



Translating strategies of oath expressions in the Holy Qur'an into English by senior students

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Abstract

This study explores the strategies employed by senior translation and English students in Yemeni universities in translating oath expressions in the Holy Qur'an. Oath expressions, known as "Qasam" in Arabic, serve as powerful rhetorical devices in the Qur'anic discourse, imbued with theological significance and cultural connotations. This paper explores how translation and English students convey the meaning of Qur'anic oaths while preserving their linguistic, cultural, and religious authenticity, drawing on translation theory and Qur'anic studies. The study's dataset consists of twenty oath expressions, selected randomly and have been subjected to analysis through semantic, and pragmatic methodologies. The findings revealed that translation strategies employed by respondents are literal translation, paraphrasing, transposition, modulation, semantic translation, communicative translation, omission, and transliteration. The study showcases that literal translation emerged as the most frequently used strategy for translating oath expressions. Paraphrasing and transposition were also used to address grammatical and structural differences. However, omission and word-for-word translation often resulted in semantic and lexical losses, highlighting the students' limited familiarity with the complexities of sacred texts.

Keywords: Noble Quran translation, Transliteration, Semantic translation, Quranic studies, Religious translation.

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استراتيجيات ترجمة عبارات القسم في القرآن الكريم إلى الإنجليزية من قبل طلاب السنة الأخيرة في الجامعة

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الملخص:

تستكشف هذه الدراسة الاستراتيجيات التي يستخدمها طلاب السنة الأخيرة في أقسام الترجمة واللغة الإنجليزية في الجامعات اليمنية عند ترجمة النصوص القرآنية من العربية إلى الإنجليزية، مع التركيز على عبارات القسم في القرآن الكريم. تُعد عبارات القسم أدوات بلاغية قوية في الخطاب القرآني، إذ تحمل دلالات دينية وكذلك معاني ثقافية عميقة. وتعتمد الدراسة على نظريات الترجمة، ودراسات الترجمة الدينية، والبحوث القرآنية لتحليل الاستراتيجيات المختلفة التي يستخدمها طلاب الترجمة واللغة الإنجليزية لنقل معنى عبارات القسم وتأثيرها مع الحفاظ على أصالتها اللغوية والثقافية والدينية. يتكون المتن المدروس من عشرين عبارة قسم تم اختيارها عشوائيًا، وخضعت للتحليل وفق منهجيات دلالية وتداولية. كشفت نتائج الدراسة أن استراتيجيات الترجمة المستخدمة من قبل المشاركين تشمل الترجمة الحرفية، وإعادة الصياغة، والإبدال، والتحوير، والترجمة الدلالية، والترجمة التواصلية، والحذف، والنقل الصوتي. تُظهر الدراسة أن الترجمة الحرفية برزت كأكثر الاستراتيجيات استخدامًا لترجمة عبارات القسم. كما استُخدمت إعادة الصياغة والإبدال لمعالجة الاختلافات النحوية والبنوية. ومع ذلك، غالبًا ما أدى الحذف والنقل الصوتي إلى خسائر دلالية ومعجمية، مما يُبرز محدودية إلمام الطلاب بتعقيدات النصوص المقدسة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: ترجمة القرآن الكريم، النقل الصوتي، الترجمة الدلالية، الدراسات القرآنية، الترجمة الدينية.

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Introduction

Translating religious texts has always been significant, bridging linguistic and cultural gaps to make sacred scriptures accessible to diverse audiences worldwide. The process of translating these texts, however, is far from straightforward, particularly when preserving their rich meaning, cultural nuances, and spiritual essence. Translators face substantial difficulties in rendering Qur'anic Arabic words into other languages without losing or altering their meanings (Alhaj & Alwadai, 2024; Al-Rayes, 2024). Among the myriad challenges faced by translators, the faithful rendition of oath expressions holds a central place, especially in the context of the Holy Qur'an, one of the most revered and widely studied religious texts globally.

The translator of the Holy Qur'an must possess a profound understanding of the rhetorical and syntactic intricacies inherent in the Arabic language to fully grasp the intricate rhetorical and linguistic frameworks present within the compositions of the Quranic text (Abdul-Raof, 2017). Alhaj & Alwadai (2019) emphasize that "to convey the religious values and beliefs accurately, the translator is forced to use strategies such as paraphrasing, partial equivalents, literal translation, functional translation, among other techniques to address the challenge of correctly translating Qur'anic expressions" (p. 46). Additionally, the translator must be aware of these implications in order to introduce the real meaning effectively (Hakami, 2024; Mounassar, 2018).

Qur'anic translation employs several techniques, such as overtranslation, undertranslation, and transliteration. Other strategies include narrowing the cultural gap, considering sociocultural contexts, and using communicative translation. Overtranslation is associated with the additional language that must be added to the target text (TT) to make it understandable and logical (Hakami, 2024). Undertranslation is related to reducing the speech that the TT contains to be less than that of the source text (ST) (Newmark, 1976). Transliteration is the use of the same sounds of the ST equivalent and attributing it to the TT. This technique is used when the equivalent is missing in the target language (Habash et al., 2007). Communicative translation, on the other hand, seeks to recreate the effect of the original text on the reader, ensuring that the translated text feels as natural and impactful as the source text (Newmark, 1981). Moreover, sociocultural circumstances play a critical role in determining the procedures and strategies used to bridge cultural references. These factors significantly influence the reception of the target text by its audience (Schäffner & Adab, 1997).

This study explores the complex domain of translation studies, specifically focusing on strategies employed in translating oath expressions from Arabic to English in the Holy Qur'an. Oath expressions are a hallmark of Qur'anic discourse, functioning as powerful rhetorical devices to underscore truth, solemnity, and the divine authority of the message. Effectively conveying the essence of these expressions while maintaining linguistic precision and cultural relevance presents a significant challenge for translators, as they must navigate the English language's distinct linguistic structures and cultural connotations.

