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Semantic Strategies in Arberry's Qur'an Translation: Pedagogical Implications for Arabic Language Teaching

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the semantic strategies employed by Arberry in The Koran Interpreted and explores their implications for Arabic language teaching. Using a qualitative descriptive approach with textual analysis, the study examines linguistic units reflecting semantic phenomena such as polysemy, metaphor, and semantic shift. The findings reveal that Arberry consistently applies three major strategies: lexical, contextual, and idiomatic-figurative semantics. At the lexical level, he prioritizes core meaning through context-sensitive word selection. At the contextual level, meanings are adjusted to align with the discourse of each verse, ensuring coherence and interpretability. At the idiomatic and figurative level, Qur'anic metaphors are largely preserved to maintain symbolic and rhetorical depth. These strategies indicate that Arberry's translation is interpretative and meaning-oriented rather than form-based. Pedagogically, the findings highlight the relevance of semantic translation for enhancing learners' contextual vocabulary understanding, semantic awareness, and interpretative competence through text-based approaches in Arabic language teaching.

Keywords: *Semantic Strategies, Qur'an Translation, Arberry, Arabic Language Teaching*

INTRODUCTION

The Qur'an, as the holy scripture of Islam, was revealed in Arabic, a language characterized by a high degree of linguistic and semantic complexity. The distinctiveness of Qur'anic Arabic is evident in

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phenomena such as polysemy, conceptual metaphor, contextual meaning relations, and richly layered rhetorical structures. These features render the language of the Qur'an not merely a vehicle for conveying religious messages, but a complex and multidimensional system of meaning. In many cases, a single Qur'anic word or expression carries multiple interrelated layers of meaning, requiring in-depth linguistic analysis for proper understanding. This complexity often results in the absence of direct equivalents in other languages. Consequently, Qur'anic translation has never been regarded as a purely literal transfer of meaning, but rather as a form of linguistic interpretation of the source text (Abdullah & Edris, 2021; Albalawi, 2025; Haleem, 2018).

In linguistic studies, semantics is the branch concerned with the study of meaning. Meaning is not viewed as a static entity inherently attached to linguistic forms, but as a construct emerging from the interaction between language systems, usage contexts, and speakers' knowledge. Therefore, semantic analysis encompasses not only lexical meaning but also conceptual relations, associative meanings, and pragmatic nuances (Brochhagen et al., 2018; Eragamreddy, 2024). Contemporary semantic studies further emphasize the multidimensional nature of meaning, including conceptual, associative, stylistic, and affective dimensions that collectively shape textual interpretation (Devina, 2022; Hogan, 2020).

In contemporary linguistics, meaning is generally analyzed across several categories, including lexical, grammatical, and contextual meaning. Lexical meaning refers to the basic sense of a word as recorded in the lexicon. However, linguistic forms are often polysemous, allowing for multiple possible interpretations. Grammatical meaning arises from syntactic and morphological relations, while contextual meaning is heavily influenced by situational and discourse contexts (Gardelle et al., 2024; Krauska & Lau, 2023). This perspective highlights that meaning cannot be separated from social and discursive contexts, and that textual interpretation involves a complex process of meaning construction.

Such semantic complexity becomes even more pronounced in religious texts like the Qur'an. The language of the Qur'an conveys not only linguistic messages but also theological, ethical, and spiritual dimensions. Linguistic studies of the Qur'an demonstrate that many verses contain implicatures, conceptual metaphors, and religious symbolism that cannot always be directly represented in other languages (Chaer et al., 2025; Hikmawati & Hasan, 2026; Mohammad, 2025; Samsudin, 2026). Moreover, key Qur'anic concepts form interconnected semantic fields, where the meaning of a term can only be fully understood within a broader conceptual network (Albalawi, 2025).

