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Translating Qur'anic Ecological Metaphors: An Arabic–English Contrastive Analysis

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ABSTRACT

The Qur'an employs a wide range of ecological metaphors—such as water, vegetation, gardens, and natural phenomena—to convey complex theological, moral, and eschatological meanings. These metaphors operate on multiple semantic levels, blending literal depictions of nature with profound symbolic and ethical significance. Translating such metaphors into English presents substantial challenges due to their cultural embeddedness and the sacred status of the Qur'anic text. This study investigates how ecological metaphors in the Qur'an are conceptually structured and how they are rendered in major English translations. Drawing on Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) and integrating it with established translation models proposed by Nida, Newmark, Venuti, and Schäffner, the study offers a comprehensive analytical framework for sacred text translation. It identifies key ecological source domains and their mappings onto spiritual and theological target domains, examines the translation strategies employed, and evaluates the balance between formal/semantic and dynamic/communicative equivalence. Furthermore, the study explores how translations position themselves along the domestication–foreignization continuum when dealing with culture-specific ecological imagery. The findings aim to provide practical, evidence-based guidelines for translators of the Qur'an and other religious texts, contributing to both translation studies and Qur'anic scholarship.

1. Introduction:

1.1. Background and Context

The Qur'an, as the foundational text of Islam, uses a rich collection of nature-based metaphors to express theological, moral, and eschatological ideas. These ecological images (water, vegetation, gardens and natural events) are far more than stylistic devices; they form essential conceptual frameworks through which divine truths are articulated. Translating the Qur'an into English introduces major challenges at the intersections of language, theology, culture, and ideology. Specifically, metaphor translation is challenging because metaphors are culturally grounded and the sacred status of the Qur'anic text requires both accuracy and respect. In the Qur'an, ecological metaphors often function on several semantic layers at once, combining literal portrayals of the natural world with symbolic theological significance and ethical lessons.

1.2. Significance of the Study

The current study advances translation theories by applying Conceptual Metaphor Theory to sacred text translation, an area where cognitive linguistic approaches remain understudied. By integrating CMT with established translation models (Newmark (1981, 1988), Nida (1964, 1969), Venuti (1995), and Schäffner (2004)), the current study presents a comprehensive analytical framework applicable not only to Qur'anic studies but also to other religious and culturally significant texts. The findings will highlight real guidelines for translators working with Qur'anic translation and other Arabic religious discourse, offering evidence-based strategies for handling ecological metaphors. The proposed translation solutions can inform future Qur'an translations and revisions of existing ones.

1.3. Research Questions

1. What are the primary conceptual metaphors involving ecological source domains in the Qur'an, and how do these map onto spiritual and theological target domains?
2. What translation strategies (according to Newmark's procedures and Schäffner's framework) do major English Qur'an translations employ for ecological metaphors, and do these strategies show systematic patterns?
3. To what extent do different translations achieve formal/semantic equivalence versus dynamic/communicative equivalence in rendering ecological metaphors?
4. How do translations position themselves along the domestication-foreignization continuum in handling culture-specific ecological references, and what factors influence these positioning choices?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Conceptual Metaphor Theory

Lakoff and Johnson's revolutionary work *Metaphors We Live By* (1980) revolutionized the understanding of metaphor from a mere rhetorical/stylistic device to a fundamental cognitive mechanism structuring human thought and experience. According to CMT, metaphors are systematic mappings from a concrete source domain to an abstract target domain, enabling humans to understand and reason about complex, abstract concepts through more familiar, embodied experiences. The theory identifies three main types of conceptual metaphors: the first type is structural metaphors: where one concept is metaphorically structured in terms of another (e.g., argument is war, life is a journey). These metaphors provide the richest mapping systems. The second type is orientational metaphors: spatial orientation metaphors (e.g., happy is up, sad is down) grounded in physical and cultural experience. Finally, ontological metaphors: where abstract phenomena are understood as entities, substances, or containers (e.g., the mind is a container, inflation is an entity).

In the context of Qur'anic ecological metaphors, CMT provides a framework for analyzing how natural phenomena (source domains) are systematically mapped onto spiritual and theological concepts (target domains). For example, the conceptual metaphor *faith is a plant* underlies many Qur'anic verses where *belief is described in terms of roots, growth, fruits, and nourishment*. This mapping is not arbitrary but grounded in the experiential correlation between cultivation and development.

2.2 Metaphor Translation Theory

2.2.1 Newmark's Approach

Peter Newmark's seminal works *Approaches to Translation* (1981) and *A Textbook of Translation* (1988) provide comprehensive frameworks for understanding translation processes, with particular attention to metaphor. Newmark identifies *seven strategies for translating metaphors*:

1. Reproducing the same image: Maintaining both the SL image and sense in TL
2. Replacing the image with a standard TL equivalent: Using a TL metaphor with similar meaning
3. Translation of metaphor by simile: Making the comparison explicit
4. Translation of metaphor (or simile) by simile plus sense: Adding explanation
5. Conversion of metaphor to sense: Paraphrasing the meaning non-metaphorically
6. Deletion: Omitting the metaphor if considered redundant
7. Same metaphor combined with sense: Keeping the image while adding explanation

Newmark distinguishes between "dead" (conventional), "stock" (frequently used), "recent," and "original" metaphors, arguing that translation strategies should vary accordingly. Dead metaphors may be translated literally, while original metaphors require more creativity. For sacred texts, Newmark advocates semantic translation over communicative translation, prioritizing the author's thought processes over reader comprehension.

2.2.2 Schäffner's Cognitive Approach

Christina Schäffner's (2004) work integrates cognitive linguistics with translation theory, building upon CMT to understand metaphor translation as conceptual transfer rather than merely linguistic substitution. In her influential article "*Metaphor and Translation: Some Implications of a Cognitive Approach*" (2004), Schäffner argues that successful metaphor translation requires translators to:

1. Identify the conceptual metaphor underlying the linguistic expression
2. Determine whether the same conceptual metaphor exists in the target culture
3. Assess the degree of conventionalization in both languages
4. Consider the specific communicative context and function

Schäffner identifies translation strategies based on the relationship between source and target conceptual systems:

- Strategy 1: Use of the same metaphorical expression if the conceptual metaphor and linguistic realization exist in both languages and serve similar functions.
- Strategy 2: Substitution with a different metaphorical expression that preserves the same underlying conceptual metaphor but uses a different linguistic realization acceptable in the target language.
- Strategy 3: Substitution with a different conceptual metaphor if the source conceptual metaphor does not exist or is not conventionalized in the target culture.
- Strategy 4: Conversion to non-metaphorical language (paraphrase) when metaphor transfer is not feasible or would cause comprehension difficulties.
- Strategy 5: Retention of the source metaphor with explication added to ensure comprehension.

Schäffner's approach is particularly important for Qur'anic translation because it recognizes that metaphor translation involves negotiating between conceptual systems, not just finding lexical equivalents. The ecological metaphors in the Qur'an represent conceptual mappings that may or may not align with target culture conceptualizations, requiring strategic decisions that go beyond surface linguistic choices.

2.3 Equivalence in Translation

2.3.1 Nida's Formal and Dynamic Equivalence

Eugene Nida's theory of equivalence, developed primarily for Bible translation, offers a framework highly relevant to Qur'anic translation. In *Toward a Science of Translating* (1964), Nida distinguishes between:

Formal Equivalence (formal correspondence): Translation that focuses on the form and content of the source message, seeking to reproduce elements such as grammatical units, consistency in word usage, and meanings in terms of the source context. This approach prioritizes fidelity to source language structures and cultural references.

Dynamic Equivalence (functional equivalence): Translation that aims to establish a relationship between receivers and message that is significantly the same as the relationship between the original receivers and the message. This approach prioritizes equivalent response over formal correspondence.

Nida argues that dynamic equivalence is more effective for communicative effectiveness because it prioritizes the message's impact on the target audience. However, for sacred texts, both approaches have advocates: formal equivalence advocates argue that scripture translation must preserve divine wording accurately, while dynamic equivalence advocates claim that God's message should be comprehensible and effective in the receiver language.

For Qur'anic ecological metaphors, this clash is particularly important. A formally equivalent translation of (the example of those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah is like a seed which grows seven ears) (مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ كَمَثَلِ حَبَّةٍ أَنْبَتَتْ سَبْعَ سَنَابِلَ فِي كُلِّ سَنَابِلَةٍ مِائَةٌ حَبَّةٌ وَاللَّهُ يُضَاعِفُ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ) (2:261) preserves the agricultural imagery essential to the Qur'anic text. A dynamically equivalent translation might adapt the metaphor to ensure modern readers grasp the intended meaning of growing or increasing very rapidly and divine blessing, potentially using different imagery.

2.3.2 Newmark's Semantic and Communicative Translation

Newmark's distinction between semantic and communicative translation parallels but refines Nida's categories. Semantic translation attempts to render the exact contextual meaning of the original within the semantic and syntactic constraints of the target language, while communicative translation attempts to produce the same effect on target language readers as the original produced on source language readers.

Newmark (1981, 1988) argues that semantic translation is suitable for serious literature and authoritative texts where form is as important as content. For the Qur'an, this suggests prioritizing

preservation of metaphorical structures even when they require more cognitive effort from readers. However, Newmark acknowledges that communicative elements may be necessary in glosses or explanatory notes.

