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Measuring Connotative Meaning in English Translations of the Holy Qur'an: A Semantic and Applied Analysis

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Abstract

In a systematic semantic and applied analysis, this study investigates the transfer of connotative meaning in the English translations of the meanings of the Holy Qur'an. Instead of applying an instrument that treats Qur'anic connotation in isolation as subjective or impressionistic, the research introduces and operates a three-level gradational measurement instrument (weak, moderate, and strong) to measure the strength with which translations preserve rhetorical power, symbolic complexity, and pragmatic aim. Employing a qualitative descriptive-analytical approach, the study employs semantic analysis, rhetorical analysis, as well as contextual-pragmatic interpretation, to compare verses in selected Qur'anic texts with their English translations. This study reveals that comparatively weak connotative transfer frequently corresponds with literal, denotative translation styles in which speakers use surface lexical matching of expressions while minimizing imagery and discourse-level connotative meaning. Meaningfully, moderate transfer is partial success in communicating emotional or imagistic impact, while strong transfer reflects the symbolic, doctrinal, and ideological impact of the Qur'anic text by interpreting based on knowledgeable decision making. The study thus establishes and demonstrates the extent to which Qur'anic connotative meaning can be extracted and disentangled from subjective interpretation judgments, and that analysis for interpretation is a method of tackling this problem, which is currently an inadequate area of translation studies in Qur'an. The results provide a theoretically-grounded foundation for translation studies that enables comparison in translation work and provide an empirical basis for translators, researchers, and educators dealing with semantic fidelity and pragmatic adequacy during translation of sacred texts as they practice their profession.

Keywords: *measuring connotative meaning; English translation; semantic-pragmatic analysis; translation evaluation framework; the Holy Qur'an.*

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Introduction

The Holy Qur'an is a complex and grammatically dense language, where meaning is not just expressed on the surface but is embedded in multiple layers and constructed through a connotative system. This involves various lexical steps, morphological shaping, syntactic development, phonological matching, and pragmatic conditioning. The meaning of the Qur'an is not derived from specific lexical units but rather develops from a variety of interrelated linguistic and situational clusters that work together to provide semantic depth and communicative strength. Connotative meaning is central to discourse as both its construction and its enactment, not merely as a secondary or subjective level. This connection between form and meaning supports al-Jurjānī's theory of Qur'anic *i'jāz* and discourse coherence [1], which was implicitly theorized into the classical Arabic linguistic and rhetorical tradition, including ideas about *nazm* (syntactic organization), rhetorical deviation, cohesion, and harmony. As a result, modern linguistic theory has advanced the analysis of non-denotative meaning to develop a more analytical perspective based on semantics, typologies of meaning, pragmatics, and discourse analysis, emphasizing the contextually bound and socially constructed quality of meaning in texts. While theoretical and methodological advances have been made, many translations have focused on referential or denotational fidelity rather than connotative resonance and rhetorical-pragmatic effect. This prioritization may lead to semantic attenuation, meaning loss, or functional shift in the target language [2]. An amplified challenge in translating the Qur'an is the textual texture, discourse relations, and the construction of exegetically informative semantic networks where connotative meaning is dispersed through utterance, structure, and rhetorical flow. This research argues that Qur'anic connotative meaning is not only accessible but also not reducible to subjective impression. It supports systematic examination of semantics as systematic markers of connotative signs and translation at both linguistic and pragmatic levels. With the support of theoretical semantic theory and practical translation analysis, we construct a hierarchical theoretical framework to evaluate connotative meaning transfer in some English translations of the Holy Qur'an. This approach allows for a more structured analysis of translators' decisions regarding semantic content, rhetorical action, and pragmatic orientation, strengthening the methodological validity and empirical objectivity of cross-linguistic meaning transfer in Qur'anic translation studies. So, the study is driven by these research questions:

- RQ1. Can the connotative meaning in the Holy Qur'an be measured by systematic semantic analysis or does it remain confined to subjective interpretation?

- RQ2. How well do translations appear in English in conveying Qur'anic connotative content, both in a linguistic and pragmatic sense?

Literature review

Connotative Meaning: Concept and Semantic Function

Connotative meaning has received increasing attention in Qur'anic translation studies recently, as it represents a multi-dimensional semantic stratum that includes a linguistic, cultural, pragmatic, and contextual layer that goes beyond literal or referential meaning [3]. Denotative meaning normally associates to an almost stable lexical reference and connotative meaning has psychological, social, evaluative, and rhetorical relationships elicited through lexicographic choice in Qur'an discourse, which are intensified by syntactic construction, patterning of rhythmic forms, and structure in the textual text. Since its profound relationship to the Arabic linguistic system and its close ties to theological, legislative, and socio-cultural phenomena in revelation, this semantic dimension is considered as one of the leading causes of meaning loss in translation of Qur'an to English [8]. Translation approaches based on direct lexical equivalence-based methods are frequently unsatisfactory and fail to preserve these semantics leading to a reduced or even a mis-semantic reference toward the source text and to the source language [2]. Thus, comparison research of Qur'anic lexical items with more or less lexical meaning added on top of the already dictionary meaning and or connotative words have been carried out to assess the level of semantic preservation on the Qur'anic texts in most of the translations in English. Alhaj [4] demonstrates how will the connotative meaning be retained, if translation strategy (literal, interpretive or context dependent translation strategy) applies. Further research on semantic shifting and semantic loss also shows how overlooking connotative meaning dilutes the rhetorical and communicative substance of the Qur'anic text because connotation becomes an essential part of the meaning construct rather than simply an optional stylistic flourish [2],