Through a comprehensive analysis of the translation strategies employed by Yemeni senior translation and English students in rendering Oath expressions from the Holy Qur'an, this study aims to assess their translation competence, highlight the challenges they face, and explore opportunities for improving the translation of religious



texts. By shedding light on the complexities of this specialized area within translation studies, the research seeks to enrich scholarly discourse, guide translation practices, and deepen appreciation for the linguistic and cultural heritage embedded in the sacred scriptures of Islam. According to Newmark (1988), "To grasp the intended meaning of the Holy Qur'an, the translator should read the verses in the original language many times" (p. 22). In this regard, oath expressions in the Qur'an often carry significant religious weight, so preserving their essence is crucial. It is a must for the translator to consider the cultural differences between the ST and TT. For instance, Arabic and English have different linguistic structures and cultural connotations. A translator must be mindful of these nuances to ensure the translated text resonates with English-speaking audiences while staying true to the original intent. The translator needs to consult classical commentaries because consulting classical commentaries can provide insights into the interpretation of oath expressions and help maintain fidelity to traditional understanding. He/she is sometimes obliged to use suitable equivalent expressions because some oath expressions in Arabic may not have direct equivalents in English. In such cases, translators may need to use phrases or expressions that convey a similar sense of solemnity and commitment. He/she considers the target audience because translations may vary depending on whether the target audience is familiar with Islamic terminology and concepts. For a broader audience, translators may need to provide additional explanations or footnotes to aid comprehension.

The research problem can be articulated through the following questions: 1) What strategies do Yemeni senior translation and English students employ when translating oath expressions in the Holy Qur'an from Arabic into English? 2) How effective are these strategies in conveying the intended meaning and cultural nuances of these expressions? 3) what types of losses occur during the translation process? This study seeks to explore these questions examining the challenges that Yemeni senior translation and English students face, the types of losses that occur in their translations, and the broader implications for improving translator training in handling religious texts.

By examining various English translations of the Holy Qur'an, this research investigates how translators render oath expressions while preserving their rhetorical and cultural significance. It explores the influence of translators' linguistic backgrounds, cultural perspectives, and theological interpretations on their work, shedding light on the ethical responsibilities inherent in translating sacred texts. Furthermore, the study highlights the practical implications of these strategies, offering guidance to translators, scholars, and religious communities seeking to produce translations that are both faithful to the original text and meaningful to the target audience.

Literature review

Translating oath expressions in the Holy Qur'an presents significant linguistic, cultural, and rhetorical challenges due to the unique nature of Qur'anic Arabic. Linguistically, the complexity of synonymy and subtle connotational differences often complicate the selection of appropriate equivalents in the target language, especially for non-native Arabic speakers (Albarakati, 2024). This is due to the differences in semantics, idiom, style, and culture (Hashemi, 2023). Lexical choices are further hindered by the distinctiveness of Qur'anic vocabulary, which frequently lacks direct equivalents in English, risking the loss of nuanced meanings (Hassanein & Moustafa, 2024). Culturally, the embedded idiosyncrasies and extraordinary vocabulary (gharib) in the Qur'an pose additional hurdles, as these



elements often lack parallels in English and require careful interpretation (Hassanein, 2021). Rhetorically, features such as rhymed prose (saj') and rhetorical questions are difficult to replicate, leading to a loss of the original text's aesthetic and mnemonic qualities (Al-Smadi, 2022; Lawrence, 2005). Structural challenges, such as the use of omission or ellipsis, further complicate translation, as the implicit meanings in the source text are not easily rendered in the target language (Allaithy, 2019). The language of the Qur'an is typically metaphorical, and most of its metaphors are quite conceptual. While English and Arabic do not always share the same conceptualizations in general texts, let alone sensitive texts like the Qur'an, the conceptualization of some Qur'anic metaphorical expressions is lost in translation (Al-Sowaidi et al., 2021; Elmahdi & Mohamad, 2024). Additionally, interpretative variability, particularly with expressions like the muqatta'at, results in diverse translations that can confuse readers (Al-Tarawneh, 2020). Addressing these challenges requires profoundly understanding the Qur'anic text's linguistic intricacies and cultural and rhetorical richness.

The translation of oath expressions in the Holy Qur'an, known as "Qasam," has garnered scholarly attention due to their theological significance, cultural connotations, and rhetorical power. Previous studies have explored the linguistic and stylistic complexities of these expressions, highlighting challenges such as differences between Arabic oath expressions and their translated counterparts and the difficulty of accurately conveying the intended meaning. For instance, Talib and Muhmmad (2020) conducted a linguistic analysis of selected Qur'anic verses containing oaths, employing lexical, syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic methodologies, and found that explicit oaths are more frequent and easier to recognize than implicit ones. Similarly, Alqurneh et al., (2016) proposed a stylometric model for detecting apparent and narrative oaths, utilizing structural and content-specific features, and demonstrated the effectiveness of machine-learning classifiers in analyzing oath styles.

To explore the capabilities of Yemeni translation students in handling diverse texts, ALFattah and Morshid (2024) revealed that students employ various translation methods, such as modulation, paraphrasing, and literal translation, to navigate linguistic and cultural gaps when translating war-related collocations. The study highlighted students' struggles with lexical and cultural nuances, pointing to the need for enhanced training in specialized translation. It emphasized the importance of improving students' linguistic competence and cultural awareness, particularly when dealing with texts that contain complex terminology and context-specific meanings. Building on these findings, the current study shifts focus to a more challenging domain: the translation of Quranic oath expressions from Arabic to English. By examining how Yemeni translation students approach socio-cultural and religious considerations in their strategies, this study aims to provide deeper insights into their ability to handle sacred texts, which requires linguistic precision and a profound understanding of cultural and religious contexts.

Building on this body of work, the present study aims to fill critical gaps by assessing the strategies employed by Yemeni senior translation and English students in rendering Qur'anic Oath expressions from Arabic to English. While previous studies have explored the challenges of translating Qur'anic texts, few have specifically examined how translation students, especially those from non-native English backgrounds, navigate these complexities. Existing research has largely focused on professional translators or comparative analyses of different English translations of the Qur'an, leaving a gap in understanding how students approach these sacred texts, what specific challenges they face,



and how their linguistic and cultural backgrounds influence their choices. While the sample size limits the generalizability of the findings, the study provides valuable insights into the range of strategies students employ and the challenges they encounter, offering a foundation for improving translator training programs, particularly for handling religious texts.