The choice between these approaches has major implications for ecological metaphor translation. Should a translator preserve the specific Arabian plant species mentioned in metaphors (semantic approach), or substitute functionally equivalent plants familiar to target readers (communicative approach)? The former maintains cultural-historical authenticity; the latter enhances accessibility and cognitive resonance.

2.4 Domestication and Foreignization

Lawrence Venuti's revolutionary work *The Translator's Invisibility* (1995) introduced the concepts of domestication and foreignization as central translation strategies that reflect ideological and ethical dimensions of translation practice.

Domestication: a translation strategy that seeks to minimize the foreignness of the source text, adapting it to target language cultural norms, making the text read fluently and naturally as if originally written in the target language. This ethnocentric approach prioritizes reader comprehension and comfort.

Foreignization: a translation strategy that deliberately preserves or even emphasizes the foreignness of the source text, preserving source culture elements, syntax, and conceptualizations. This ethnodeviant approach resists target culture norms and exposes readers to linguistic and cultural differences.

Venuti argues that mainstream Anglo-American translation practice has favored domestication, resulting in the "invisibility" of both translator and source culture. He advocates for foreignization as an ethical stance that acknowledges cultural differences and resists cultural domination. For Qur'anic translation, these strategies have theological and political implications. Domestication might make the Qur'an more accessible to English readers by naturalizing its metaphors and cultural references, potentially increasing engagement and understanding. However, critics argue this approach risks changing the Qur'an's cultural-historical specificity and Islamic identity, possibly facilitating what some scholars term domestication as cultural assimilation.

Foreignization preserves the Qur'an's divergence, maintaining Arabic concepts, cultural specificity, and linguistic structures that remind readers they are encountering a text from a different time, place, and worldview. This approach aligns with the Islamic theological perspectives emphasizing the Qur'an's inimitability (*i'jaz*, Arabic: *إِلْهَامٌ*) and Arabic linguistic brilliance. However, excessive foreignization may

create comprehension barriers that prevent effective communication of the divine message. In this regard, the translation of ecological metaphors particularly highlights this clash. Should palm trees in Qur'anic metaphors remain palm trees (foreignization), or be translated as more familiar trees for Western readers (domestication)? Should desert rain imagery be preserved or adapted? These decisions shape how target readers conceptualize the relationship between divine message and natural world.

2.5 Previous Studies on Qur'anic Translation

Research on Qur'anic translation has grown significantly in recent decades, though studies specifically focused on ecological metaphors remain limited.

Abdul-Raof's work *Qur'an Translation: Discourse, Texture and Exegesis* (2001) provides comprehensive analysis of translation challenges, including metaphor. He argues that Qur'anic metaphors often resist translation because they are embedded in a complex intertextual network of Qur'anic discourse and Islamic explanatory and interpretative tradition. Abdul-Raof advocates for translation strategies that preserve source metaphors accompanied by explanatory methods.

Dickins' (2010) research on Qur'anic metaphor translation demonstrates how different translators adopt different strategies, from hyper-literal rendering to functional adaptation. His comparative analyses reveal that no single translation adequately captures the full semantic, pragmatic, and aesthetic dimensions of Qur'anic metaphors.

Al-Sowaidi's (2011) study of nature-related terms in Qur'anic translation identifies systematic patterns where translators either preserve Arabic ecological references or substitute target culture equivalents. She finds that preservation is more common but often results in comprehension difficulties for readers unfamiliar with Arabian ecology.

Despite all of the previous studies, no study has systematically applied Conceptual Metaphor Theory to analyze how ecological source domains map onto spiritual target domains across different English translations of the Qur'an, nor has research comprehensively evaluated translation strategies using an integrated framework of CMT, Newmark's procedures, Schäffner's strategies, equivalence theory, and domestication-foreignization strategies.

3. Data Collection

Source Text: the Arabic source text is the Qur'an (*standard Hafs recension*), with particular focus on verses containing ecological metaphors.

Target Texts: Six major English translations representing diverse approaches and periods (*these translations represent a range of approaches from formal to dynamic equivalence, traditional to contemporary language, and individual to collaborative authorship*) will be analyzed:

1. Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall (1930)
2. Abdullah Yusuf Ali (1934)
3. Muhammad Asad (1980)
4. Saheeh International (1997)
5. Abdul Haleem (2004)
6. Mustafa Khattab (2016)

4. Sample Analysis of Ecological Metaphors across Translations

4.1 Analysis of Arboreal Metaphors

Surah 14:24-25 (The Good Tree Moral Story)

أَلَمْ تَرَ كَيْفَ ضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا كَلِمَةً طَيِّبَةً كَشَجَرَةٍ طَيِّبَةٍ أَصْلُهَا ثَابِتٌ وَفَرْعُهَا فِي السَّمَاءِ ﴿١٤:٢٤﴾ تُؤْتِي أُكْلَهَا كُلَّ حِينٍ بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهَا ۚ وَيَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ
الْأَمْثَالَ لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿١٤:٢٥﴾

This verse presents one of the Qur'an's most complex ecological metaphors in Surah Ibrahim (14:24-25), where divine speech and faith are conceptualized through an extended botanical metaphor. The Arabic text establishes a complex conceptual mapping between the source domain of arboreal (related to trees) and the target domain of spiritual truth.

Conceptual Metaphor Analysis: The underlying conceptual metaphor is *Good word/faith is a good tree*, with systematic correspondences: the word/belief corresponds to the tree itself; firm roots correspond to strong foundational understanding; branches reaching skyward correspond to spiritual aspiration; continuous fruit-bearing corresponds to beneficial deeds; and divine permission for growth corresponds to God's enabling grace. This metaphor is grounded in the experiential correlation between cultivation and development observed in agricultural societies, where tree health provides visible evidence of root integrity and environmental support.

Pickthall's Translation (1930) translates the passage with formal equivalence: "*Seest thou not how Allah coineth a similitude: A goodly saying, as a goodly tree, its root set firm, its branches reaching into heaven, Giving its fruit at every season by permission of its Lord?*" This translation demonstrates foreignization and

semantic equivalence, preserving the archaic register ("coineth," "Seest thou") that signals textual divergance and sacred register. Pickthall maintains the complete metaphorical structure without explanatory additions, trusting readers to grasp the analogical relationship. According to Newmark's taxonomy, this represents "reproducing the same image in the target language." The domestication-foreignization analysis reveals a strongly foreignizing approach that maintains cultural distance and requires readers to enter the source text's conceptual world. However, the archaic language may create comprehension barriers for contemporary readers unfamiliar with Biblical English registers.

Muhammad Asad's Translation (1980) presents a more communicative approach: *"Art thou not aware how God sets forth the parable of a good word? It is like a good tree, firmly rooted, reaching out with its branches towards the sky, yielding its fruit at all times by its Sustainer's leave."* Asad modernizes the register while maintaining the complete botanical metaphor. His addition of "reaching out with" explicates the upward directionality implicit in the Arabic, enhancing comprehension without fundamentally altering the metaphor. Asad's extensive footnotes provide cultural-botanical context about tree symbolism in Semitic tradition and the specific significance of root stability in desert environments where wind destruction threatens vegetation. This represents Schäffner's Strategy 5 (retention with explication), balancing foreignization with accessibility. Asad achieves dynamic equivalence by ensuring contemporary English readers experience the metaphor's cognitive-affective impact similarly to original Arabic audiences, though through slightly more explicit linguistic formulation.

Abdul Haleem's Translation (2004) offers: *"Do you not see how God makes comparisons? A good word is like a good tree whose root is firm and whose branches are high in the sky, yielding constant fruit by its Lord's leave."* Haleem's version demonstrates what Newmark calls "translation of metaphor by simile plus sense"—making the analogical relationship more explicit through "like a good tree" while adding "constant fruit" to clarify the temporal dimension of *ukuli* (its fruit/food). This translation occupies a middle position on the domestication-foreignization continuum, preserving the specific botanical imagery while ensuring clarity through grammatical structures natural to English. Haleem's approach reflects his stated philosophy of creating an English Qur'an that "reads naturally" while maintaining semantic accuracy, representing what Nida would classify as functional equivalence.

Saheeh International (1997) translates: *"Have you not considered how Allah presents an example, a good word like a good tree, whose root is firmly fixed and its branches high in the sky? It produces its fruit all the time, by permission of its Lord."* This translation demonstrates high formal correspondence, with grammatical structure closely paralleling Arabic syntax. The phrase "all the time" explains the Arabic (كل

(حين) more clearly than literal "every season," showing how formal equivalence can incorporate minor communicative adaptations without fundamental domestication. Saheeh International consistently employs Newmark's procedure of reproducing source metaphors with minimal adaptation, reflecting a translation philosophy prioritizing accuracy for Muslims studying the Qur'an rather than spreading Islam to non-Muslims.

Mustafa Khattab (2016) provides the most communicatively oriented translation: *"Do you not see how Allah compares a good word to a good tree? Its root is firm and its branches reach the sky, always yielding its fruit in every season by the Will of its Lord."* Khattab's translation illustrates Venuti's domestication principle applied thoughtfully: the metaphor remains intact but linguistic formulation maximizes naturalness for contemporary English readers. Khattab adds interpretive elements ("always yielding," "in every season") that explain the metaphor's implications without fundamentally transforming the conceptual mapping. His extensive footnotes explain that the "good word" refers to faith declarations and that the specific tree may reference the palm tree, deeply symbolic in Arabian culture. This represents Schäffner's Strategy 1 (same metaphorical expression with enhanced clarity), achieving what Nida would consider optimal dynamic equivalence; maximum comprehension with minimal distortion.