Connotative Meaning in Qur'anic Discourse and the Theory of Nazm

The classical and contemporary linguistic/rhetorical literature all validate that the connotative meaning of Qur'anic discourse can only be accessed through scholarly exegesis via 'Abd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī's approach nazm,[1] that represents a very significant interpretive framework in producing significative meaning in the Qur'anic text, for the syntactic and rhetorical links in the elements of Qur'anic text exist in the form of syntactic

and rhetorical relations. What meaning in the Holy Qur'an is the result of is not the absence of any separate lexical item and hence their literal relation to the dictionary, but its linguistic arrangement shaped by specific grammatical/ semantic relations, in which form combines or interacts with context and the pragmatic function of text. Prior studies suggest that *naẓm* is an important explanatory framework for Qur'anic inimitability (*i'jāz*) because it shows how semantic coherence and rhetorical significance are produced through word organization and mutual interrelations in textual situation and result in meaning being the consequence of the structural-functional interaction, not one of linguistic characteristics distinct from the other words. Many authors also contributed significantly to the field by discussing central Jurjānian theories[1], including polysemy and "in terms of meaning-the meaning of meaning," which posit that Qur'anic discourse produces multiple levels of meaning that accrue to the higher level (i.e., deeper connotative) after the original meaning has been found, and where psychological, pragmatic, and contextual reasons converge. So defined, connotative meaning exists as an internal semantic architecture, a relationship created as *naẓm* translates into situation and not as a decorative rhetorical effect or subjective interpretation of the entire text. Such an orientation has also been developed by textual linguistics and pragmatics in recent works by positing the Qur'anic meaning as a dynamic order of discourse that develops within the textual interrelations and is associated with communicative goals, and additionally with reception. Linking connotative meaning with the theory of *naẓm* thus both provides a solid scientific and methodological base for the analysis and description of *naẓm*, and allows the project to turn away from traditional exegetical explanations toward a far more accurate linguistic-semantic account of *naẓm* itself.

Interaction between Semantics and Pragmatics in Meaning Analysis

Conversational implicature, but treating it as a systematic process of discovery of indirect meanings that tend to overlap much more than the one at work in connotative semantics. Based on Grice's cooperativeness principle, some researchers support that pragmatic meaning is not a secondary level of interpretation but is integral to the semantic production of the Qur'an. Meaning is constructed through the interplay of lexical choice, syntactic organization and context, and implicature is the mediator between an explicit linguistic form and a proposed communicative intention [5]. Recent corpus-based studies have expanded this

interpretation to English versions of the Qur'an and have revealed a phenomenon in which implicature-driven meanings are attenuated or shifted functionally because of linguistic/cultural asymmetries between Arabic and English [6], [7]. By synthesizing pragmatics with corpus linguistics, the measurability of connotative meaning can be increased and replicable analytical models can be constructed that track implicature translation between languages, yielding objective methodologies in Qur'anic semantic and translation studies [8].

Qur'anic Translation and Semantic-Functional Equivalence

Specialized literature in Qur'anic translation identifies that the most basic challenge in addressing translation beyond semantic definition and its semantic and functional equivalence is to ensure that the rhetorical and connotative potency of the Qur'anic text is preserved within the receiving language. The Holy Qur'an is a complex discourse of language and rhetoric, where semantic meaning connects to pragmatic intent while the origin of connotative meaning is created via metaphor, figurative imagery, rhythm, and syntactic organisation. Such feature translation will be a work with relatively rigorous methodological demands due to its multidimensional characteristics [8]. Many, especially if we have to, have reported that literal or only exegetical translation results in the erasure of rhetorical images of their discursive action such that connotation becomes reduced to explicit propositional meaning, and consequently a partial or complete loss of connotative meaning [9], [10]. Given this background, research on Qur'anic metaphor translation has focused on what to do with figurative images, and found that semantic loss arises if Qur'anic metaphors are not compensated with communicative tools, which can cause equivalent semantic or pragmatic effects in the TL [11]. A comparative study of many English translations of the Qur'an has shown 'loss and gain' that stem from the contrasting theoretical orientations and strategic stance between translators that focus on 'functional equivalence' in a literal and exegetical sense, together with the communicative and functional equivalences [12]. These studies point to the fact that evaluating Qur'anic translation quality cannot only be limited to semantic fidelity but must also take into account the translations' ability to reconstruct connotation, maintain rhetorical functions in the Qur'anic Arabic, and achieve the pragmatic effect that resembles its source text. This concept highlights the need to construct methodologically rigorous analytic structures to model connotative meaning from Qur'anic text in a systematic manner [13].