Theoretical framework

Religious texts present unique challenges in translation. Arabic carries religious, cultural, and linguistic meanings that are difficult to fully convey in English. The language of the Qur'an is typically metaphorical, and many of its metaphors are highly conceptual (Al-Sowaidi et al., 2021). Abdul-Raof, (2005) pointed out that in the process of interpreting the significance of the Qur'an, it is noted that the text is situated within an Arab cultural framework that is fundamentally distinct from the cultural paradigms of target languages external to the Arabian Peninsula (p. 162). Abdul-Raof emphatically articulates that "the context of culture, the natural habitat of words, needs to be preserved in order to achieve a successful ethnographic translation" (Abdul-Raof, 2005, p. 163). The translation of the Holy Qur'an is a debatable process because Arabic is full of culture-specific terms with no equivalence in other languages.

To bridge the gap of cultural differences between the ST and the TT, Venuti (2017) suggests the strategies of domestication and foreignization. Translating Qur'ani-specific words/phrases is considered a challenge for novice translators, which requires an accurate interpretation and consciousness of the major functions of these Qur'anic expressions and, therefore, gain equivalence and render the exact meaning (Khan, 2020). The result here is a misunderstanding of the intended meaning. This misunderstanding, according to Al-Badrany (2023), happens due to two general reasons: first, incompetent or non-specialized translators, and second, the difficulty of the text being translated. Nida and Taber (1969) emphasize translating the meaning rather than the literal form, which is particularly useful for translating religious texts like the Qur'an where cultural and theological elements must be respected. Nida also suggests that for sacred texts, the translator must convey the sense of the original as faithfully as possible while still ensuring that the target audience can understand it. Religious translation studies focus specifically on the translation of sacred scriptures and religious texts, exploring the unique challenges and ethical considerations involved in conveying religious concepts, beliefs, and practices across linguistic and cultural boundaries. This interdisciplinary field draws upon insights from translation theory, religious studies, linguistics, and cultural studies to analyze the translation of religious texts and its impact on faith communities and interfaith dialogue.

Studying the strategies of translating religious texts from Arabic to English, focusing on oath expressions in the Holy Qur'an, will draw upon these theoretical foundations to inform our research methodology, analysis, and interpretation. By integrating insights from translation theory, religious studies, rhetoric, and cultural analysis, we aim to develop a nuanced understanding of the complexities involved in translating religious texts and the strategies employed to overcome linguistic, cultural, and theological barriers in the translation process.

This theoretical background provides a comprehensive overview of the theoretical frameworks and interdisciplinary perspectives relevant to the study of translating religious texts, particularly oath expressions in the Holy



Qur'an. It underscores the importance of considering linguistic, cultural, rhetorical, and religious dimensions in analyzing translation strategies and their implications for intercultural communication and religious discourse.

In the context of translating oath expressions in the Holy Qur'an, functional equivalence theory suggests that translators should prioritize conveying the intended function and rhetorical impact of these expressions, even if it requires deviation from literal translation.

Applied to the translation of oath expressions in the Holy Qur'an, sociocultural translation theory suggests that translators should be sensitive to the cultural contexts and religious sensitivities of both source and target audiences, ensuring that translations accurately reflect the socio-religious milieu of the original text. Robinson (2005) highlights the importance of cultural awareness in translation, arguing that the deeper a translator's understanding of cultural differences, the more skilled and effective their translations will be.

Oath expressions

Oath expressions are persuasive rhetorical devices used to convince and persuade the listener or reader of the validity and importance of the message being conveyed. By swearing by elements of creation that are universally recognized and revered, Allah appeals to human reason and conscience. Oath is also a solemn promise to do something (Talib & Muhammad, 2020). God uses oaths in the Quran to emphasize the truthfulness or importance of a particular concept or statement. They serve as a divine tool to underscore the message's significance (Alqurneh et al., 2016).

The phenomenon of oath expressions encompasses a variety of objects, including celestial entities such as the moon, the sun, the night, and the stars, among others. These oaths, invoked by such entities, serve to signify that Almighty Allah is the sole creator of all existence (Talib & Muhammad, 2020). An oath constitutes a grave commitment to undertake a specific action. Oath expressions are used to capture the attention of the listener or reader, drawing them into the discourse and highlighting the significance of the message being conveyed. By swearing by various elements of creation, such as the sun, the moon, or the dawn, Allah prompts reflection on His power and majesty. The oaths taken by the divine possess profound insights that individuals will comprehend based on their respective levels of understanding. Additionally, it is noteworthy that the omnipotent and exalted deity articulates significant matters for the purpose of swearing, thereby underscoring the crucial elements that the formidable creator highlights in order to enact punishment (Keramaifard, 2020).

Oath expressions convey a sense of solemnity and gravity, signaling the seriousness of the matter at hand. When Allah swears by His creations or by aspects of the natural world, He emphasizes the divine authority behind His words and the importance of adhering to His commands.

When Allah swears by something in the Qur'an, He underscores the absolute certainty and truthfulness of the subsequent statement. By invoking something as a witness or by swearing by a particular aspect of creation, Allah emphasizes the importance of what follows and assures believers of its certainty. Al-Razi, (1209) explains that the use of oaths in the Qur'an is not to emphasize truth to Allah (since He is the ultimate truth) but to draw the listener's attention, highlight the importance of the subject matter, and sometimes to refute disbelief or negligence on the part of the human audience.



In conclusion, oath expressions in the Qur'an are a significant rhetorical feature that requires careful consideration to convey the intended meaning and emphasis accurately. This literature review will examine the strategies used in translating these expressions, drawing from key scholarly works.

Overall, oath expressions in the Holy Qur'an serve multiple functions, including emphasizing certainty, capturing attention, conveying solemnity, establishing divine witness, and enhancing persuasive effect. They contribute to the richness and depth of Qur'anic discourse, guiding believers towards reflection, obedience, and spiritual growth.

Oath expressions as a culture - specific

Oath expressions in the Holy Qur'an are deeply rooted in the cultural and linguistic context of Arabic-speaking societies and Islamic tradition. They serve as culturally specific rhetorical devices that reflect the religious worldview, values, and linguistic conventions of the time. Here's how oath expressions can be considered culture-specific.

Oath expressions in Arabic, such as "وَالشَّمْسِ وَضُحَاهَا" (By the sun and its brightness) or "فَلَا أُقْسِمُ بِالشَّفَقِ" (So I swear by the twilight), contain linguistic nuances and idiomatic expressions that may not have direct equivalents in other languages. These expressions are deeply embedded in the Arabic language and carry cultural connotations that may be challenging to convey accurately in translation.