Comparative Analysis: across these translations, several patterns emerge. All translators recognize the centrality of the botanical metaphor and preserve the basic faith is a tree conceptual mapping, suggesting this metaphor possesses sufficient universality to transfer across cultures. However, translations vary in: (1) register formality (archaic vs. contemporary); (2) degree of explanation (minimal vs. detailed); (3) syntactic structure (source-oriented vs. target-oriented); and (4) paratextual support (none vs. extensive footnotes). These variations reflect different solutions to the major clash in sacred text translation between preserving divine textual form and ensuring human comprehension. *The translations demonstrate that successful metaphor transfer requires not merely lexical rendering, but attention to conceptual coherence, cultural resonance, and communicative purpose.*

4.2 Analysis of Rain-as-Revelation Metaphors

Surah 2:264-265 (Rainfall and Charity)

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لَا تُبْطِلُوا صَدَقَاتِكُمْ بِالْمَنِّ وَالْأَذَى كَالَّذِي يُنْفِقُ مَالَهُ رِئَاءَ النَّاسِ وَلَا يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ ءَآخِرِ فُتْمَثْلَهُ كَمِثْلٍ صَفْوَانٍ عَلَيْهِ
تُرَابٌ فَأَصَابَهُ وَابِلٌ فَتَمَازَلَا يَفْقِرُونَ عَلَىٰ شَيْءٍ مِّمَّا كَسَبُوا ۖ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْكَافِرِينَ ٢٦٤ وَمِثْلَ الَّذِينَ يَنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ اتِّبَاعًا
مَرْضَاتٍ لِلَّهِ وَتَنْبِيئًا مِّنْ أَنفُسِهِمْ كَمِثْلٍ جَنَّةٍ بَرِيْرَةٍ أَصَابَهَا وَابِلٌ فَتَأْتَتْ أَكْطَافُهَا ضِعْفَيْنِ فَإِن لَّمْ يُصِبْهَا وَابِلٌ فَطَلٌّ ۖ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ ٢٦٥

These verses present ecological metaphors contrasting sincere and insincere charity through rain, soil, and agricultural productivity imagery. The conceptual metaphor Charity/good deeds is rainfall on responsive soil underlies verse 265, while verse 264 employs Insincere charity is rainfall on stone as a contrasting structure.

Conceptual Metaphor Analysis: The source domain of precipitation (any kind of weather condition where something's falling from the sky; rain for example) and soil response maps onto the target domain of human charitable action and its spiritual effectiveness. Key correspondences include: rainfall corresponds to charitable giving; receptive soil corresponds to sincere intention (النَّيَّةُ); fertile growth corresponds to spiritual reward and divine acceptance; stone/rock corresponds to insincerity and pretention (الرِّيَاءُ); rainless wind corresponds to nullified deeds; and agricultural yield corresponds to eschatological reward. The metaphor is experientially grounded in Arabian agricultural dependence on irregular rainfall, where the same precipitation produces dramatically different outcomes depending on soil quality; a correspondence that structures understanding of spiritual causation.

Pickthall's Translation of verse 265: *"And the likeness of those who spend their wealth in search of Allah's pleasure, and for the strengthening of their souls, is as the likeness of a garden on a height. The rainstorm smiteth it and it bringeth forth its fruit twofold. And if the rainstorm smite it not, then the shower."* This translation maintains complete formal correspondence to Arabic structure, including the insistent repetition (فَإِنْ لَمْ يُصِبْهَا وَابِلٌ فَطَلٌّ) ("and if not a rainstorm then dew"). Pickthall preserves the specific meteorological terminology distinguishing وَابِلٌ (heavy rainstorm) from طَلٌّ (light rain/dew), maintaining the semantic precision of graduated rainfall intensity. His use of "smiteth" (archaic form of "strikes") foreignizes the translation through register, creating temporal distance that signals sacred textual authority. However, this creates potential comprehension challenges: contemporary readers may not grasp "garden on a height" as specifically signifying elevated ground with superior drainage and soil quality, nor recognize "twofold" as agricultural yield measurement rather than mere numerical doubling.

Abdullah Yusuf Ali's Translation: *"And the likeness of those who spend their substance, seeking to please Allah and to strengthen their souls, is as a garden, high and fertile: heavy rain falls on it but makes it yield a double increase of harvest, and if it receives not heavy rain, light moisture sufficeth it."* Yusuf Ali demonstrates communicative adaptation while maintaining metaphorical structure. His explanation "high and fertile" clarifies the Arabic رُبُوعٌ (elevated ground), making the correlation between elevation and agricultural productivity explicit for readers unfamiliar with Middle Eastern topography. The phrase "light moisture sufficeth it" (rather than just "dew") explains the implicit meaning that even minimal rain produces

growth in excellent soil; an entailment of the conceptual metaphor that sincere charity is spiritually productive regardless of amount. This exemplifies Newmark's procedure of "same metaphor combined with sense," where the basic metaphorical image is preserved but semantic implications are made more explicit. Yusuf Ali's extensive footnotes explain that elevated gardens have better water drainage and richer soil, contextualizing the metaphor's agricultural logic for non-specialist readers.

Muhammad Asad's Translation: *"And the parable of those who spend their possessions out of a longing to please God, and out of their own inner certainty, is that of a garden on high, fertile ground: a rainstorm smites it, and thereupon it brings forth its fruit twofold; and if no rainstorm smites it, soft rain falls upon it."* Asad's translation demonstrates sophisticated handling of the conceptual metaphor while achieving dynamic equivalence. His translation "inner certainty" for the Arabic *وَتَثْبِيٓئًا مِّنْ أَنْفُسِهِمْ* (strengthening from themselves) interprets the psychological dimension more explicitly than literal translation would. The phrase "on high, fertile ground" explains both elevation and soil quality, ensuring readers grasp the agricultural-spiritual correlation. Asad's footnote explains that the metaphor illustrates how sincere intention creates spiritual receptivity analogous to fertile soil's receptivity to precipitation, making the conceptual mapping explicit. This represents Schäffner's Strategy 5 (retention with explication), where the source metaphor is preserved but supplemented with sufficient explanation to ensure conceptual accessibility.

Abdul Haleem's Translation: *"And those who spend their wealth in order to gain God's approval, and as an affirmation of their own faith, are like a garden on a hill: heavy rain falls on it and it produces double its normal yield; even if no heavy rain falls, it will still be watered by the dew."* Haleem's translation demonstrates high communicative orientation within semantic translation constraints. His phrase "double its normal yield" explains the agricultural meaning of *ضِعْفَيْنِ* (twofold) more concretely than abstract "twofold," ensuring readers understand this refers to harvest multiplication rather than symbolic doubling. The addition "still be watered by" makes the implicit causation explicit; dew provides sufficient water for growth. Haleem's translation represents optimal dynamic equivalence: the metaphor remains fully intact as a conceptual structure, but linguistic formulation ensures contemporary readers grasp both the surface analogy and deeper implications about divine acceptance being conditional on sincere intention rather than deed magnitude.

Saheeh International Translation: *"And the example of those who spend their wealth seeking means to the approval of Allah and assuring [reward for] themselves is like a garden on high ground which is hit by a downpour—so it yields its fruits in double. And [even] if it is not hit by a downpour, then a drizzle [is*

sufficient]." This translation maintains high formal correspondence while incorporating minimal explicative additions in brackets. The bracketed "[reward for]" and "[is sufficient]" indicate translators' interpretive additions distinguished from Qur'anic text proper, reflecting a translation philosophy that visually separates literal rendering from necessary explication. This approach respects source text integrity while acknowledging translation requires interpretive supplementation. The phrase "garden on high ground" clearly communicates elevated location, and "downpour/drizzle" effectively distinguishes rainfall intensities. Saheeh International employs what Newmark would call semantic translation with minimal communicative supplementation, achieving formal equivalence with strategic comprehension support.

Mustafa Khattab Translation: *"The example of those who donate their wealth, seeking Allah's pleasure and believing the reward is certain, is like a garden on a fertile hill: when heavy rain falls, it yields twice its normal produce. If no heavy rain falls, a drizzle is sufficient."* Khattab's translation demonstrates domestication within respectful bounds. His phrase "believing the reward is certain" interprets the Arabic more explicitly than literal translation, ensuring readers grasp the psychological-spiritual dimension of confidence in divine reward. "Fertile hill" concisely conveys both elevation and soil quality. The phrase "twice its normal produce" naturalizes the agricultural metaphor for readers unfamiliar with traditional yield measurements, while "a drizzle is sufficient" makes the implicit adequacy of minimal rainfall explicit. Khattab's extensive footnote explains that the metaphor teaches sincerity's primacy over quantity in charity, making the conceptual mapping's theological implications explicit. This represents Venuti's domestication applied carefully; the metaphor's foreignness is minimized through natural English formulation, but source cultural specificity (desert rainfall, Arabian agriculture) is preserved in paratextual explanation (footnotes).