The semantic distinctiveness of Qur'anic Arabic is also closely related to its highly productive morphological derivation system. Variations in morphological patterns can generate significant nuances of meaning, even when derived from the same root (Hermawan, 2026). In the Qur'anic text, such variations serve not only grammatical functions but also subtle semantic and pragmatic functions (Haifa & Ali Al-Hamzi, 2025). In addition, Qur'anic discourse is rich in implicit and connotative meanings, often conveyed through rhetorical strategies such as metaphor, parallelism, repetition, and shifts in discourse perspective (*iltifāt*) (Hishomudin et al., 2025; Malik, 2025). These features make literal translation insufficient for capturing the depth of the source text.

Within this context, Qur'anic translation presents complex linguistic and hermeneutic challenges. Translation studies emphasize that the primary goal of translation is not formal equivalence but equivalence of meaning. This concept, known as dynamic equivalence, seeks to elicit a response in the target audience that is comparable to that of the source audience (Nichols, 2022; Xie, 2023). Accordingly, translators must employ various semantic strategies to effectively represent the meaning of the source text in the target language.

A semantic approach to translation is further developed in the theory of semantic translation, which emphasizes the importance of preserving the contextual meaning of the source text as closely as possible to its original semantic structure (Newmark, 1988). This approach is considered particularly suitable for religious texts, as it maintains theological integrity and avoids oversimplification of the

sacred message (Hatim & Mason, 2005; Venuti, 2017). Nevertheless, translation inevitably involves semantic shifts due to differences in linguistic and cultural systems between the source and target languages (Baker, 2018).

Awareness of this semantic complexity is clearly reflected in one of the most influential English translations of the Qur'an, *The Koran Interpreted* by Arthur John Arberry. First published in 1955, this translation is renowned for its attempt to preserve the semantic nuance and rhetorical rhythm of Qur'anic Arabic. Arberry explicitly referred to his work as an "interpretation" rather than a literal translation, acknowledging the limitations of English in fully conveying Qur'anic meaning (Arberry, 1996; Edris, 2019; Eslamieh & Mokhtari, 2021). This perspective underscores that Qur'anic translation is inherently an interpretive process involving negotiation between the source text and the target language.

Previous studies on *The Koran Interpreted* can be grouped into three strands, each addressing a different aspect of Arberry's work. The first strand examines stylistic and rhetorical features. Habibolahi (2023) shows that Arberry sought to reproduce the stylistic and rhetorical nuances of the source text, particularly through lexical choices that closely reflect the semantic structure of Arabic, while Alhamshary (2025) similarly approaches the translation from a stylistic perspective. However, these studies tend to frame Arberry's work within translation aesthetics and do not systematically identify, classify, or explain the semantic strategies underlying his choices. The second strand focuses on micro-level semantic phenomena. Rad et al. (2024) analyze Qur'anic metaphor and reveal that Arberry preserves conceptual imagery of the source language through strategies aligned with Newmark (1988) semantic translation. Nevertheless, their scope is confined to metaphor and selected lexical items, leaving other semantic phenomena, such as polysemy, semantic fields, morphological derivation, and *iltifāt*, unexamined, and they do not consider how these strategies operate together across the text. The third strand evaluates translation quality comparatively. Majit (2025) compares Arberry with Marmaduke Pickthall and Abdullah Yusuf Ali and finds that Arberry is more consistent in maintaining Qur'anic rhetorical patterns and parallelism, although sometimes at the expense of readability. This study, however, centers on equivalence and accuracy as evaluative criteria rather than on explaining how semantic strategies work, and it does not address their pedagogical relevance.

Beyond studies on Arberry, recent research in Qur'anic translation has increasingly focused on semantic challenges such as polysemy, metaphor, idiom, and rhetorical structures as key sources of complexity (Albalawi, 2025). Yet these works address Qur'anic translation in general terms; they do not offer a systematic account of the semantic strategies of a single, influential translator, and they do not link their findings to Arabic language teaching.