Oath expressions in the Qur'an are infused with religious and spiritual significance, reflecting Islamic beliefs and theological concepts. For example, swearing by elements of creation, such as the sun, the moon, or the night, underscores the divine authority and omnipotence of Allah as the Creator of the universe. These expressions are deeply intertwined with Islamic theology and serve to reinforce the monotheistic principles of Islam. To translate these expressions, it is not an easy task. Abdul-Raof (2001) confirms that translating Qur'anic oath expressions is a challenging task. He pointed out that the Qur'an uses oath expressions (e.g., "By the sun and its brightness" - Surah 91:1) to emphasize a point or invoke a powerful image. Translators often face the challenge of maintaining the rhetorical force of these expressions while ensuring linguistic clarity and theological accuracy. Abdel Haleem (2004) also pointed out that Qur'anic oath expression includes cultural and theological meanings. Oath expressions in the Qur'an are not merely rhetorical devices but often carry profound theological meanings.

Oath expressions in the Holy Qur'an frequently utilize metaphorical language (e.g., oaths by natural elements like the sun, moon, stars, etc.). Preserving the metaphorical sense while ensuring clarity for English readers is crucial. Some translators opt to provide footnotes or additional commentary to explain these metaphors (Peachy, 2013). Understanding the culture-specific nature of these expressions is essential for accurately interpreting and translating the Qur'anic text and appreciating its significance within the broader Islamic tradition. Therefore, the translator needs to take into account this tradition.

Translation strategies

Translation strategies are the steps and procedures translators use to tackle ST translation problems (Almijrab, 2020). Ali (2001), states that translators are expected to use specific linguistic strategies when translating oath expressions. Drawing on the framework of Newmark (1976, 1981, 1988), Alabbasi (2021) identifies five key translation strategies that guide the translation process:



Formal translation: This strategy is mainly concerned with seeking an equivalence that concentrates on the SL in both form and content. Nida (1964) emphasizes that in such translation, the translator is concerned with such correspondences as poetry to poetry, sentence to sentence, and concept to concept. Formal translation, according to Nida (1964), attempts to reproduce several formal elements, including grammatical units, consistency in word usage, and meanings in terms of the source text.

Semantic translation: In this strategy, the translator concentrates more on rendering all meanings of the ST, including the contextual meaning. Newmark (1981) points out that semantic translation tries to transfer as closely as the semantic and syntactic structures of the second language allow, the exact contextual meaning of the original.

Communicative translation: This strategy focuses on the SL meanings and the TL readers' feelings. Newmark (1981) states that communicative translation tries to provide its readers with an effect as close as possible to that obtained from the readers of the original. This means that if the ST text affects the ST readers' feelings or behavior, the TT translation should have the same effect on the TT readers.

Dynamic or functional translation: In this strategy, the translator concentrates on rendering the ST message and making sure that the TT translation will have the same effect and function as the ST. Nida & Taber (1982) state that dynamic translation is "the reproduction in a receptor language of the closest natural equivalent of the source language message, first in terms of meaning and secondly in terms of style". It is important to indicate that communicative and dynamic translations are very similar. However, in dynamic translation, translators have more freedom to find the closest natural equivalent, which has almost the same function as the ST (Alabbasi, 2021).

On the other hand, Newmark (1981) determines eight translation strategies. These are word-for-word translation, literal translation, faithful translation, semantic translation, adaptation, free translation, idiomatic translation, and communicative translation. However, "Some translation procedures and strategies cannot be used to translate religious texts. For example, the omission procedure does not apply to translating the Noble Qur'an. A translator cannot simply delete the words of Allah" (Ayyad & Tengku Mahadi, 2021).

Dickins et al. (2002) present several strategies that may be appropriate when translating religious and cultural texts. These are exoticism and calque, cultural borrowing, communicative translation, and cultural transplantation. Exoticism and calque are mainly oriented towards the source culture, while cultural borrowing is less oriented than exoticism and calque. However, cultural transplantation is extremely oriented towards the culture of the target text, and communicative translation is less oriented than transplantation.

Reiss (2000) and Nord (2007) suggested the functional approach, which focuses on the functions of the texts and translations. Transliteration is another strategy, which is referred to by Dickins et al. (2002) as cultural borrowing.



Generalization is another translation strategy which has been used when translating culturally bound words that don't have a synonym or near a synonym in the target language. Nida (1964) proposes dynamic equivalence, focusing on conveying the meaning and emotional impact rather than a word-for-word translation. Exegetical translation involves providing additional explanations or commentary to clarify the meaning of the text. This strategy is particularly useful for complex or ambiguous passages. Ali's translation, for example, includes extensive footnotes and commentary to elucidate the meaning and context of Qur'anic verses, including oath expressions.

Methodology

The present study adopts a qualitative-quantitative research design and the analytical, descriptive method as the most appropriate method for such a type of study. It analyzes and describes the current conditions of the data that were collected from the sample.

The population

The population of this study consists of Yemeni senior translation and English students (Level Four) enrolled in translation programs at four universities: the Faculty of Applied Sciences & Humanities- Amran University (department of English, department of translation); Faculty of Arts & Humanities-Saba'a Region university, department of English (public universities); the Faculty of Humanities- Al-Nasser university (department of translation); and Faculty of Administrative Sciences & Humanities- (department of English) Al-Andalus University (private universities), represent the population of the study. The total population number is 100 students during the first semester of the Academic Year 2024/2025.

The sample and sampling techniques

The sample of the present study consists of 20 oath expressions that have been given to 52 senior translation students of Level Four who are enrolled in the B. A in the four Yemeni chosen universities, particularly the translation program and English program during the first semester of the Academic Year 2024/2025. The percentage of the sample is 52%. To make it clear, the students in the departments of translation study 16 to 18 translation courses, including one or two religious translation courses, whereas the departments of English programs include 2 to 4 translation courses. The researchers selected samples from the English and translation departments because the graduates from both departments will work in the field of translation, therefore, it is advisable to evaluate the ability of these two different departments.

The inclusion of both translation and English department students in the study is justified by the study's aim to explore the strategies employed when translating Qur'anic oath expressions and to assess the effectiveness of these strategies in conveying the intended meaning and cultural nuances. Both groups were selected because they represent students with advanced language skills and exposure to translation practices, making them suitable for examining the cognitive and practical challenges involved in translating religious texts. The focus is not on comparing the two groups but rather on analyzing the overall patterns and challenges that emerge from their translation attempts. This approach provides a broader understanding of the difficulties students face and the types of losses that occur, which can inform improvements in translator training, particularly for handling religious texts.