Comparative Analysis: The translations reveal systematic variation in handling ecological metaphors' experiential foundation. Pickthall and Saheeh International maintain maximal formal correspondence, assuming readers either possess background knowledge or will acquire it through study. Yusuf Ali, Asad, and Abdul Haleem employ progressive degrees of communicative adaptation, explaining implicit agricultural knowledge necessary for metaphor comprehension. Khattab pursues maximal accessibility, prioritizing immediate comprehension for readers distant from the source text's cultural-environmental context. All translations preserve the basic conceptual metaphor structure, but they differ in how much cultural-agricultural contextualization they provide and whether this occurs in the main text or paratextual methods. This variation reflects fundamental questions in sacred text translation: Does the translator's responsibility include providing cultural context necessary for comprehension, or should translation convey only what is linguistically explicit in the source, leaving contextualization to commentaries? The analysis

suggests no single approach adequately serves all reader needs; different audiences require different balances of foreignization and domestication, semantic and dynamic equivalence.

4.3 Analysis of Plant Growth Metaphors for Faith Development

Surah 48:29 (Seed Growth and Community Strength)

مُحَمَّدٌ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ۚ وَالَّذِينَ مَعَهُ أَشِدَّاءُ عَلَى الْكُفَّارِ رُحَمَاءُ بَيْنَهُمْ تَرَاهُمْ رُكَّعًا سُجَّدًا يَبْتَغُونَ فَضْلًا مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَرِضْوَانًا سِيمَاهُمْ فِي وُجُوهِهِمْ مِّنْ أَثَرِ السُّجُودِ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ مَثَلُهُمْ فِي التَّوْرَةِ ۚ وَمَثَلُهُمْ فِي الْإِنْجِيلِ كَزَرْعٍ أَخْرَجَ شَطْطَهُ فَآزَرَهُ فَاسْتَغْلَظَ فَاسْتَوَىٰ عَلَىٰ سَوَاقٍ يُعْجِبُ الزَّارِعَ لِيَغِيظَ بِهِمُ الْكُفَّارَ ۗ وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ مِنْهُمْ مَغْفِرَةً وَأَجْرًا عَظِيمًا ٢٩

This verse employs an extended agricultural metaphor describing early Muslim community development through plant growth stages. The conceptual metaphor *faith community is a cultivated plant* structures the verse, with remarkable accuracy in botanical description.

Conceptual Metaphor Analysis: The source domain of cereal cultivation (likely wheat or barley based on classical exegesis) maps systematically onto the target domain of religious community development. Key correspondences include: seed planting corresponds to prophetic mission initiation; development corresponds to initial belief; shoot emergence (شَطْطُهُ) corresponds to early converts; strengthening (فَازَرَهُ) corresponds to community alliance; thickening corresponds to numerical and organizational growth; standing firm on stalks (فَاسْتَوَىٰ عَلَىٰ سَوَاقٍ) corresponds to independent stability; and farmer amazement/satisfaction corresponds to divine and prophetic pleasure. The metaphor's experiential basis lies in the observable correlation between careful cultivation and successful harvest, projected onto spiritual cultivation of human community.

Pickthall's Translation: "*Muhammad is the messenger of Allah. And those with him are hard against the disbelievers and merciful among themselves. Thou seest them bowing and falling prostrate, seeking bounty from Allah and acceptance. The mark of them is on their foreheads from the traces of prostration. This is their description in the Torah and their description in the Gospel—like as sown corn that sendeth forth its shoot and strengtheneth it and riseth firm upon its stalk, delighting the sowers.*" Pickthall maintains complete formal equivalence with the botanical metaphor, preserving each developmental stage in sequence. His archaic formulation "sendeth forth" and "riseth" creates temporal distance signaling sacred register. However, "sown corn" may mislead American readers who associate "corn" with maize (a Central American cereal plant that yields large grains (corn or sweetcorn) which was introduced to the Old World centuries after the Qur'an), though British readers would correctly understand "corn" as generic grain/cereal. The phrase "delighting the sowers" preserves the agricultural framework completely. Pickthall's approach

represents Newmark's "reproducing the same image," assuming metaphorical transfer without cultural adaptation. This foreignizing strategy maintains the metaphor's Arabian agricultural specificity but risks comprehension difficulties for readers unfamiliar with ancient grain cultivation processes.

Abdullah Yusuf Ali Translation: *"Muhammad is the messenger of Allah; and those who are with him are strong against Unbelievers, compassionate amongst each other. Thou wilt see them bow and prostrate themselves, seeking Grace from Allah and Good Pleasure. On their faces are their marks, the traces of their prostration. This is their similitude in the Taurat; and their similitude in the Gospel is: like a seed which sends forth its blade, then makes it strong; it then becomes thick, and it stands on its own stem, filling the sowers with wonder and delight."* Yusuf Ali demonstrates communicative adaptation while preserving botanical accuracy. His phrase "like a seed which sends forth its blade" explains each growth stage more distinctly than the Arabic's compressed phrasing, enhancing comprehension. The progression "blade → strong → thick → stands on its own stem" clearly describes developmental stages for readers unfamiliar with cereal biology. "Filling the sowers with wonder and delight" explains the emotional dimension of يُعْجِبُ الْزَّرَّاعَ more fully than literal "amazes the sowers." Yusuf Ali's extensive footnote explains that the metaphor specifically describes wheat or barley cultivation, where the initial thin shoot progressively strengthens until it can support seed heads, paralleling how the early Muslim community grew from vulnerable minority to established society. This represents Schäffner's Strategy 1 (same metaphorical expression) enhanced through explicative translation technique, achieving dynamic equivalence by ensuring readers grasp both botanical process and spiritual analogy.

Muhammad Asad Translation: *"Muhammad is God's Apostle; and those who are with him are firm and unyielding towards all deniers of the truth, full of mercy towards one another. Thou canst see them bowing down, prostrating themselves, seeking favour with God and good pleasure: their marks are on their faces, traced by prostration. This is their parable in the Torah as well as their parable in the Gospel: like a seed that brings forth its shoot, and then He strengthens it, so that it grows stout, and stands firm upon its stem, delighting the sowers."* Asad's translation maintains the complete botanical metaphor while subtly modernizing linguistic formulation. His phrase "brings forth its shoot, and then He strengthens it, so that it grows stout" preserves each developmental stage while using contemporary English vocabulary accessible to modern readers. The capitalization of "He" (referring to Allah) makes divine agency in the growth process more explicit than the Arabic, which relies on context for this understanding. Asad's extensive commentary explains that the metaphor employs botanical terminology with remarkable accuracy, noting that classical commentators identified the plant as wheat based on the specific growth pattern described. He further explains that the metaphor emphasizes organic, gradual development rather than sudden

transformation, teaching that faith communities develop through natural processes under divine providence. This foreignizing translation with scholarly explication represents Schäffner's Strategy 5, balancing textual preservation with conceptual accessibility.

Abdul Haleem Translation: *"Muhammad is the Messenger of God. Those who follow him are harsh towards the disbelievers and compassionate towards each other. You see them kneeling and prostrating, seeking God's bounty and His good pleasure; on their faces they bear the marks of their prostrations. This is how they are pictured in the Torah and the Gospel: like a seed that sends up a shoot and becomes strong, thick, and firm on its stem, delighting those who sowed it."* Haleem's translation demonstrates optimal communicative translation within formal equivalence constraints. His phrase "sends up a shoot and becomes strong, thick, and firm on its stem" condenses the botanical development into natural English rhythm while preserving semantic content. The phrase "delighting those who sowed it" naturalizes the agricultural reference without sacrificing accuracy. Haleem's translation eliminates redundancy present in more literal renderings, creating smoother English prose while maintaining complete conceptual correspondence. His introductory note explains that Qur'anic moral stories/lessons frequently draw on agricultural imagery familiar to original audiences, and that this particular metaphor was historically understood to describe the Muslim community's rapid growth during the Prophet's lifetime. Haleem achieves what Nida would consider optimal functional equivalence; maximum naturalness with zero semantic loss.

Saheeh International Translation: *"Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah; and those with him are forceful against the disbelievers, merciful among themselves. You see them bowing and prostrating, seeking bounty from Allah and pleasure. Their mark is on their faces from the trace of prostration. That is their description in the Torah. And their description in the Gospel is as a plant which produces its offshoots and strengthens them so they grow firm and stand upon their stalks, delighting the sowers."* This translation maintains high fidelity to Arabic syntactic structure while ensuring botanical terminology is clear. The phrase "plant which produces its offshoots and strengthens them" explicitly indicates both self-replication and progressive strengthening, making the process transparent. "Stand upon their stalks" preserves the precise botanical image of cereal grains reaching maturity. Saheeh International employs minimal interpretation, letting the metaphor's agricultural logic speak for itself. This semantic translation approach trusts readers to understand the analogical relationship without excessive explication, reflecting a translation philosophy oriented toward Qur'anic study rather than casual reading.

Mustafa Khattab Translation: *"Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah. And those with him are firm with the disbelievers yet compassionate with one another. You see them bowing and prostrating, seeking Allah's*

bounty and pleasure. The sign of their devotion is on their faces from the trace of prostration. This is their description in the Torah, and their parable in the Gospel: like a seed that sprouts its shoot, then becomes strong, and stands firmly on its stem to the delight of the planters." Khattab's translation demonstrates careful domestication. His phrase "sprouts its shoot, then becomes strong, and stands firmly on its stem" uses contemporary English that flows naturally while preserving botanical accuracy. The substitution of "planters" for "sowers" slightly modernizes agricultural terminology while maintaining semantic equivalence; both terms denote agricultural agents. Khattab's extensive footnote explains that the metaphor describes progressive community growth, with the early Muslims represented as shoots emerging from the prophetic seed, eventually becoming so numerous and strong that they provoked opposition surprise (reinterpreting "delight" to include the consternation of opponents who underestimated Islam's growth). This interpretive addition in the footnote shows how Khattab balances textual preservation with theological explanation, employing Venuti's domestication in linguistic formulation while maintaining foreignization in conceptual content.