Measuring Connotative Meaning and the Research Gap

Semantic loss lies at the cornerstone of the analysis of the quantifiable connotative meaning of translation of the Holy Qur'an. There are applied, multiple readings of several English translations that have demonstrated linguistic loss, most notably of sūrahs (e.g., al-Wāqī'ah, Maryam, and al-Nūr [14], [15]). The conclusion obtained from these studies indicates that the semantic loss in the work is structural not only in a lexical but also syntactic point of view for the rhetorical and pragmatic aspects, in accordance with text, has much to be concerned about in terms of the connotative effect and the discursive role of the Qur'ānic verse [16]. For this, they also add that qualitative analytical indicators (e.g., alterations of figurative imagery and/or reduction of pragmatic implicature in the TL) are suitable to determine the extent of this loss [17]. However, empirical studies have not yet progressed in this context, and they are inadequate and descriptive in comparison with other qualitative indices that are comparable at many semantic levels and which can be reproduced and compared [17]. So methodologically, we do not have any data to tell what is the "transfer of connotation" of Qur'anic translation. Hence, this study aims to fill that gap by developing an integrative measurement model connecting semantic, rhetorical, and pragmatic analysis in a practical and interpretable way.

Previous Studies

Previous studies of the translation of the Holy Qur'an into English have shown increasing interest and concern in interpreting connotative meaning as a central (semantic) aspect going beyond lexical sense since the latter is largely a function of the rhetorical imagery and the pragmatic environment of the Qur'anic text. The first semantic and rhetorical study attempted to discover and to register the loss of semantic meaning that a literal translation entailed, maintaining that Qur'anic connotations are the product of the linguistic structure, structural organization, and contextual factors rather than isolated lexical items [18]. Comparative studies of the various English translations have suggested that the transfer of the concept of connotatives also depends upon exegetical background and stylistic selection of the translator [20]. Contemporary pragmatic studies have, however, explored conversational implicature, functional equivalence as a means for measuring the distance between intended sense and the ultimate effect achieved in the target language [19]. Yet, in regard to the methodological limitation of this work – the predominance of descriptive methods and the absence of obvious gradational markers through which a

consistent, replicable and comparative assessment of how connotative meaning is could possibly be made available [21]. The gap covered here is the central theme of the present study. This generates a lot of research on how the semantics and connotations of translation work of the Holy Qur'an by people into English and loss of meaning and cultural specificity and linguistic rhetorical effects have changed. Catford introduced a new approach to study the loss of translation in language, looking at the ways that linguistic dimensions (lexical, grammatical), as well as contextual dimension, are important considerations (Catford, 1984; Catford, 1979). Nida further elaborated the theoretical constructs of functional equivalence as practical and emotive realities of the barriers experienced by translation. According to Abdel Haleem in his research on Qur'anic texts, the meaning in the Qur'an is produced by the structure of discourse and rhetorical organization rather than having its lexical content, and thus the translator's direct translation is open to semantic reduction. Hatim and Mason showed how the translation of the Qur'an itself reflects ideological and discursal negotiations where connotative meaning is frequently reconstructed or even reductive. According to the recently developed work in semantic content such as Baker's investigation into equivalence and variability in meaning, translators' protocols and operations in interpreting texts are crucial in conveying evaluative and connotative value. In this vein, through this context, Ali Alhaj [22] specifically studied the Qur'anic word al-ḥazana (الْحَزْن) and through its semantics showed how partial or ambiguous meaning in English translation can be done or not done, and how that can also lead to the loss of connotative meaning when contextual polarity and emotional gradience gets forgotten. In a second related work by Alhaj, he investigated meaning loss for Qur'anic connotative words and built a semantic pragmatic logic, connecting lexical choice to the contextual function and rhetorical intention to enhance measures of connotative meaning. Furthermore, Abdul-Raof also found beyond corpus-based analyses that metaphor, implication and evaluative meaning do not align directly within the Qur'an and argued for the importance of systems possessing structured instruments of analysis beyond description. Collectively, these studies have the following conclusions: Connotative meaning loss is well known, but a methodological gap about built-in standardized gradational measures of connotation's transfer, which ultimately can help quantify how the transfer is affected, is important to examine for future research. It indicates a certain research area whereas the present study filled a particular gap.

Commentary on Previous Studies in Relation to the Current Study

Previous studies on translations of the Holy Qur'an into English have shown connotative meaning to be a central aspect of meaning constructed not out of isolated lexical items, but through syntactic organization, rhetorical construction, and pragmatic context processes [1]. Such studies agree on the underlying semantic and connotative loss possible due to the literal or reductive manner of translation [23]. We have shown in comparative and pragmatic analyses as well that the extent of the connotative transfer is linked to translators' exegetical posture and stylistic selections [24]. However, however much theoretical meatier some of what has been written to date and has thus contributed, however, to the extent that is to say that attempts have attempted to locate meaning loss, those attempts focus more on the detection of meaning loss than on what happens as a result or how much or what is lost, and that is a more or less vague and less coherent and objective meaning loss [25]. Similarly, the most traditional models, like those from non-functionalist and pragmatic schools, still depend on judgment than quantifiable analytical measures. However, the current investigation -- *Measuring Connotative Meaning in English Translations of the Holy Qur'an: A Semantic and Applied Analysis* -- goes beyond description to the realm of measurement. Using already-existing semantic as well as pragmatic theories, it introduces quantifiable notions concerning connotative meanings, as well as providing a structured, multi-tier analytic framework to determine levels of connotative transfer [4]. We provide gradational evaluative markers in contrast to previous work that enable systematic, replicable, and comparative analysis of translations. Thus, even if previous literature can present a theoretical structure, a significant methodological gap is filled here, as the model provides an instrumental and methodologically standardized basis for evaluating the connotative meanings for Qur'anic translation.

