
Sahih International	"The Day the Horn will be blown. And We will gather the criminals, that Day, blue-eyed."
Arberry	"On the day the Trumpet is blown, and We shall muster the sinners upon that day with eyes staring."
Dawood	"On that Day, We shall assemble all the sinners. Their eyes will turn blue with terror, and they shall murmur among themselves."

Figure 16. The Meaning of the blue color in the Holy Quran

The above verse has been extracted from Taha Chapter. The Blue color in this example depicts the state of the gathering criminals on the Day of Judgment blue-eyed, which refers to the horror scene of the criminals on that day.

Pickthall utilized blue-eyed, the best choice to represent the horror and the suffering. Specifying the eyes is not mentioned in the verse; therefore, this can be interpreted. The second translation renders it as ‘white-eyed,’ replacing the blue color with white. On the other hand, Dawood uses a literal strategy, using only ‘blue’ without adding additional words. However, Arberry translation uses

free translation as it omits the word blue and adds ‘eyes staring’ instead, which does not represent the color mentioned in the verse.

Verse	Translation	Translation Strategies	Signifier	Signified
"يَوْمَ يُنْفَخُ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَتُنْفَخُ السُّعُورُ يُؤْمِنُ زُرْقًا" (20:102)	Pickthall	inaccurate translation	eyes	Horrific scene for the disbelievers on the day of judgement
	Sahih International	Literal		
	Arberry	Free Translation		
	Dawood	Literal		

Figure 17. The meaning of blue in the Holy Quran

Red

Red is the sixth and last color mentioned in the Holy Quran, with one occurrence. The color red is dynamic and has a different meaning depending on the context. It can refer to blood and sacrifice, and in the Quran, it refers to the mountains. It was found that all translations used literal translation and successfully rendered red.

"أَلَمْ نَرُكْ أَنْ اللَّهَ أَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَخْرَجْنَا بِهِ ثَمَرًا مِثْلَ نُحَيْثُهَا أَلْوَانُهَا وَمِنَ الْجِبَالِ جُدَدٌ بَيْضٌ وَحُمْرٌ مُخْتَلِفٌ أَلْوَانُهَا وَغَرَابِيبُ سُودٌ" (35:27)

Pickthall	"Hast thou not seen that Allah causeth water to fall from the sky, and We produce therewith fruit of divers hues; and among the hills are streaks white and red, of divers hues, and (others) raven-black."
Sahih International	"Do you not see that Allah sends down rain from the sky, and We produce thereby fruits of varying colors? And in the mountains are tracts, white and red of varying shades and [some] extremely black."
Arberry	"Hast thou not seen how that God sends down out of heaven water, and therewith We bring forth fruits of diverse hues? And in the mountains are streaks white and red, of diverse hues, and pitchy Black"
Dawood	"Did you not see how God sent down water from the sky with which We brought forth fruits of different hues? In the mountains there are streaks of various shades of white and red, and jet-black rocks."

Figure 18. Example one of red color

The above verse has been extracted from the Fatir (The Originator) chapter. It depicts Allah’s creation, showing that Allah created red, black, and white mountains. The four translations used a literal translation strategy to render the red color into English.

Conclusion

Translations of the Holy Quran illuminate the intricacies of translation and the conscious decision-making translators undertake. After carefully analyzing four major translations, it has been proven that literal translation is the foremost method for translating the colors of the Quran from Arabic to English with better accuracy. This approach ensures fidelity to the original text and highlights how concerned translators are with maintaining the linguistic purity of the Quran.

This analysis also reveals intertextual references, as evident by using an association related to the Old Testament, which extends the scope and complexity of the study further. Sometimes, modification of certain colors, such as from black to other colors for political correctness, emphasizes the translators' sensitivity to the prevailing cultural and social context. This, therefore, makes the research findings emphasize that translation methods cannot be separated from the communication of meanings of colors in the Quran. The study adds to our knowledge regarding the Quran translation issue by drawing into focus the options and procedures chosen by translators, which enables us to appreciate how linguistic and cultural nuances are dealt with in different environments.

While this study provides valuable insights, several limitations must be considered. First, the sample of four translations may not fully represent the breadth of translation strategies applied to the Quran. Second, considering the narrow scope of this study regarding literal translation, other methods, interpretative or adaptive approaches are not explored in depth and thus may limit the scope of findings. Finally, within the narrow focus on color terms, more general linguistic features of Quranic text, fall beyond the scope of this study, thus pointing to further research directions.

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