Table 1 presents the distribution of the study sample across four Yemeni universities, detailing the number of senior translation students, their gender, and representation in the sample.

Table 1: Demographics of the participants

University	Population	Sample	Male	Female
Amran University	32	17	2	15
Al-Andalus University	14	10	0	10
Al-Nasser University	24	15	0	15
Saba'a Region University	30	10	2	8
Total	100	52	4	48

Data Collection and analysis

Twenty oath expressions were selected randomly from the Holy Qur'an to collect the data. The decision to select 20 oaths, rather than a larger set, was made to strike a balance between depth and breadth of analysis, ensuring that the sample is diverse enough to reflect different oath structures while remaining manageable for both the researchers and the students. In total, there are 118 instances of oath in the Qur'an (Keramaifard, 2020). When selecting the oath expressions, the time was considered. After gathering translations produced by Yemeni senior translation and English students, we systematically analyzed their renditions to identify the strategies used in translating these expressions into English. Each translation was examined with attention to linguistic, cultural, and theological considerations. The students' translations and strategies were compared to well-known English translations and evaluated in terms of equivalence and translation strategy used. The translations used are Mohammed Taqi-uddin Al-Hilali and Mohammed Muhsin Khan (1987).

Results

Table (2) summarizes the translation strategies employed by Yemeni senior translation and English students. The analysis reveals the predominant techniques used in rendering oath expressions. Language correctness, cultural awareness, and rhetorical efficacy in expressing the original text's intended meaning were also covered in this examination.

Table (2)

Statistical analysis of translating oath expressions from Arabic into English

	literal T.		Paraphrasing		Transposition		Modulation		Comm. T.		Sem. T.		Omission		Transliteration	
	Freq.	Perc.	Freq.	Perc.	Freq.	Perc.	Freq.	Perc.	Freq.	Perc.	Freq.	Perc.	Freq.	Perc.	Freq.	Perc.
Item 1	22	42%	19	37%	2	4%	4	8%	0	0%	0	0%	5	10%	0	0%
Item 2	28	54%	20	38%	1	2%	2	4%	0	0%	0	0%	1	2%	0	0%
Item 3	20	38%	11	21%	14	27%	2	4%	0	0%	0	0%	4	8%	1	2%
Item 4	24	46%	6	12%	14	27%	0	0%	2	4%	0	0%	6	12%	0	0%
Item 5	23	44%	12	23%	9	17%	6	12%	1	2%	0	0%	1	2%	0	0%
Item 6	26	50%	9	17%	6	12%	6	12%	2	4%	1	2%	2	4%	0	0%



Item 7	20	38%	7	13%	15	29%	3	6%	4	8%	1	2%	2	4%	0	0%
Item 8	29	56%	6	12%	5	10%	1	2%	9	17%	2	4%	0	0%	0	0%
Item 9	33	63%	4	8%	2	4%	4	8%	6	12%	1	2%	2	4%	0	0%
Item 10	38	73%	4	8%	2	4%	2	4%	5	10%	0	0%	1	2%	0	0%
Item 11	33	63%	4	8%	5	10%	4	8%	3	6%	3	6%	0	0%	0	0%
Item 12	35	67%	5	10%	5	10%	1	2%	4	8%	1	2%	0	0%	1	2%
Item 13	29	56%	3	6%	7	13%	5	10%	4	8%	3	6%	1	2%	0	0%
Item 14	23	44%	7	13%	9	17%	4	8%	4	8%	4	8%	1	2%	0	0%
Item 15	18	35%	4	8%	13	25%	7	13%	2	4%	7	13%	1	2%	0	0%
Item 16	24	46%	9	17%	4	8%	3	6%	3	6%	7	13%	2	4%	0	0%
Item 17	27	52%	14	27%	5	10%	0	0%	2	4%	3	6%	1	2%	0	0%
Item 18	32	62%	9	17%	5	10%	4	8%	1	2%	0	0%	0	0%	1	2%
Item 19	34	65%	12	23%	4	8%	0	0%	0	0%	1	2%	1	2%	0	0%
Item 20	11	21%	8	15%	6	12%	5	10%	0	0%	5	10%	1	2%	16	31%

To set the translation strategies employed by the respondents, it is necessary to discuss the oath expressions one by one.

Table (2) uncovers a wide range of translation strategies employed by the respondents to render the meaning of oath expressions. First of all, the respondents utilized five translation strategies to translate item (1) "لَا أَقْسِمُ بِيَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ" (I swear by the Day of Resurrection) (Al-Hilali & Khan, 1987, 799). These strategies are (literal translation, paraphrasing, transposition, modulation, and omission). Literal translation has been observed with a statistical frequency of (42%). The respondents resorted to literal translation to preserve the meaning of the oath expression. However, word-by-word translation negatively affected the meaning of the text, and violated the meaning of the ST. One of these translations is "I don't swear by the Day of resurrection" (respondents 3, 10, 14, 16, 24, 37, 43, and 50, and this is one of the problems that causes inaccurate translation. Using "don't and "no" as a literal translation of "لا", negates the action and gives opposite meaning. It is also important to notice that thirty-seven percent of the respondents used a paraphrasing strategy (19 students) to render the meaning of these oath expressions. For instance, respondents (25), (26), 29 and (32), and (40) translated (يوم القيامة) "the day of the resurrection" into "the great day", "the last day", "the doomsday" and "the day of judgment". Modulation was also employed in a low statistical frequency (8%). They finally used omission strategy with a statistical frequency of (10%). The use of the omission strategy with translating the Holy Qur'an is one of the most serious challenges that cause misunderstanding of the Holy Qur'an. For instance, respondent (16) translated item (1), "I swear by the resurrection", deleting the word "day".

The respondents used five translation strategies to translate item (2) "وَالطُّورُ وَكِتَابٌ مَسْطُورٌ" (1) By the tur (mount), And by a Book Inscribed) (Al-Hilali & Khan, 1987, 713). Fifty four percent of them used literal translation. This oath expression is a name of a specific place "a mountain located in Egypt" and Allah the almighty swears by this place. Therefore, the respondents believe that literal translation is the most suitable translation strategy. Paraphrasing is the second most adopted strategy employed by the respondents. It accounted for (38%). For instance, respondent (38) used



the mountain location "altur in Sina'a" to clarify the meaning and make it familiar to the reader. Transposition, modulation, and omission are also used in low statistical frequencies (2%, 4%, and 2%) respectively.