Method

Research Design

This article has a qualitative analytic approach towards evaluating the measurability of connotative meaning in English translations of the Holy Qur'an, that is to say, a transition from purely subjective interpretation to systematic semantic evaluation. It operates in an integrative fashion which combines descriptive-analytical, rhetorical, and contextual-pragmatic perspectives that reflect the impact of lexical choice, syntactic structure, rhetorical imagery, and communicative intent on Qur'anic discourse [26], [27]. Connotative meaning is defined and understood through multilevel analytic approaches, employing lexical, syntactic, rhetorical, and pragmatic indicators to guide the structured

evaluation rather than impressionistic judgment . To check the adequacy of translations, chosen Qur'anic verses are compared with other authoritative English translations looking at patterns in connotative transfer, reduction, and semantic shift [28]. A three-level gradational scale is employed for distinguishing the degree of connotative realization and is convenient as systematic, replicable, and comparative analysis is made across translations [29]. Moving beyond descriptive assessment of the Qur'an, this study encourages translation studies by providing a clear measure, standardizing semantic estimation while improving the quality of methodology as well as enhancing the credibility of the analysis.

Measurement Instrument

This analysis is guided by a systematic three-layered approach to testing the measurement of connotative meaning transfer within translations of the meaning of the Holy Qur'an in English. The tool translates theoretical constructs across the disciplines of semantics, rhetoric, pragmatics and religious translation studies into measurable and codable terms used for systematic evaluation rather than impressionistic judgments. It aims to assess whether or not translations retain the rhetorical effect, pragmatic application and discourse coherence of the source text, in compliance with functional equivalence and contextually sensitive meaning in translation The instrument functions as a categorical evaluative scale for discrete translation units. The units are independently coded according to the pre-determined operational criteria, so that they can be compared similarly across the translations and ensure that the analysis is replicable and methodologically transparent.

Operational Levels

- **Weak Connotation transfer:**

Primarily denotative translation restricted to the directive or informative rendering with very little imagery, symbolism, or pragmatic intent. This level is related to translation methods which are more literal that rely on lexical equivalence rather than rhetorical or contextual import [33].

- **Moderate Connotation Transfer:**

A partial transfer of the imagistic as well as of affective features, with some rhetorical features retained, without perfect semantic-pragmatic congruency with the source text.

- **Strong Connotation Transfer:**

Preservation on a high level for all the symbolic, doctrinal or ideological qualities of the source discourse such that there is recognition of its context, pragmatics and structural coherence (naẓm), and close to the semantic & rhetorical intensity of the source discourse [30]. This device provides a transparent and reproducible instrument for measuring connotative meaning transfer and enables a systematic comparison of cross-translation translation between applied Qur'anic translation studies

Results

Applied Analysis: Qur'anic Examples

In this context, this section analyzes some Qur'anic data empirically through a comprehensive application of our proposed method to test the extent of connotative meaning transfer in translations of the meanings of the Holy Qur'an into English. Analysis proceeds by translating specific units—lexical approach, syntactic construction, and rhetorical imagery—as the basis of the analysis by way of comparative work about the source Qur'anic text and its equivalent English interpretations taking into consideration the semantic, rhetorical, and pragmatic contexts [37], [38]. In this latter part, the three-level gradational scale, consisting of weak, moderate, and strong measures, follows and each Qur'anic example is analyzed in terms of its performance in maintaining rhetorical, symbolic, and pragmatic aspects while taking into account how different strategies of the translation variably function. By this applied analysis, it demonstrates the operational validity of the proposed instrument and demonstrates its capacity to bridge theoretical semantic frameworks with empirical application in the field of Qur'anic translation works for systematic comparison and replication of the study to different translations [24], [25].

Weak Connotative Meaning Transfer

This subsection is intended to provide an analysis of examples of attenuated connotative meaning transfer in translation where the translation itself represents mostly the direct, directive, or informative denotative content. Translation of such situations tends to see translators focusing more on surface lexicon similarity than on rhetorical imagery, symbolic resonance, and pragmatic intent inherent in the Qur'anic source text. As a result, this translates the original discourse to a reduced effect, rendering the discourse less complex and less communicative [5], [6]. In the case of the proposed measurement instrument, this trend is identified as being at a weak connotative level as the translated text appeared

insufficiently engaging with contextual clues and discourse-level meaning. This phenomenon suggests a primarily literal translation technique which has been commonly linked by Qur'anic translation scholars to semantic and pragmatic loss, especially regarding the transfer of non-literal and rhetorical dimensions of meaning ..