Comparative Analysis: These translations reveal convergence on preserving the botanical metaphor's structural integrity, suggesting this metaphor possesses sufficient cross-cultural resonance to transfer effectively. All translators recognize that the faith community is a cultivated plant mapping conveys irreplaceable meaning about organic growth, divine-human collaboration (God provides conditions, humans respond), and progressive development. However, translations diverge in: (1) *botanical precision versus simplified description*; (2) *agricultural terminology specificity* (sowers vs. planters, corn vs. seed vs. plant); (3) *developmental stage articulation* (some preserve five distinct stages, others condense to three); and (4) *emphasis on divine agency versus natural process*. These variations reflect different assessments of how much botanical knowledge translators assume readers possess and whether the metaphor's effectiveness depends on technical accuracy or general comprehension of agricultural growth patterns.

The comparative analysis demonstrates that ecological metaphors in the Qur'an function not as decorative imagery but as complex conceptual structures encoding theological principles. The plant growth metaphor communicates essential teachings about faith development: it requires proper conditions (analogous to soil, water, sunlight = divine guidance, community support, personal effort); it follows natural stages that cannot be rushed; it involves both divine providence and human agency; it produces visible results (fruits = good deeds); and it inspires appropriate responses (farmer's delight = divine pleasure). Different translation strategies preserve these conceptual entailments to varying degrees, with more explaining approaches ensuring contemporary readers grasp implications that might be lost through purely formal correspondence.

4.4 Analysis of Barrenness-as-Disbelief Metaphors

Surah 2:171 (The Deaf Metaphor)

وَمَثَلُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا كَمَثَلِ الَّذِي يَنْعِقُ بِمَا لَا يَسْمَعُ إِلَّا دُعَاءً وَنِدَاءً صُمُّ بُحْمٌ عُمْيٌ فَهُمْ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ ١٧١

This verse employs an ecological metaphor comparing disbelievers to livestock (farm animals raised in an agricultural setting) that hear only sounds without comprehension, using the conceptual metaphor *disbelievers are unreasoning animals*. While the primary metaphor is zoological, the verse's agricultural context (livestock management) provides ecological framing relevant to countryside societies.

Conceptual Metaphor Analysis: The source domain of livestock communication draws on the observation that herding animals respond to vocal commands through conditioned association rather than linguistic comprehension. The mapping structures understanding of spiritual receptivity: livestock corresponds to disbelievers; shepherd's calls correspond to divine revelation and prophetic preaching; hearing without comprehension corresponds to auditory perception without spiritual reception; and animals' inability to reason corresponds to disbelievers' rejection of truth despite revelation. The metaphor's experiential basis lies in the daily observation, familiar to countryside societies that animals can be directed through sound but cannot engage with meaning.

Pickthall Translation: "*The likeness of those who disbelieve is as the likeness of one who calleth unto that which heareth naught except a shout and cry. Deaf, dumb, blind, therefore they have no sense.*" Pickthall's formal equivalence approach preserves the compressed Arabic structure, which requires readers to infer the complete analogy. The translation maintains ambiguity about whether the "one who calleth" refers to the disbelievers themselves or to those calling to them (classical explanations support the latter interpretation: the Prophet calling to disbelievers is like a shepherd calling to livestock). This ambiguity in Pickthall's translation, mirroring structural ambiguity in Arabic, demonstrates extreme foreignization; readers must engage interpretively rather than receive simplified meaning. However, this creates comprehension challenges: without footnotes or contextual knowledge, readers may struggle to reconstruct the intended meaning. The phrase "heareth naught except a shout and cry" preserves the auditory emphasis but lacks explicit countryside reference, potentially obscuring the livestock framework.

Abdullah Yusuf Ali Translation: "*The parable of those who reject Faith is as if one were to shout like a goat-herd, to things that listen to nothing but calls and cries: Deaf, dumb, and blind, they are void of wisdom.*" Yusuf Ali significantly explains the metaphor by adding "like a goat-herd," making the countryside context explicit rather than implicit. This addition represents Newmark's "same metaphor

combined with sense"; the basic metaphorical structure is preserved but cultural context is supplied for comprehension. Yusuf Ali's extensive footnote explains that the verse compares disbelievers to animals that hear sounds without processing meaning, emphasizing that mere auditory exposure to revelation does not constitute genuine reception. His clarification "void of wisdom" interprets the Arabic لَا يَعْقِلُونَ (they do not reason/understand) in terms of wisdom deficit rather than pure irrationality. This communicative approach enhances accessibility for readers unfamiliar with pastoral societies, though it arguably over-determines meaning that the Arabic leaves more open to interpretation.

Muhammad Asad Translation: *"And so, the parable of those who are bent on denying the truth is that of the beast which hears the shepherd's cry, and hears in it nothing but the sound of a voice and a call. Deaf are they, and dumb, and blind: for they do not use their reason."* Asad's translation demonstrates sophisticated handling of the metaphor's structural complexity. His phrase "the beast which hears the shepherd's cry" makes both the livestock and countryside management context explicit, resolving the Arabic's structural compression through English subordinate clause. The addition "and hears in it nothing but the sound of a voice and a call" explains what remains implicit in Arabic; that the animal perceives acoustic phenomenon without semantic content. Asad's footnote extensively discusses the metaphor's theological implications: it does not suggest disbelievers' lack of rational capacity but rather that they fail to exercise reason in spiritual matters, choosing willful ignorance over difficult truth. This represents Schäffner's Strategy 5 (retention with substantial explication), achieving dynamic equivalence through making conceptual implications explicit that original audiences would have understood through cultural familiarity.

Abdul Haleem Translation: *"Calling to disbelievers is like a herdsman calling to things that hear nothing but a shout and a cry: they are deaf, dumb, and blind, and they understand nothing."* Haleem's translation demonstrates optimal communicative clarity. His restructured syntax "Calling to disbelievers is like a herdsman calling" eliminates structural ambiguity by explicitly identifying the disbelievers as the object of calling (not the callers themselves). The countryside context becomes immediately clear through "herdsman calling," and the analogy's structure is transparent. Haleem's phrase "they understand nothing" interprets لَا يَعْقِلُونَ more colloquially than literal "they do not reason," prioritizing immediate comprehension. This translation achieves what Nida would consider functional equivalence; the modern English reader grasps the meaning as readily as the original Arabic audience, though through more explicit linguistic formulation. Haleem's approach represents moderate domestication: the metaphor's countryside-agricultural basis is preserved but linguistic presentation is thoroughly naturalized for contemporary readers.

Saheeh International Translation: *"The example of those who disbelieve is like that of one who shouts at what hears nothing but calls and cries—deaf, dumb and blind, so they do not understand."* Saheeh International maintains structural ambiguity present in Arabic, producing a translation that requires interpretive effort similar to the source text. The phrase "like that of one who shouts at what hears nothing but calls and cries" preserves the compressed comparison without explicitly resolving whether this describes the disbelievers' calling or calling to them. The translation's footnote clarifies that classical explanations interpret this as describing the Prophet's preaching to disbelievers being like a shepherd's calling to livestock; the animals hear but do not comprehend. This approach demonstrates semantic translation: preserving source text features including structural complexity, trusting readers to engage interpretively or consult explanatory materials. The strategy reflects a translation philosophy prioritizing fidelity to source form over immediate accessibility.

Mustafa Khattab Translation: *"The example of the disbelievers is like someone who calls upon others who hear nothing but a call and a cry. They are deaf, dumb, and blind, so they do not understand."* Khattab's translation demonstrates his characteristic prioritization of clarity. His restructured syntax "The example of the disbelievers is like someone who calls upon others" makes the analogical structure more transparent, though it slightly alters the original emphasis. Khattab's footnote explains that the verse compares disbelievers to animals that hear their master's voice but don't understand the words, emphasizing that spiritual approachability requires more than auditory perception. His phrase "calls upon others" generalizes beyond specifically pastoral context, creating a more universally accessible metaphor. This represents Venuti's domestication applied thoughtfully: the core conceptual metaphor (communication without comprehension) is preserved, but cultural-environmental specificity (livestock herding) is partially generalized to enhance cross-cultural resonance.

Comparative Analysis: The translations reveal significant variation in handling metaphors with strong cultural-environmental grounding. Pickthall and Saheeh International preserve structural features of Arabic including ambiguity and compression, requiring active reader interpretation. Yusuf Ali, Asad, and Abdul Haleem progressively explain implicit cultural context (countryside livestock management), making the metaphor's agricultural basis more accessible to readers distant from herding societies. Khattab pursues maximum clarity by partially generalizing the metaphor beyond its specific cultural context. These variations reflect differing philosophies about whether translators should preserve source text interpretive openness or resolve ambiguities to ensure comprehension. Regarding the ecological dimension, the metaphor's grounding in countryside agricultural observation is preserved to varying degrees; with more

foreignizing translations maintaining cultural specificity and more domesticating translations emphasizing universal aspects of the communication-without-comprehension structure.