In translating the third oath expression "وَالضُّحَىٰ وَاللَّيْلِ إِذَا سَجَىٰ" (By the forenoon (after sunrise), By the night when it darkens (and stand still) (Al-Hilali & Khan, 1987, 840), the respondents used six transition strategies (literal translation, paraphrasing, transposition, modulation, omission and transliteration). Literary translation appeared to have a high statistical frequency (38%). In this oath expression, Allah the almighty swears by the parts of the day, therefore, it seems easy for the respondents to use literal translation to suit the intended meaning of the ST. Twenty seven percent of the respondents utilized transposition. They attempted to make the necessary changes in the grammatical categories of the ST and TT to make their translation smooth and acceptable. For instance, some respondents translated "forenoon and night" into "morning and night if darkens", "the morning and night of appearance", "dawn and night darkens", and these are inaccurate and unacceptable translations. The third most adopted strategy as illustrated in table (2), is paraphrasing which appeared with a statistical frequency of (21%). For instance, some respondents translated "the forenoon and night" into morning and night when it shines, and "early hours of the day," and this leads to inaccurate translations and cryptic meanings. The respondents' incompetency led them to use omission with a statistical frequency of (8%), and this technique is unacceptable in religious and cultural texts because it causes partial loss of the intended meaning. Modulation and transliteration were also used with a statistical frequency of (4%). The respondents used the Arabic word 'Duha' as a transliteration technique for the English word "forenoon".

Five translation strategies were employed by the respondents (literal translation, paraphrasing, transposition, communicative translation, and omission) to translate item (4) "وَالنَّجْمِ إِذَا هَوَىٰ" (By the star when it goes down (or vanishes) (Al-Hilali & Khan, 1987, 717). The highly frequent strategy employed by the respondents is literal translation, which has been observed with a statistical frequency of (46%). In this oath expression, Allah the almighty swears by one of the objects of nature; therefore, from the translators' point of view, the literal translation is suitable for this situation. Transposition has been observed with a statistical frequency of (27%). Some respondents translate item (4) into "And if the star falls down", "the star is displaced", "when the star sets", "when the star has gone". The omission has been observed with a statistical frequency of (12%) to indicate the inability of the respondents to give a complete translation. For instance, they translated item (4) "it darkens", and this is an unacceptable translation. Communicative translation appeared with a statistical frequency of (4%). In this regard, the respondents attempted to render the contextual meaning and syntactic structures.

To translate item (5) "وَاللَّيْلِ إِذَا يَغْشَىٰ" (By the night as it envelops) (Al-Hilali & Khan, 1987, 838), the respondents utilized six translation strategies (literal translation, paraphrasing, transposition, modulation, omission, and communicative translation). The literal translation was employed as the most adopted strategy, with a statistical frequency of (44%). To swear by the night, it seems easy for the respondents to use literal translation as the most suitable strategy in this situation. Twenty three percent of the respondents utilized paraphrasing. For instance, some of them translated item (5) "And the night when it covers", "And the night when it conveyed the earth" "God swears by the



night". The third most adopted strategy utilized by the respondents is transposition, which accounted for (17%). To make suitable grammatical categories, some of the respondents translated item (5) as "And the night covered the earth". Modulation was also employed with a statistical frequency of (12%). To achieve acceptable translation, the respondents utilized this strategy. For instance, they translated item (5), "Allah swears by the dark of the night". Their intention is to transfer new perspectives to the readers. Communicative strategy was also observed in a low statistical frequency (2%).

As illustrated in Table (2), seven strategies were employed by the respondents (literal translation, paraphrasing, transposition, modulation, communicative strategy, semantic translation) to translate item (6) "فَلَا أَقْسِمُ بِرَبِّ الْمَشَارِقِ" (So I swear by the Lord of all the (three hundred and sixty-five (365) points of sunrise and sunset in the east and the west that We are Able) (Al-Hilali & Khan, 1987, 786). Fifty percent of the respondents utilized a literal translation strategy to make faithful adherence to the religious text. They also used word by word translation, and the result is unacceptable translation. For instance, they translated item (6) "But not I swear by the lord of the east and the west that we are certainly able". They translated "فَلَا" (but not), instead of translating it (so). Paraphrasing was also observed with a statistical frequency of (17%). Transposition and modulation have been observed as the second-ranking strategies in the same statistical frequency (12%). Communicative strategy and omission were also observed with a statistical frequency (4%), as the third most adopted strategies. An example of communicative translation is "so I swear by the lord of (all) risings and settings that indeed we are able". The use of omission in a high statistical frequency reflects no adherence to the faithful translation. For example, respondent (14) and (19) gave incomplete translation for item (6), "And by the lord of the east and the west". The sentence 'we are able' was deleted. Finally, semantic translation was observed in a low statistical frequency (2%).

The literal translation was also utilized by the respondents with a statistical frequency of (37%) to translate item (7) "وَالسَّمَاءِ ذَاتِ الْخُبُكِ" (By the heaven full of paths) (Al-Hilali & Khan, 1987, 707) from Arabic to English). By using this strategy, the respondents intend to preserve the SL text when translating this oath expression. Transposition and paraphrasing are also observed with statistical frequencies of (29% and 13%) respectively. These two strategies appeared to be better at conveying the meaning of the religious text. Communicative translation, modulation, omission, and semantic translation appeared with statistical frequencies of (8%, 6%, 4%, and 2%) respectively. Communicative translation succeeded in conveying the meaning to the target language. In contrast, the omission strategy failed to transfer the meaning because it causes partial semantic loss.

When translating item (8), "فَلَا أَقْسِمُ بِالْخَنَسِ" (So verily I swear by planets that recede (i.e. disappear during the day and appear during the night) (Al-Hilali & Khan, 1987, 818). The respondents preferred literal translation. As illustrated in table (2), it accounted for (56%). In this regard, the respondents have a strong intention to preserve the source culture. Communicative strategy appeared with a statistical frequency of (17%), as the second most adopted strategy. In this situation, the respondents intend to give the readers a chance to have a pragmatic understanding. Paraphrasing and transposition are also observed with statistical frequencies of (12% and 10%), respectively. The



respondents attempted to transfer the correct meaning and produce an acceptable TL text. Finally, semantic translation appeared to have a low statistical frequency (2%), as shown in Table (2).