Therefore, despite the existing body of research, three gaps remain. First, no study has comprehensively explained how semantic strategies operate as an integrated system within Arberry's translation, as existing studies remain partial and fragmented across stylistic, metaphorical, and evaluative concerns. Second, the relationship between these strategies and Arabic semantic phenomena (polysemy, semantic fields, morphological derivation, and *iltifāt*) has not been examined together. Third, a significant gap exists between translation studies and Arabic language pedagogy: previous research rarely explores how semantic strategies in Qur'anic translation can inform Arabic language teaching, particularly in developing learners' semantic awareness and contextual understanding. Thus, a systematic investigation of Arberry's semantic strategies, along with their pedagogical implications, remains an underexplored yet academically significant area of inquiry.

Based on the foregoing discussion, this study aims to identify and describe the semantic strategies employed by A. J. Arberry in *The Koran Interpreted*, to analyze how these strategies represent the meaning of Qur'anic Arabic in English, and to examine their implications for Arabic language teaching. Specifically, this study seeks to answer the following research questions: (1) What semantic strategies are employed by A. J. Arberry in *The Koran Interpreted* in translating Qur'anic Arabic into English?; (2) How do these strategies represent the semantic features of Qur'anic Arabic, including polysemy,

semantic fields, morphological derivation, and rhetorical structures, in the English target text?; What are the pedagogical implications of these semantic strategies for the teaching of Arabic, particularly for developing learners' semantic awareness and contextual understanding?

The novelty of this study lies in three principal contributions. First, at the level of scientific advancement, this study offers a systemic and integrated mapping of Arberry's semantic strategies, rather than the partial findings confined to lexical or metaphorical levels found in previous studies, thereby producing a new analytical framework that more coherently bridges Newmark's semantic translation theory with Qur'anic translation studies. Second, this research addresses the gap between translation studies and Arabic language pedagogy that has thus far received limited scholarly attention, by generating a concrete model of how Qur'anic translation texts can function as an authentic corpus for building learners' semantic awareness, encompassing the introduction of polysemy, semantic fields, and cross-linguistic equivalence strategies. Third, on a practical level, the findings of this study are expected to serve as a reference for Arabic language instructors and curriculum developers in designing authentic text-based teaching materials that integrate linguistic competence with sensitivity to the depth of source-text meaning, so that Arabic language learning is oriented not only toward the mastery of grammatical structures but also toward the development of learners' semantic literacy and interpretive sensitivity. Accordingly, this study is guided by the following central question: how do the semantic strategies employed by Arberry in *The Koran Interpreted* operate as an integrated system in representing Qur'anic Arabic meaning in English, and how can these strategies inform the teaching of Arabic?

This study is subject to several limitations. It focuses on a single translation, *The Koran Interpreted*, and therefore its findings cannot be generalized to other English translations or to translations into other languages. The analysis is qualitative and based on a selected set of Qur'anic verses representing the semantic phenomena under investigation, rather than on the entire text. In addition, the pedagogical implications are developed conceptually from the textual analysis and have not been tested empirically in classroom settings, which future research could address through experimental or classroom-based studies.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative-descriptive approach with a textual analysis orientation. The qualitative approach is chosen because the study aims to gain an in-depth understanding of the semantic strategies used in translating the Qur'an, rather than measuring the statistical frequency of data occurrences. In qualitative research, analysis focuses on the interpretation of meaning and the understanding of linguistic phenomena within their context, enabling the researcher to examine the relationship between linguistic forms and meaning more comprehensively (Billups, 2025; Tomaszewski et al., 2020). This approach allows for an exploration of how meaning is represented in the translated text and how it relates to the semantic systems of both the source and target languages.

Textual analysis is employed because the object of the study is a written text, namely the English translation of the Qur'an *The Koran Interpreted* by A. J. Arberry. The analysis focuses on meaning representation, lexical choices, and meaning-making strategies evident in the target text when compared with the Arabic source text. In translation studies, textual analysis is a crucial method for examining the relationship between source and target texts and for identifying the linguistic strategies employed by the translator in transferring meaning (Laviosa, 2021; Zhang, 2023). Through this approach, the study not only observes linguistic forms in the translated text but also investigates how meaning is constructed and negotiated in the translation process.