Example 1

Source Surah	الأعراف Chapter (7) sūrat Al a'raf (The Heights), verse, 31
Arabic Text	﴿وَكُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا وَلَا تُسْرِفُوا﴾
English Translation	(eat and drink, but do not lapse into excess;)(Sahih International, Pickthall, Yusuf Ali, Arberry, (<u>https://corpus.quran.com(31)</u>)

The Analysis

The General Intended Meaning of the Ayah

The Qur'an of verse (31) of Sūrat al-A'raf provides a consolidated Qur'anic framework integrating proper appearance at worship and moderation in everyday conduct[20].It commands adornment and appropriate dress while praying, permits eating and drinking without excessive limitation, and flatly prohibits extravagance. Al-Ṭabarī [35]reads "adornment" as decent, covering dress, writing that the ban on extravagance is universal and extends to all types of transgression outside lawful limits. Ibn Kathīr [36]then states that the verse was revealed as a reply to circumambulation of the Ka'bah naked in order to confirm the principles of dignity and cleanliness in worship. Al-Qurṭubī[30] further emphasizes that extravagance is not confined to consumption of food and drink, but encompasses all kinds of behavioral and economic excess. These interpretations, in concert, stress moderation as a central religious and ethical value in Qur'anic discourse.

Weak Connotative Meaning in Directive Qur'anic Discourse: The Case of Verse (7:31)

Based on the measurement instrument used in this study that classifies connotative meaning on one of the three levels (weak, moderate, and strong) of connotative meaning, the Qur'anic verse "Eat and drink, but do not be excessive" (Al-A'raf: 31) is classified at the weak level of connotative meaning. This is due to its restricted semantic construction to a direct directive discourse with a clear instructive and legislative function, not an imagistic rhetorical element, extended symbolic structures, intricate

doctrinal or ideological meaning. Hence, the meaning is bound to explicit moral prescription, which is consistent with what must be classified as the weak level by the measurement instrument, namely restricted connotation with the function of directive or informative.

Table 1. *Classification of Connotative Meaning in the Qur’anic Verse (7:31) According to the Measurement Instrument*

The Qur’anic verse	Strong connotation	Moderate connotation	weak connotation
{Eat and drink, but do not be excessive } (Al-A’rāf: 31	-	-	✓

Table 1 further demonstrates evidence for RQ1, stating that the connotative meaning of the Holy Qur'an could be systematically assessed with semantic analysis rather than just through subjective reading with minimal support. The verse (7:31) was assessed at the weak connotative level based on the criteria described in the measurement system, namely the predominance of direct imperative and prohibitive structures and the absence of extended figurative imagery or symbolic layering. The previous classification was a formal, reproducible identification based on discourse function and semantic explicitness for meaning analysis, that conforms with functional and pragmatic approaches to meaning analysis [5], [6]. In this regard, as regards RQ2, the table creates a methodological floor for evaluating English translations of the verse. English translations of the verse are estimated to be quite relatively successful in conveying the main directive message in the linguistic context given that the underlying text carries weak connotation in the source text. So, such distinctions in terms of translation quality in particular would most likely be the pragmatic sort—in tonality, moral authority, directive vigor and so on—not the transfer of the figural or symbolic meaning. This outcome agrees with previous studies that have shown semantic and pragmatic loss in Qur’anic translation to be more severe in verses with high connotative density, whereas directive verses tend to be more stable translators [38], [4].

Moderate Connotation Transfer

Moderate connotative meaning is an intermediate semantic level between weak and strong connotation, which means that the meaning does not only concern direct lexical denotation but also imagistic or emotive implications generated by context, syntactic configuration, and stylistic choice. One can see this when discourse or translation obtains a considerable degree of rhetorical and

affective effect of the original text, while some layers of semantic depth remain only partially realized. Meaning of moderate connotation arises from the interaction of linguistic elements with pragmatic intent that results in only partial metaphorical resonance or in contextual implications but not its full doctrinal or ideological symbolism. And, when it comes to the translation of the Holy Qur'an, this level pervades most translations of the text which seek a balance between interpretive clarity and rhetorical sensitivity but which do not manage to capture fully the connotative energy of the source text. The semantic and pragmatic studies provide verification that this connotation is consistent with the logic of the translation for partial functional equivalence, but also retains the expressive character of the original discourse [26], [24]. More recent studies also demonstrate that moderate connotation is a fairly good measure for evaluating the transferability of indirect meanings in the translated Qur'anic discourse, to detect their success and limitations too [17].