The respondents demonstrated a clear tendency to use literal translation to translate the oath expression no (9) "فَلَا أَقْسِمُ بِمَا تُبْصِرُونَ" (So I swear by whatsoever you see) (Al-Hilali & Khan, 1987, 782) from Arabic to English. This strategy was observed with a statistical frequency of (63%), as the most adopted strategy. This oath expression is very simple; therefore, the respondents preferred this strategy to produce a faithful meaning for the SL text. The communicative strategy appeared as the second most adopted strategy, with a statistical frequency of (12%) to render the meaning of the religious text as closely as possible to TL culture. Paraphrasing and modulation appeared in the same statistical frequency (8%). Omission and semantic translation appeared in low statistical frequencies (4% and 2%), respectively.

Likewise, literal translation was observed in highly statistical frequencies when translating the three oath expressions (10), (11), and (12) "فَلَا أَقْسِمُ بِمَوَاقِعِ النُّجُومِ" (So I swear by the setting of the stars) (Al-Hilali & Khan, 1987, 737), "فَلَا أَقْسِمُ بِالنَّفْسِ اللَّوَّامَةِ" (And I swear by the self-reproaching person (a believer) (Al-Hilali & Khan, 1987, 799), "فَلَا أَقْسِمُ بِالسَّافَرِ" (So I swear by the afterglow of sunset) (Al-Hilali & Khan, 1987, 825). This strategy has been noticed with statistical frequencies of (73%, 63%, and 67%), respectively. Paraphrasing was also employed with statistical frequencies (8%, 8%, and 10%) when translating these three oath expressions. The respondents employed it when they were unable to use any other strategy. Transposition was also employed with statistical frequencies of (4%, 10%, 10%). Modulation strategy was observed with statistical frequencies of (4%, 8%, and 2%). Communicative translation was also observed with statistical frequencies of (10%, 6%, and 8%). Finally, semantic translation appeared with statistical frequencies of (0%, 3%, 1%).

When translating oath expression no (13), "وَالشَّمْسُ وَضُحَاهَا" "By the sun and its brightness", (Al-Hilali & Khan, 1987, 837), the literal translation remains the first most adopted strategy, where it accounted for (56%). Although Allah the almighty swears by one object of nature, the respondents preferred literal translation to render the faithful meaning of the SL text. The second most adopted strategy is transposition, which appeared with a statistical frequency of (13%). In this situation, the respondents intend to render the meaning of the religious text to the TL text smoothly by making necessary changes in the structures of the SL text. Modulation, communicative translation, and semantic translation were also observed with statistical frequencies of (10%, 8%, and 6%), respectively.

Seven translation strategies were observed by the respondents (literal translation, paraphrasing, transposition, modulation, communicative translation, semantic translation, and omission) to translate oath expression no (14) "وَالْيَوْمِ وَالْأَجْرِ" (And by the promising day (i.e. the day of resurrection), And by the witnessing day (i.e. Friday) (Al-Hilali & Khan, 1987, 826). Literal translation was observed as the most frequent strategy, with a statistical frequency of (44%). The respondents have shown a high tendency to use this strategy to preserve the meaning of SL text. Transposition appeared as the second most adopted strategy employed by the respondents, with a statistical frequency of (17%). In this situation, the respondents have a clear tendency to convey the meaning of the SL by rearranging the



structures of the text. Modulation, communicative translation, and semantic translation appeared with the same statistical frequency (8%).

To translate oath expression no (15) "وَالْعَادِيَاتِ ضَبْحًا" (By the (steeds) that run with panting), literal translation and transposition were observed as the most adopted strategies, with statistical frequencies of (35% and 25%), respectively. Thirteen percent of the respondents (13%) utilized modulation and semantic translation. The respondents resorted to these two techniques to make reasonable translation in the target language text. Paraphrasing and omission were also observed with statistical frequencies of (8% and 2%), respectively.

As illustrated in Table (2), the respondents demonstrated a high tendency to utilize literal translation to translate item (16) "فَلَا وَرَبِّكَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ حَتَّى يُحَكِّمُوكَ فِيمَا شَجَرَ بَيْنَهُمْ" (But no, by your Lord they can have no faith until they make you (O Mohammed) judge in all disputes between them) (Al-Hilali & Khan, 1987, 119), which appeared with a statistical frequency of (46%). The second most adopted strategy is paraphrasing, which accounted for (17%). This oath expression includes a good deal of culturally specific terms. Therefore, the respondents attempted to use semantic translation which accounted for (13%). They attempted to render as closely as the semantic and syntactic structures of the exact contextual meaning of the original (Newmark, 1981). Transposition, modulation, and communicative translation have been observed with statistical frequencies of (8%, 6%, and 6%), respectively. Omission was also employed with a statistical frequency of (4%).

The simple component and the clear contextual meaning of oath expression no (17) "و الفجر و ليال عشر" (By the dawn, by the ten nights (i.e. the first ten days of the month Dhul- Hijjah) (Al-Hilali & Khan, 1987, 833) carries, encourages the respondents to utilize literal translation in a high statistical frequency (46%), as an appropriate strategy to render the meaning of this text. Despite the simple structure of this expression, the respondents utilized paraphrasing and semantic translation with statistical frequencies of (17% and 13%), respectively. Transposition, modulation, communicative translation, and omission were also observed in the data corpus with statistical frequencies (8%, 6%, 6%, and 4%).

Oath expressions no (18) and (19) "و التين و الزيتون" (By the fig, and the olive) (Al-Hilali & Khan, 1987, 841) "و السماء ذات البروج" (By the heaven holding big stars) (Al-Hilali & Khan, 1987, 825), include clear and simple structures, therefore, the respondents preferred literal translation, with statistical frequencies (62%), (65%) to render faithful meaning. Paraphrasing was also employed in highly statistical frequencies (17% and 23%), respectively. Transposition and modulation appeared in the data corpus with statistical frequencies (10%, 8%, 8%, and 0%).