4.5 Analysis of Darkness-Light Contrasts in Natural Phenomena

Surah 24:39-40 (Mirage and Ocean Depths)

وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَعْمَلُوا كَسَرَابٍ بِقِيعَةٍ يَحْسَبُهُ الظَّمْآنُ مَاءً حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاءَهُ لَمْ يَجِدْهُ شَيْئًا وَوَجَدَ اللَّهَ عِنْدَهُ فَوْقَهُ جَسَابَ ۖ وَاللَّهُ سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ ٣٩
كَظَلُمْتُ فِي بَحْرٍ لُّجِّي يَغْشَاهُ مَوْجٌ مِّنْ فَوْقِهِ مَوْجٌ مِّنْ فَوْقِهِ سَحَابٌ ۖ ظَلُمْتُ بَعْضُهَا فَوْقَ بَعْضٍ إِذَا أَخْرَجَ يَدَهُ لَمْ يَكِدْ يَرِلْهَا ۖ وَمَنْ لَّمْ يَجْعَلِ اللَّهُ لَهُ
نُورًا فَمَا لَهُ مِنْ نُّورٍ ٤٠

These verses present one of the Qur'an's most sophisticated ecological metaphor systems, employing dual natural phenomena, desert mirage (an optical illusion where light bends through layers of hot, less dense air near the ground, making the sky appear as a shimmering pool of water or a distorted reflection on the desert floor) and ocean depths, to illustrate the emptiness of disbelief. The passage demonstrates remarkable observational precision regarding environmental phenomena while constructing detailed theological arguments through sustained analogical reasoning.

Conceptual Metaphor Analysis: The verses establish two complementary conceptual metaphors: disbelievers' deeds are a mirage and disbelief is darkness in deep ocean. The first metaphor maps desert mirage phenomena onto meaningless human actions: the mirage corresponds to false hopes and expectations; the thirsty traveler corresponds to the disbeliever seeking satisfaction; the journey toward the mirage corresponds to pursuing worldly achievements; arriving to find nothing corresponds to death and divine judgment; finding Allah instead corresponds to receiving just recompense. The second metaphor uses oceanic depths: darkness corresponds to spiritual blindness; wave upon wave corresponds to accumulated errors; clouds above correspond to additional veils; inability to see one's hand corresponds to complete guidance loss; divine light withdrawal corresponds to absolute spiritual darkness. Both metaphors share experiential grounding in Arabian environmental observations; desert travelers' fatal encounters with mirages and merchants' knowledge of treacherous seas.

Pickthall Translation: "*As for those who disbelieve, their deeds are as a mirage in a desert. The thirsty one supposeth it to be water till he cometh unto it and findeth it naught, and findeth, in the place thereof, Allah, Who payeth him his due; and Allah is swift at reckoning. Or as darkness on a vast, abysmal sea. There covereth him a wave, above which is a wave, above which is a cloud. Layer upon layer of darkness. When he holdeth out his hand he scarce can see it. And he for whom Allah hath not appointed light, for him there is no light.*" Pickthall's translation maintains complete formal correspondence with the Arabic structure,

preserving the dramatic progression of both metaphors. His archaic formulation ("supposeth," "cometh," "findeth," "holdeth") creates temporal distance signaling sacred register. The phrase "vast, abysmal sea" effectively conveys the Arabic بَحْرٌ لَّجِي (deep/fathomless ocean). Pickthall preserves the layering structure precisely, wave upon wave upon cloud, maintaining the metaphor's emphasis on accumulated darkness. The final theological statement "he for whom Allah hath not appointed light, for him there is no light" is rendered with stark absoluteness. This foreignizing approach maintains the metaphors' environmental specificity and dramatic power but may challenge contemporary readers with archaic language. According to Newmark's taxonomy, this represents "reproducing the same image" with maximum fidelity to source structure.

Abdullah Yusuf Ali Translation: *"But the Unbelievers,—their deeds are like a mirage in sandy deserts, which the man parched with thirst mistakes for water; until when he comes up to it, he finds it to be nothing: But he finds Allah there, and Allah will pay him his account: and Allah is swift in taking account. Or the Unbelievers' state is like the depths of darkness in a vast deep ocean, overwhelmed with billow topped by billow, topped by dark clouds: depths of darkness, one above another: if a man stretches out his hand, he can hardly see it! for any to whom Allah giveth not light, there is no light!"* Yusuf Ali demonstrates communicative adaptation while maintaining complete metaphorical structure. His addition "sandy deserts" explains the implicit environment of the mirage, contextualizing for readers unfamiliar with Arabian geography. The phrase "man parched with thirst" adds detail not explicit in Arabic but implied by context, enhancing the metaphor's pathos. For the ocean metaphor, Yusuf Ali's "vast deep ocean, overwhelmed with billow topped by billow, topped by dark clouds" uses contemporary English that preserves the layering structure while eliminating archaisms. His repetition "depths of darkness, one above another" emphasizes accumulation more explicitly than the Arabic. Yusuf Ali's extensive footnote explains that the mirage metaphor illustrates how worldly pursuits deceive until the moment of punishment, while the ocean depth metaphor shows how sin upon sin creates dense spiritual darkness. This represents Schäffner's Strategy 1 (same metaphorical expression) with enhanced clarity through explicative additions, achieving dynamic equivalence by ensuring readers experience the metaphors' dramatic power fully.

Muhammad Asad Translation: *"But as for those who are bent on denying the truth, their deeds are like a mirage in the desert, which the thirsty supposes to be water—until, when he approaches it, he finds that it was nothing: instead, he finds God there, who will pay him in full what is due to him; for God is swift in reckoning! Or their state is like the depths of darkness in a fathomless sea, made yet more dark by wave billowing over wave, with dark clouds above—depths of darkness, layer upon layer, so that when one holds up his hand, he can barely see it: for he to whom God gives no light, no light whatever has he!"* Asad's translation maintains the metaphors' environmental precision while modernizing linguistic formulation. His

phrase "mirage in the desert" clearly establishes location, and "the thirsty" economically captures the desperate traveler without verbal elaboration. Asad's "fathomless sea" effectively translates *بَحْرٌ لَّجِي* and his phrase "wave billowing over wave" preserves the motion implied in Arabic. The addition "made yet more dark" explains the progressive darkening that the layering creates. Asad's translation "layer upon layer" followed by interpretive restatement "so that when one holds up his hand, he can barely see it" ensures readers grasp both the metaphor's structure and its implication. His extensive commentary explains that the mirage metaphor teaches that worldly achievements separated from divine consciousness prove deceptive at death, while the ocean depth metaphor illustrates how sin creates self-reinforcing spiritual blindness. This represents balanced foreignization-domestication: source metaphors are fully preserved while linguistic presentation ensures accessibility.

Abdul Haleem Translation: *"The deeds of those who disbelieve are like a mirage in the desert: the thirsty person thinks there is water but, when he gets there, he finds only God, who pays him his account in full—God is swift in reckoning. Or like depth of darkness in a deep ocean covered by waves upon waves, with clouds above—layer upon layer of darkness—if he holds out his hand, he is scarcely able to see it. The one to whom God gives no light has no light at all."* Haleem's translation demonstrates optimal functional equivalence. His phrase "mirage in the desert" immediately establishes context, and "the thirsty person thinks there is water but, when he gets there, he finds only God" presents the progression clearly using natural English syntax. For the ocean metaphor, Haleem's "depth of darkness in a deep ocean covered by waves upon waves, with clouds above" preserves all elements while using contemporary vocabulary. His phrase "layer upon layer of darkness" followed by practical demonstration "if he holds out his hand, he is scarcely able to see it" ensures comprehension through concrete detail. Haleem's translation achieves maximum naturalness while maintaining complete semantic equivalence. His brief footnote notes that these metaphors contrast with the "light upon light" description of believers in the following verse, showing the Qur'an's systematic use of environmental contrasts to structure theological oppositions.

Saheeh International Translation: *"But those who disbelieved—their deeds are like a mirage in a lowland which a thirsty one thinks is water until, when he comes to it, he finds it is nothing but finds Allah before Him, and He will pay him in full his due; and Allah is swift in account. Or like darknesses within an unfathomable sea which is covered by waves, upon which are waves, over which are clouds—darknesses, some of them upon others. When one puts out his hand, he can hardly see it. And he to whom Allah has not granted light—for him there is no light."* Saheeh International maintains high formal correspondence while ensuring clarity. The translation "mirage in a lowland" renders the Arabic *كَسْرَابٌ بَقِيعَةٌ* precisely *بَقِيعَةٌ* refers specifically to flat, low-lying desert terrain where mirages are most common. This precision demonstrates

Saheeh International's commitment to semantic accuracy even when requiring less familiar English vocabulary. The phrase "darknesses within an unfathomable sea which is covered by waves, upon which are waves, over which are clouds" preserves the Arabic's plural "darknesses" (ظُلُمَاتٍ), emphasizing multiple layers. The structure "darknesses, some of them upon others" maintains Arabic syntax closely. Saheeh International's approach represents semantic translation with strategic precision, trusting readers to engage with slightly more complex formulations to preserve source text features.

Mustafa Khattab Translation: *"As for the disbelievers, their deeds are like a mirage in a desert, which the thirsty perceive as water, but, upon reaching it, they find it to be nothing. Instead, they find Allah there, ready to settle their account. And Allah is swift in reckoning. Or their deeds are like the darkness in a deep sea covered by waves upon waves, topped by clouds. Darkness upon darkness! If one stretches out their hand, they can hardly see it. And whoever Allah does not bless with light will have no light!"* Khattab's translation illustrates careful domestication and accessibility. His phrase "which the thirsty perceive as water" uses contemporary English that flows naturally. The addition "ready to settle their account" interprets divine encounter more explicitly than literal translation. For the ocean metaphor, Khattab's "deep sea covered by waves upon waves, topped by clouds" uses accessible language while maintaining structure. His exclamatory "Darkness upon darkness!" adds rhetorical emphasis appropriate to the metaphor's dramatic force. The phrase "If one stretches out their hand, they can hardly see it" uses inclusive "their" (singular they) reflecting contemporary English usage. Khattab's footnote explains that these metaphors teach that worldly achievements without faith prove empty at death, and that sin creates compounding spiritual darkness, making the theological implications explicit for general readers. This represents Venuti's domestication balanced with theological accuracy.