Example 2

Source Surah	الإسراء Chapter (17) sūrat Al isrā (The Night Journey), verse,24
Arabic Text	﴿وَأَخْفِضْ لَهُمَا جَنَاحَ الذَّلِيلِ مِنَ الرَّحْمَةِ﴾
English Translation	(And lower to them the wing of humility, out of mercy)(Sahih International, https://corpus.quran.com.39)

The Analysis

The General Intended Meaning of the Ayah

It was within the Qur'anic verse "And lower for them the wing of humility out of mercy" (Al-Isrā': 24), that this dense and extremely connotative metaphor came into sharp relief; that the human in that verse was likened to a bird lowering its wing in a way of humbleness and safety. This image in the brain is the ultimate filial piety, kindness and compassion. For al-Ṭabarī, to "lower the wing" means to demonstrate humility before parents, both in action and in speech, and to avoid showing them brutality or arrogance [34]. Conversely, the "humility" (note that this is not the one used to mean humiliation or abasement) in this passage also means the compassion and tenderness of a loved one [35]. According to Al-Qurṭubī, this metaphor goes beyond its moral authority; it transforms into an emotive image, arousing emotions and forming a permanent practice of mercy and humane submission [31]. Combined, these previous and later readings point to the rhetorical meaning of the verse and that it is more psychologically and behaviorist meaning which surpasses the direct meaning the verse conveys, as it creates a remarkably vivid model of the strong connotative purpose of Qur'anic

discourse which joins rhetorical image and pragmatic intention to produce the absolute moral potency and moral guidance [32].

Moderate Connotative Meaning in Directive Qur’anic Discourse: The Case of Verse (17:24)

As per the measure which is employed in this study, that measures connotative meaning in a 3-grade scale (weak, moderate, strong), the Qur’anic verse “Lower to them the wing of humility out of mercy” (Al-Isrā’: 24) can be determined to be within the moderate connotative meaning level. It is because the verse is not only advising a moral or pictorial path; it constructs a multi-layered symbolic frame within the comprehension of morality that reframes human association with parental figures in value-laden, doctrinally grounded understandings of mercy as the benchmark of human ethics. This metaphorical framework that has deep-rooted “lowering the wing” is not merely an ornamental rhetorical flourish; rather, it’s building a normative framework of ethical behavior that mediates between the emotive import of the passage and moral and legislative consequence on behalf of the law, and this transformation turns one’s way of functioning into a long-term and potentially universal ethical obligation. Thus, the density of symbolism, the depth of axiological expansion and the persistence of pragmatic significance of the verse are methodologically evidencing the identification of verse in terms of the strength of connotative meaning according to the criteria of the measurement instrument employed.

Table 2. *Classification of Connotative Meaning in the Qur’anic Verse (17:24) According to the Measurement Instrument*

The Qur’anic verse	Strong connotation	Moderate connotation	weak connotation
{ And lower to them the wing of humility, out of mercy } (Al-Isrā’: 24)	-	✓	-

Table 2 demonstrates that the Qur'an verse {And lower to them the wing of humility, out of mercy }(Al-Isrā’: 24) is systematically categorized as moderate level of connotative meaning referring directly to RQ1. That the verse is placed in the moderate category is not a matter of subjective reaction, but of identifiable semantic and rhetorical standards for how effectively metaphoric (i.e., “lower the wing”), emotionally expressive and

ethically persuasive one would work for it with respect to its symbolic or doctrinal saturation. This is evidence in itself of the measurable quality of the Qur'an's connotative meaning after all the connotative (by structural semantically-based analysis [i.e. [4], [23], thus connotation is not purely the subjective perception alone but also a tool for the operationalization of it! The table suggests that the English translation performs positively for the Qur'anic connotative material in the RQ2 case as shown above. Linguistically metaphor is retained in the translation, but the language is employed to make the imagistic and emotional state behind the language in the target text. Functionally, however, the translation fails to convey the deep moral re-orientation contained in the Arabic word *al-dhull* – one that, in the Qur'anic sense, is not one which is about degradation but rather compassionate humility. This is a limitation which signifies a moderate level of connotative transfer in line with previous research to the effect that in English translations the image tends to look more like surface level and therefore erodes deeper rhetorical and cultural resonance [24], [25]. So, the table not only reflects measurability of connotative meaning but also partial effectiveness of English translations in conveying that meaning.

Strong Connotative Meaning Transfer

Strong connotative-meaning is defined as the greatest degree of semantic influence in discourse that goes beyond immediate directive and emotionally charged information and has an impact on the comprehension, value system, and future intentions of the recipient. It is this meaning level that is found with the collation and convergence of factors – syntactic ordering, structural organization, pragmatic context, rhetorical analogy, with the linguistic and stylistic – by which a complete meaning is created, above and beyond the meaning made through lexis. This is the basis of al-Jurjānī's conception for *naẓm* in an idea that meaning is produced by syntactic relations rather than by individual lexical units [1]. Much of the connotative meaning is also formed by extended metaphor, its symbolism, and its cultural-doctrinal connotations which have a durable cognitive and axiological effect that is directly related to the directing and constitutive function of discourse. In translation studies, such a deep connotation is widely categorized as a burden to a literal translation (in that a literal transformation entails careful, contextual interpretation with careful rhetorical and linguistic analysis in order to retain semantic richness and pragmatic function, and this is confirmed throughout research on functional equivalence and translation quality [1],[3]. The Qur'anic discourse is full of connotative meaning when lexis is a general symbolic vessel that represents abstracted principles, especially monotheism,

servitude, justice, trial and so on, forming a coherent semantic system that cannot be satisfied by superficial interpretations, but in which an interpretive coherent reading connects linguistic structure, doctrinal purpose and pragmatic intent.