Oath expression no (20) "وتالله لأكيدن أصنامكم بعد أن تولوا مدبرين" (And by Allah, I shall plot a plan (to destroy) your idols after you have gone away and turned your backs) (Al-Hilali & Khan, 1987, 435) includes unique cultural perspectives, which make it to some extent complex to be translated easily. Due to this complexity, the respondents resorted to using the transliteration strategy, which accounted for (31%), as the most frequent strategy to render the meaning, by borrowing Arabic terms to the TL. The term "Allah" was used instead of "God". The Arabic lexeme "Alkhunas" was also used. The result will probably be an inaccurate translation. Twenty one percent of the respondents utilized literal translation to convey appropriate meaning when translating religious text. Finally, paraphrasing,



transposition, modulation, and semantic translation were also employed by the respondents with statistical frequencies (15%, 12%, 10%, and 10%) respectively.

Summary of the results

Table (3):

The statistics of translation strategies employed by the respondents (summary)

Strategy	Frequency	Percentage
literal T.	529	51%
Paraphrasing	173	17%
Transposition	133	13%
Modulation	63	6%
Comm. T.	52	5%
Sem. T.	39	4%
Omission	32	3%
Transliteration	19	2%

To sum up, a wide range of strategies were opted by the respondents to render oath expressions from Arabic to English. With a frequency of 51% and 529 replies, the data corpus showed that the literal translation strategy emerged as the most conspicuous strategy utilized by the respondents. In order to convey the desired message accurately, participants preferred this strategy when translating religious texts between Arabic and English. This is because many theorists and translators think that literal translation is the most suitable strategy to render the meaning of religious texts. With 173 responses, paraphrasing is the second most popular technique, as respondents modify their grammar to close the gap between the two languages. With 133 responses, transposition is the third most adopted strategy, as participants attempted to change the grammatical categories and structures due to the differences between the source language and the target language. With 63, 52, and 39 replies, respectively, modulation, semantic translation, and omission techniques were also employed in a small number of instances. The transliteration strategy was also employed with a statistical frequency of 2% (19 students). The respondents resorted to this strategy because they couldn't find a suitable equivalent in the target language (English).

Discussion and Conclusion

The current study aims to explore the translation strategies used by Yemeni senior translation and English students when translating oath expressions from Arabic to English. The data was gathered from students in the translation and English departments of four public and private Yemeni universities. How Yemeni undergraduates handle the Holy Qura'an texts while transferring them to the target language is one of the problems the study sought to address. Yemeni senior translation and English students approached religious texts differently, according to the response to the first question. They utilized a variety of techniques to convey their meaning. According to the study, Yemeni students translate oath expressions from English to Arabic using a range of translation strategies. Various strategies are employed in translation, including literal translation, paraphrasing, transposition, modulation, semantic



translation, communicative translation, transliteration, and omission. An appropriate translation, as held by translation theorists, is one that is able to render into the TT the original effect of the expression in the ST (Newmark, 1981).

The second objective of the study sought to explore the effectiveness of different translation strategies in conveying the meaning and cultural nuances of oath expressions. In this regard, literal translation serves to preserve the ST structure and protect cultural and linguistic peculiarities. Paraphrasing helps to bridge structural differences between the two languages, allowing respondents to articulate the meaning in their own terms. Transposition involves making essential adjustments to grammatical categories and structures between the ST and TT. Modulation is used to keep the acceptability of meaning when the form of ST is changed. Semantic translation serves to maintain the syntactic structures and contextual meaning of the second language (Newmark, 1981). Communicative translation was also employed to preserve the faithfulness and accuracy of translating religious texts. However, the use of omission strategy and word-by-word translation led to inaccurate and unacceptable translation, which caused misunderstanding of the divine texts.

While ALFattah and Morshid (2024) explored the challenges Yemeni senior translation and English students face in handling war-related collocations, the current study shifts focus to the translation of oath expressions from Arabic to English, particularly within the context of religious texts. ALFattah and Morshid (2024) found that modulation was the most common strategy (50%, 1289 responses), followed by paraphrasing (524 responses) and literal translation (484 responses), as students aimed to bridge linguistic and cultural gaps in war-related contexts. In contrast, the current study reveals that literal translation emerged as the most frequently used strategy (51%, 529 responses) for translating oath expressions, as participants prioritized preserving the structure and sacredness of religious texts. Paraphrasing (173 responses) and transposition (133 responses) were also employed, though to a lesser extent, to address grammatical and structural differences. Additionally, strategies like modulation (63 responses), semantic translation (52 responses), and omission (39 responses) were used sparingly, with transliteration appearing in only 2% of cases (19 responses). Unlike ALFattah and Morshid (2024), where modulation dominated, this study highlights the preference for literal translation in religious contexts, reflecting the students' attempt to maintain the divine meaning and cultural nuances of the Holy Qur'an. However, the use of omission and word-for-word translation often led to semantic and lexical losses, underscoring the students' limited familiarity with the complexities of sacred texts. These findings emphasize the unique challenges of translating religious expressions and the need for specialized training to enhance students' ability to handle such texts effectively.

Regarding the third objective of the study, it becomes clear that using the omission strategy in translating oath expressions led to various types of loss. Semantic loss occurs when the meaning or nuance of the original term is not preserved due to the lack of an equivalent in the target language, especially in cases involving synonymy and polysemy in Arabic. Lexical loss, on the other hand, refers to the complete omission or incorrect substitution of a word or term, leading to a gap in the translated text. Novice translators sometimes oversimplify or provide inadequate explanations of some Qur'anic terms, resulting in the loss of the intended meaning.



In conclusion, it must be noted that the respondents are mostly unable to choose the best translation strategy to convey the intended meaning. This proves their unfamiliarity with religious texts.

This study contributes to understanding the state of university education in translation, particularly in the context of religious translation. Given the complexities of translating oath expressions and the frequent reliance on literal translation, future research should delve deeper into the pedagogical approaches used in translation programs and their effectiveness in equipping students with the necessary skills. Additionally, qualitative studies exploring the cognitive processes behind students' translation choices, as well as the role of linguistic, cultural, and theological awareness in translation competence, would provide valuable insights. Further research could also assess the availability and adequacy of translation resources and curriculum design in Yemeni universities and beyond, identifying strategies to enhance the quality and relevance of translation education. By addressing these areas, future studies can help bridge existing gaps and propose educational reforms that improve translation training, particularly in religious contexts.

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