Comparative Analysis: These translations reveal convergence on preserving both ecological metaphors intact, suggesting their cross-cultural resonance despite cultural-environmental specificity. All translators recognize that the mirage and ocean depth imagery conveys irreplaceable meaning about spiritual deception and darkness. However, translations diverge in: (1) *environmental detail specification* (generic desert vs. "lowland," ocean vs. "fathomless sea"); (2) *linguistic modernization* (archaic vs. contemporary English); (3) *structural preservation* (maintaining Arabic syntax vs. restructuring for English naturalness); (4) *explicative additions* (minimal vs. substantial contextual detail). The most significant variation appears in handling the metaphors' experiential basis; whether translators assume readers possess knowledge of desert mirages and ocean depths or provide contextualizing details. The evidence suggests these metaphors function optimally when: (a) *environmental phenomena are clearly identified*; (b) *progressive structure* (mirage illusion to discovery, darkness layer upon layer) is maintained; (c) *theological implications are*

made accessible through translation or footnotes; (d) dramatic force is preserved through appropriate register and rhythm. The translations demonstrate that while ecological metaphors with precise environmental grounding present translation challenges, their conceptual power often transcends cultural boundaries when handled with attention to both accuracy and accessibility.

5. Proposed Solution

The comparative analysis of ecological metaphors across six major English Qur'an translations reveals that an optimal translation strategy must integrate multiple theoretical frameworks rather than adhering rigidly to a single approach. The sample analyses of the good tree moral story/lesson (Surah 14:24-25), rainfall-charity metaphors (Surah 2:264-265), seed growth imagery (Surah 48:29), and livestock communication metaphor (Surah 2:171) demonstrate that successful translation requires a layered, context-sensitive methodology that balances three critical dimensions: theological fidelity, conceptual accuracy, and communicative effectiveness. The evidence shows that translations employing extreme foreignization (Pickthall, Saheeh International) successfully preserve source text integrity and cultural authenticity but often sacrifice comprehensibility for contemporary readers unfamiliar with Arabian ecology and archaic English registers. Conversely, translations pursuing maximal domestication risk distorting the Qur'an's cultural-historical specificity and potentially weakening theological precision. The most effective approach, demonstrated by Abdul Haleem and refined in Khattab's work, combines preservation of conceptual metaphor structures with strategic linguistic adaptation and comprehensive paratextual support (footnotes). This integrated framework maintains the Faith is a plant, revelation is water, and parallel conceptual mappings intact while ensuring target readers grasp both the surface analogies and deeper theological entailments. The solution proposes a three-layer translation model: (1) Formal Correspondence Translation for scholarly audiences prioritizing source text fidelity with extensive footnoting; (2) Functional Equivalence Translation balancing accuracy and accessibility through natural contemporary English while preserving all ecological metaphors with clarifying additions; and (3) Communicative Translation maximizing comprehension for general audiences through careful explicitation (a shift in translation from what is implicit in the source text to what is explicit in the target text) while maintaining conceptual integrity. Each layer employs Schäffner's cognitive translation strategies flexibly; preserving metaphors where cross-cultural resonance exists (Strategy 1), adapting linguistic realization when necessary (Strategy 2), and providing substantial explication for culturally-embedded elements (Strategy 5) while avoiding metaphor elimination or substitution except in rare pedagogical contexts.

The proposed solution further establishes that effective ecological metaphor translation requires systematic paratextual methods comprising four footnote types: (1) conceptual mapping explanations identifying source-target domain correspondences; (2) cultural-environmental contextualization providing Arabian ecological background; (3) exegetical references connecting translations to classical and modern interpretive traditions; and (4) cross-references linking related metaphors across the Qur'an to maintain systematic coherence. The sample analyses reveal that translators must conduct diagnostic analysis for each metaphor, assessing cultural-environmental specificity levels (universal, semi-specific, highly specific, or culturally-embedded), determining theological functions (doctrinal-essential, pedagogical-illustrative, rhetorical-persuasive, or structural-systematic), consulting exegetical consensus, and identifying target audience profiles before selecting translation strategies. The evidence demonstrates that no single translation adequately serves all reader needs, scholarly audiences require different treatments than devotional readers or interfaith inquirers, necessitating either multiple translation versions or multi-layered presentation combining main text accessibility with scholarly methods.

By synthesizing insights from Lakoff and Johnson's Conceptual Metaphor Theory with Newmark's translation procedures, Schäffner's cognitive strategies, Nida's functional equivalence framework, and Venuti's domestication-foreignization continuum, this integrated solution provides translators with systematic decision-making protocols that honor the Qur'an's sacred status while facilitating effective cross-linguistic and cross-cultural transmission of its ecological-theological discourse.

6. Conclusion

The current study highlights a comprehensive, theoretically-grounded investigation of how Qur'anic ecological metaphors are translated from Arabic into English. By integrating Conceptual Metaphor Theory with established translation theories (Newmark's procedures, Schäffner's strategies, Nida's and Newmark's equivalence frameworks, and Venuti's domestication-foreignization continuum), the study provides unique insights into the complex cognitive, cultural, and theological dimensions of sacred text metaphor translation.

The preliminary sample analyses demonstrate that translating Qur'anic ecological metaphors involves far more than lexical translation. Translators must resolve clashes between preserving source culture environmental specificity and ensuring target culture comprehension; between maintaining formal textual features and achieving communicative effectiveness; and between respecting theological authority and facilitating approachability. Different translations position themselves distinctly along these continuums, reflecting varied philosophies about sacred text translation's primary purpose.

The current study will contribute to Translation Studies by demonstrating how cognitive linguistic frameworks influence translation processes of Qur'anic Studies by providing systematic analysis of ecological metaphor systems, and to practical translation by offering evidence-based guidance for translators. As environmental consciousness grows globally, understanding how ecological metaphors function in sacred texts and how they can be effectively communicated across languages and cultures becomes increasingly significant.

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Lexical Ambiguity and Ideology in Political Discourse: A Qualitative Analysis of Selected News Stories Covering Conflicts in the Middle East

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ABSTRACT

This research investigates how global and regional news organizations, particularly BBC, Al Jazeera, Arab News, and Gulf News, use lexical choices to construct ideological representations of Middle East political events. Anchored in Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and van Dijk's ideological square and ideological strategies, this proposal examines lexical patterns such as nomination, predication, evaluative adjectives, metaphors, and strategic labelling that foreground or background specific actors, actions, and interpretations. A qualitative approach of analysis will focus on a corpus of political news articles published between 2023–2025 involving Gaza conflict, diplomacy, and geopolitical tensions in the Middle East. The proposal aims to identify systematic ideological tendencies across Western, pan-Arab, and Gulf outlets, revealing how news language shapes our political perceptions and stances.

1. Introduction:

Lexical choices in political news are not often neutral, as they carry ideological tendencies and stances that affect our understanding of events and conflicts. In the coverage of Middle East conflicts and politics, some ambiguous or intentionally obscured lexical items (such as *militant groups or terrorists versus resistance fighters*; elimination or targeted killing versus assassination) allow media outlets to present multiple interpretations, which aims at encoding or hiding their ideological positions.

This research investigates how the English websites of BBC, Reuters, Al Jazeera English, Arab News, and Gulf News employ such lexical ambiguity to construct ideological meanings and stances that are related political events and conflicts in the Middle East. The theoretical framework of this research combines both: Fairclough's three-dimensional model of discourse analysis and van Dijk's ideological square and ideological strategies, focusing on how discourse creates group polarization and political and ideological stances.

This research aims to provide a qualitative critical analysis of how ambiguous wording forms ideological narratives across the selected Western and regional English-language news websites.

2. Research Questions

1. How do selected news outlets use lexically ambiguous items and expressions in reporting Middle East political conflicts?
2. How do these ambiguous items contribute to making ideological meanings and stances when interpreted through van Dijk's ideological square?
3. How do Fairclough's three levels of analysis reveal the social and political functions of such lexical choices?

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1 Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

According to Fairclough (1989), "Ideologies are closely linked to language because using language is the commonest form of social behaviour, and the form of social behaviour where we rely most on 'common-sense' assumptions" (p. 2).

Fairclough (1989) believes that ideology constitutes a representation of an "imaginary relation of individuals to the real condition of existence" (p. 10). He conceptualizes discourse through three interlinked dimensions:

Textual analysis: which includes lexical choice, metaphor, modality, presupposition, and cohesive devices.

Discursive practice: which includes production, distribution, and consumption of news stories; an intertextuality of the discourse.

Social practice: which gives a broader ideological, political, and social contexts that shape the discourse.

Lexical ambiguity is treated here as a textual phenomenon where its ideological effects appear through the discursive practices as presented by the selected news outlets.

Furthermore, metaphors are used for conceptual framing (such as in "wave of violence," "explosion of tensions," and "peace talks collapse"). In addition, the agency patterns are essential to understand who is granted agency and who is portrayed as passive (for example, "airstrikes hit Gaza" versus "the Israeli army launches airstrikes on Gaza").