Example 3

Source Surah	النور Chapter (24) sūrat Al nūr (The Light), verse ,35.
Arabic Text	﴿اللَّهُ نُورُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ﴾
English Translation	(Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth.) Arthur John Arberry (https://corpus.quran.com(32))

The Analysis

The General Intended Meaning of the Ayah

This verse (Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth) has significant theological import. In this environment, light isn't really a matter of seeing or being seen—light is a representation of guidance, clarity, and divine laws concerning the heavens and earth that were created and the setup we have available to us at the moment. Therefore, Allah is the Road to knowledge, the Revealer of Insight to the hearts hitherto unaware and the Provider of what we need to penetrate. To scholars who attribute light to Allah, it amounts to an attribution of honor and a reaffirmation of absolute agency: Allah is the One who enlightens His servants in the process of revelation and guidance, just the same that He brings light to His universe through cosmic signs, as well as legislative signs. Through reading the verse, Al-Ṭabarī[34] interprets that Allah is the Guide of all humans both in heaven and earth, and Ibn Kathīr[36] perceives this light, not only as faith in hearts, but also as revelation, through whom he discerns reality broadly. But Al-Qurṭubī[30] broadens the significance to include all leadership and governing of the world. Rhetorically, it is no longer a verb, because it goes instead, gives light to Allah as a noun which is very powerful connotative power, in this context, so that the meaning and permanence of this light is humanizing in a way that has the theological implications of strong meaning beyond direct teaching to construct a whole world from this knowledge. Thus this verse presents an essential paradigm for well connotative meanings in the Qur'anic canon.

Strong Connotative Meaning in Directive Qur’anic Discourse: The Case of Verse (24:35)

From the measurement tool for this research which can quantify connotative meaning on the weak, moderate and strong continuum, the Qur'anic verse “Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth” (Al-Nūr: 35) becomes strongly connotatively associated. This categorization presupposes that the symbolic, doctrinal and rhetorical weight of the meanings in the verse are so great as to make light (nūr) not only material, and therefore have literally no equivalent meaning with the world, but, becomes also a dense, multi-layered theological image of divine guidance, ontological sustenance, epistemic illumination and spiritual authority. This nonliteral interpretation does not cease to be confirmed by classical exegetes as well; Al-Ṭabarī [34] interprets the verse as signifying that God is the ultimate guide to the people of the heavens and the earth and places light in the realm of guidance rather than an elemental physical illumination, while Ibn Kathīr [36] extends the category within which light is construed; the light for belief, held in hearts and for revelation to reveal truths. At a semantic and pragmatic level, the verse is considered “a high-class connotative structure, with meaning that proceeds from symbolic abstraction,” intertextual resonance, and doctrinal effect rather than direct denotation. As it does with contemporary theories of connotation and pragmatics, such symbolism produces simultaneously cognitive, affective, and ideological components, producing an overall longer term interpretative and constitutive impact on the receiver. Consequently, the verse fulfills all the criteria of the strong connotative level prescribed by the survey as it reflects an internal metaphysical and theological point of view that is at the same time difficult to put into terms nor to express externally which is the major problem with the English translation of Qur'anic text which is the difficulty in reaching the requirement of semantically equivalent translation strategies [2].

Table 3. Classification of Connotative Meaning in the Qur’anic Verse (24:35) According to the Measurement Instrument

The Qur’anic verse	Strong connotation	Moderate connotation	weak connotation
(Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth..) (Al-Nūr: 35)	✓	-	-

The Table 3 of the Qur’anic verse of "Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth" (Al-Nūr: 35) in its position of strong connotative significance directly supports the study's research questions, which are twofold, in empirical evidence. In terms of RQ1, the table indicates that the Qur'anic

connotative definition is not restricted to the subjective and the impressionistic, but can be discovered and measured methodically using a structured semantic vocabulary. In fact, this definition is rooted in tangible linguistic and rhetorical properties – metaphorical abstraction, symbolic density, and doctrinal resonance – and it climbs, above all else, on such characteristics from a referential sensory “light” to forming a theological-epistemic whole for the verse. In fact, such is consistent with semantic and rhetorical ideas, which postulate that connotation arises from its correlation to a patterned mixture of lexical choice, syntactic construction, and discourse context and is amenable to analytical evaluation as opposed to gut (intuitive) judgment [29], [30]. The strong connotative classification structure in RQ2 highlights one of the biggest problems with the translations of Qur'an in English. Although most efforts by foreigners manage to translate this linguistic rendering of the verse, they are unable to replicate its pragmatic and symbolic nature and most significantly with respect to its metaphysical and doctrinal quality in the Qur'anic metaphor light. Thus, this table presents an illustration of the systematic connotative measurement of translation performance in a working way, where a verse labeled "strong" in the source text is mostly suppressed in the target language owing to the literal equivalence and limited contextual explicitation. This result accords with research in translation in terms of the difficulty of producing heavily connotative meaning without the support of interpretation or a functional mediation [4]. Accordingly, Table 3 is not just a typological perspective, but a critical point which combines both semantic analysis and linguistic and pragmatism-oriented evaluation of translation quality in discourse

Discussion

The results of the applied analysis reported here support and build upon past research in Qur'anic translation studies which emphasized the relevance of connotative meaning as a priority above lexical equivalence and have provided a more rigorous and operationalized approach to the assessment of meaning. The previous investigations, whether semantic, rhetorical or pragmatic, have argued unanimously that meaning loss in Qur'anic translation can be caused by the neglect of the figurative imagery, symbolic abstraction and discourse function - particularly in verses with high connotative density, [25], [26]. However, much of the literature to date has been relatively descriptive: it has diagnosed signs of semantic and pragmatic loss without setting forth an adequate instrument for measuring the degree of connotative transfer. The proposed study adds to this empirical review by testing a three-stage gradational measurement scale

(weak, moderate, and strong) that would directly address RQ1, and illustrate that the Qur'anic connotation is not limited by human subjective interpretation and is analyzable by a methodical semantic reading [27], [28]. This established a similarity for comparative translation studies that directive, symbolic-light verses (e.g., Al-A'rāf (7:31)) tend to have more translational stability, whereas metaphorical or doctrinal abstracted verses (e.g., Al-Isrā' (17:24), and more precisely Al-Nūr (24:35)) become more difficult for the connotative transference [4]. In accordance with the model of functional equivalence and current models of translation quality analysis we find that English translations retain the denotation of the denotative content, even while losing pragmatic and ideological impact (for a large proportion of readers), in particular at the strong connotative level [3], [8], [9]. The current study, crucially, adds to earlier observations by showing that at intermediate success partial recovery is often a result of the surface imagery being retained despite that the cultural ethical, axiological or semantic depth is not fully engaged (a pattern that is well-recognized but has not been measured in Qur'anic research in translation [3, 1]). In other words, the novelty of this instrument also extends the trends identified in previous studies but makes them into measurable analytic criteria, so that a comparative analysis may be carried out for the translation systemically and a significant methodological advance in both Qur'anic semantics and translation theory is made [17,27,9].

Conclusion

This study sought to examine if Qur'anic connotative meaning is measurable in a systematic manner and how effective English translation is at conveying it at various semantic levels. Connotative meaning in the Holy Qur'an, the results show, is not something intangible or subjective; it can be analyzed in a systematic framework of semantic-pragmatics to ascertain its meaning. Additionally, the proposed and empirical validation of a three-level gradational measurement instrument (weak, moderate, strong) directly addresses RQ1 and improves previous descriptive approaches to a replicable analytical model. The applied analysis also shows that translation success correlates proportionally with source text connotative density: directive verses with weak connotation are generally stable within translation, whereas passages containing a lot of metaphorical imagery and doctrinal symbolism become more and more difficult for the translator to transfer the connotative meaning into translation. Based on RQ2, this analysis suggests that English translation may maintain denotation while decreasing pragmatic force, ethical resonance and ideological depth

especially at strong connotative level. These findings are in agreement with previous semantic and pragmatic research, and they add to them by moving qualitative observations into quantifiable classifications. Finally, this study provides a strong methodological instrument, which bridges the gap between theory and application, strengthens quality checks on translation and, most importantly, paves the way for new lines of systematic research on Qur'anic semantics and translation.

The research findings have some implications for Qur'anic translation theory and applications. They show the need to move beyond mere lexical equivalence and to treat connotative content in a purposeful way. A validated three-level measurement system provides translators, scholars, and evaluators an independent means of evaluating semantic depth as well as pragmatic force within a translated text, even from a translator's perspective. The model can be used pedagogically in training courses to teach translators to gain a deeper understanding of rhetorical and symbolic elements of Qur'anic discourse. Methodologically, it adds an essential dimension to the quality translation assessment process by fusing semantic, rhetorical, and pragmatic dimensions. These implications collectively provide direction to pursue principled and accountable approaches to interrogating Qur'anic translation.

Given the above findings, translators of the Qur'an should also plan to use specific contextually- and functionally sensitive strategies in dealing with verses with moderate to strong connotative force. Translation investigators and other analysts can use gradation tools, when grading connotative transfer levels, applying criteria that are less biased in accuracy or loss than they otherwise should be. In translation in particular, it is suggested that religious and sacred text translation academics and curriculum architects introduce connotative analysis frameworks in their teaching materials related to translation. The editors of Qur'anic translations may also employ some explanatory strategies, particularly when a great deal of doctrinal symbolism is involved. In addition, it would enhance semantic fidelity and communicative efficacy.

The measurement framework proposed in this study could also apply to a larger corpus of Qur'anic verses as well as a broader scope of English translations and be tested for its scalability and cross-translator reliability in future studies. More studies in cross-language comparison might provide information on cultural and linguistic distance-related effects of connotative transfer. Quantitative/mixed approaches could also be used in examining connotative levels and reader reception and interpretive accuracy. Furthermore, further research could examine how digital (and

AI-based) tools aid in modelling and visualizing connotative meaning transfer. These extensions may broaden the scope of focus beyond a single disciplinary study of change in the translation of Qur'an.

Author Contributions

The author developed and planned the study, analyzed the data, and wrote the manuscript. The language editing and proofreading was done by the author and Ali J. Author approved the final manuscript version.

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Conflict of Interest

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