3.2 van Dijk's Ideological Square

This research explores the positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation as employed by van Dijk's Ideological Square (1998). His approach of ideological analysis includes other suggested ideological tools, such as categorization, comparison, repetition, disclaimer, hyperbole, generalization, lexicalization, numbers game, and national self-glorification, among others.

Van Dijk (1998) argues that ideology is reproduced by: emphasizing our good actions and their bad actions; while downplaying our bad actions, and their good actions.

In news discourse, ideological work is often done outstandingly through lexical choices that allow multiple readings depending on the audience background knowledge and beliefs. There are some relevant ideological strategies suggested by van Dijk (1998): Positive self-presentation / negative other-presentation, Nomination and categorization, victimization vs. threat construction, lexicalization (choosing ideologically marked terms), mitigation and vagueness. Our focus on lexical ambiguity is aligned closely with these strategies.

4. Literature Review

4.1 Discourse, ideology, and news media

Fairclough (1995) explains that news language naturalizes ideological positions through routine linguistic selections, especially lexical choices that appear neutral but are ideologically loaded.

Within Fairclough's model, lexical choices are part of textual analysis but must be interpreted with reference to institutional routines (discursive practice) and geopolitical ideologies (social practice). This means that a label such as "militant," "resistance fighter," or "terrorist" must be understood in relation to a media outlet's editorial mission, its national context, and global power relations.

Van Dijk (1998) demonstrates how media discourse structures public cognition by foregrounding or mitigating actors' responsibilities through strategic lexicalization. approaches ideology from a cognitive and sociopolitical perspective. He defines ideology as "the shared system of ideas that enables groups to organize and justify their social practices." Media discourse, therefore, is a site where ideological polarizations (us versus them) are constructed and reproduced. His ideological square and strategies uncover encoded ideologies in discourse. In addition, Richardson (2007) emphasizes how subtle wording, especially in international conflict reporting creates ideological alignments

4.2 Lexical ambiguity in political reporting

Ambiguous lexical items (such as *terrorist*, *militant*, *security*, *airstrike*) carry multiple potential interpretations depending on their context. Furthermore, in conflict reporting, terms like *clashes*, *unrest*, or *incursion* obscure agency and responsibility (Fowler, 1991). In addition Ambiguity often functions to legitimize certain political actors or soften portrayals of violence (Machin & Mayr, 2012).

4.3 Middle East media discourse

Nomination, Labeling, and Categorization: The act of naming is one of the most ideologically consequential decisions in news writing. Research shows that labels for political or armed groups differ significantly depending on a media outlet's ideological alignment. For example, Western outlets often prefer terms like "militants," "extremists," or "terrorists". On the other hand, some Middle East outlets may prefer using terms like "resistance fighters," "armed groups," or "occupation forces". The choice between such labels frames the legitimacy, moral status, and political rights of the actors involved.

Studies on Western new coverage (Said, 1978) show that lexical choices often reinforce Orientalist frames. Comparative studies (such as El-Nawawy & Powers, 2009) demonstrate systematic differences

between Western and Arab English-language media, particularly around terms like *resistance*, *martyr*, *terror*, and *occupation*. In addition, Gulf-based outlets (Arab News, Gulf News) often emphasize stability and regional security, using lexical ambiguity to maintain balanced diplomatic narratives.

5. Methodology

This research adopts a qualitative critical discourse analysis (CDA) to examine how major international and Middle Eastern news outlets, mainly BBC, Al Jazeera, Arab News, and Gulf News, construct competing ideological representations of key Middle East political conflicts. The focus is on lexical choice and semantic framing as indicators of ideological positioning, as informed by Fairclough's three-dimensional model (textual analysis, discursive practice, social practice) and van Dijk's ideological square and ideological strategies.

CDA is chosen because it foregrounds concepts such as power, ideology, and discourse, and because both Fairclough's and van Dijk's models explicitly address how language contributes to constructing political realities, particularly in the polarized discursive space of Middle East geopolitics.

5.1 Corpus Construction: A qualitative analysis sample from:

- BBC
- Reuters
- Al Jazeera English
- Arab News (Saudi Arabia)
- Gulf News (UAE)

5.2 Analytical procedure

For each article, the researcher will identify ambiguous lexical items, analyze how lexical ambiguity affects representation of events, apply van Dijk's ideological square to determine ideological stances and positionings, and apply Fairclough's three-level analysis of textual, discursive and socio-cultural functions of the selected examples of news stories.

6. Sample Analysis

6.1 From *BBC*:

“The Israeli military has carried out airstrikes on targets belonging to the Palestinian militant group Hamas in southern Lebanon and the Gaza Strip. The Israeli military said the attacks were a response to a barrage of 34 rockets fired from Lebanon into northern Israel on Thursday, which it blamed on Hamas”.

In this selected example, lexical ambiguity can be identified in the following lexical items: “militant” is an ambiguous meaning between terrorists and resistance fighters, while “air strikes” indicates a neutral term for lethal military actions that often kill armed groups as well as civilians, children, and women. The word “targets” implies that they are precise and legitimate positions, without giving attention to the fact that the location of these positions usually lead to the killing of other non-military people, which is an illegitimate killing, and very often negates the preciseness of such strikes.

As for van Dijk’s ideological square, the selected paragraph highlights their bad actions through “rockets”, while “airstrikes” mitigates our bad actions through such a technical terminology. There is a clear avoidance of attributing civilian casualties, which is in the interest of a particular side of the conflict.

When it comes to Fairclough’s approach of analysis, it can be noticed that selected text shows hedging and evidentiality through the items “officials said”. There is also a discursive practice in the BBC convention of neutrality through using such ambiguous lexicons mentioned above. In addition, the social and cultural perspective is noticed in the geopolitical influence such lexical choices.

6.2 From *Al Jazeera English*:

“Residents described the raid as part of ongoing resistance against occupation.”

Ambiguity of lexical choices: the lexical item “resistance” here indicates a legitimizing struggle for freedom, which in turn responds to the rejected nomination of just “militants, armed group, or terrorist group). In addition, “occupation” indicates another political position in the conflict, and therefore it is used to legitimize the action against those who “occupy” the land. As for the ideological square, the selected example here emphasizes “their bad actions” (as occupation forces), and highlights “our good actions” (as resistance fighters).

As for Fairclough, the textual perspective in this example shows an attribution to “residents” in a way that emphasizes “the owners of the land” and increases their authenticity. Furthermore, the discursive practice

here presents the AJ media outlet as promoting a community-centred narrative of this prolonged conflict in the Middle East.

6.3 From *Arab News*

“Both sides reaffirmed their shared commitment to peace and stability in the region...”

The quote is from a news story about an official meeting between the Saudi foreign minister and his Pakistani counterpart. There is lexical ambiguity in this sentence that promotes and mitigates the discourse through focusing on the neutral position seeking to achieve “peace and stability”. These lexical choices in particular reflects the general political position of the country (Saudi Arabia) towards the conflict.

As for the ideological square analysis, the lexical choices in the sentence enhances “our good actions”, of the wise leadership working toward achieving stability of the region.

6.4 From *Gulf News*:

Two years after the war ignited by Hamas’s October 7, 2023, attack, Gaza lies in ruins and hope strains under relentless conflict. Over 67,000 Palestinians have been killed, many buried beneath rubble or still missing, while more than 417,000 have been internally displaced. Israel, too, counts nearly 1,700 dead, including soldiers, and 48 hostages remain in Gaza.

The selected sample is the lead summary of a news story about the conflict in Gaza after the ceasefire of October, 2025. The ambiguity of the lexicon “the war ignited” reflects blaming and holding Hamas the only responsible side of the war. Gaza “lies in ruins” obscures the actor through passivation, and the reason behind the intended actions. Also the lexical items of “*over 67,000 Palestinians have been killed...*” shows a passive voice technique that aims to intentionally overlooks the actors, and chooses not to blame them for that huge number of killed people.

As for the ideological square, lexicons in “*ignited by Hamas’s October 7*” indicates “their bad actions”, and ignoring the “bad actions” of the other side of the conflict shown in the huge number of killed people.

As for Fairclough’s approach of analysis, the textual function here indicates a heavy use of modality and nominalization, which highlight the ideological positioning against a particular side of the conflict. The discursive practice here is that of showing the authenticity through the use of official numbers those who were killed and displaced from both sides. As for the Sociocultural perspective, the selected news story

highlights the UAE state narrative criticizing all Palestinian armed groups in Gaza while prioritizing its own interests as one of the main political players in the ME region.

7. Findings

- Western outlets likely use neutral-seeming terms that obscure agency through passivization and technical vocabulary.
- Arab regional outlets use terms aligned with national narratives (e.g., *stability*, *peace*, *solidarity*).
- Al Jazeera English foregrounds local voices and uses ideologically charged terms (such as *resistance groups*, *occupation*, and *siege*).
- Lexical ambiguity is a tool used for: Legitimization, delegitimization, attribution, mitigation, and constructing ideologies and identities

These differences reflect how ideological positionings can be encoded through the different news stories linguistic choices.

8. Conclusion

Using Fairclough and van Dijk reveals that lexical ambiguity is not accidental—it is a core mechanism through which news outlets produce ideological meaning. By combining textual analysis with sociocultural interpretation, the study demonstrates how the English-language media landscape constructs competing political realities of Middle Eastern conflicts.

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