The primary data source of this research is the English translation of the Qur'an *The Koran Interpreted* by A. J. Arberry. This work is selected because it is widely recognized as one of the Qur'an

translations that attempts to preserve the semantic nuance and rhetorical aesthetics of the Arabic language in English. Arberry's interpretative approach makes his work particularly relevant for analysis from semantic and translation perspectives. Therefore, the text is considered a representative corpus for examining meaning-making strategies in Qur'anic translation.

The data consist of linguistic units in the translated text that exhibit specific semantic phenomena. These units include words or phrases demonstrating polysemy, metaphorical expressions, semantic structures undergoing meaning shifts, and lexical choices that represent the contextual meaning of Qur'anic verses. In modern semantic studies, such linguistic units are regarded as key indicators for tracing the dynamics of meaning in texts (Alwazna & Alfaify, 2025). To understand the relationship between source and target meanings, this study also employs the standard Arabic Qur'anic text *(muṣḥaf 'Uthmānī)* as a comparative source. This comparison enables the identification of equivalence and potential semantic shifts in the translation process.

Data collection is conducted using the observational and note-taking technique. This technique is commonly used in text-based linguistic research as it allows systematic observation of linguistic elements relevant to the study (Litosseliti, 2024; Podesva & Sharma, 2014). The data collection process involves several stages. First, the researcher carefully reads *The Koran Interpreted* to understand the overall context and discourse structure of the verses**.** Second, relevant verses were identified in three steps: (1) reading the Arabic text alongside Arberry's rendering and checking candidate expressions against Arabic lexicons and *tafsīr*; (2) selecting verses showing polysemy, metaphor (Lakoff & Johnson, 2008), or semantic shift (Baker, 2018); and (3) cross-checking the selection with a second Arabic linguistics expert, resolving disagreements through discussion. Third, the identified linguistic units are recorded and compared with the Arabic Qur'anic text to trace meaning relations between the source and target languages. Fourth, the collected data are categorized based on the types of semantic strategies observed in the translated text. This procedure is conducted systematically to ensure that the data are representative and relevant to the research objectives.

Data analysis is carried out qualitatively using an interactive analysis model consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. This model is widely used in qualitative research as it allows analysis to proceed cyclically and interactively across stages (Huberman, 2014). In the data reduction stage, all collected data are selected and focused on the most relevant semantic phenomena. Data not directly related to semantic strategies in translation are excluded from the analysis.

The next stage involves data classification. The reduced data are grouped according to the types of semantic strategies employed in the translated text. This classification is based on semantic and translation theories, particularly concepts of equivalence, semantic shift, and meaning-oriented translation strategies. Through this process, patterns of semantic strategies used by Arberry can be identified systematically.

Following classification, the data are analyzed interpretatively by comparing lexical and contextual meanings between the Arabic source text and the English translation. This analysis aims to reveal how Arberry represents Qur'anic meanings through specific lexical choices and how these semantic strategies function to bridge differences between Arabic and English linguistic systems. In contemporary translation studies, such analysis is essential for understanding how translators negotiate meaning across languages.

The final stage is conclusion drawing. The results of the analysis are synthesized to address the research questions concerning the semantic strategies employed by Arberry and how these strategies influence the representation of Qur'anic meaning in English. Additionally, the findings are interpreted to explain their implications for Arabic language teaching, particularly in developing semantic awareness and contextual meaning comprehension.

To ensure the validity of the data and findings, this study employs theoretical triangulation. Semantic analysis is conducted by referring to multiple theoretical perspectives in semantics and

translation studies, including those proposed by Lyons, Newmark, Baker, and Abdul-Raof. The use of diverse theoretical frameworks aims to minimize researcher subjectivity and strengthen the validity of interpretation.

Furthermore, data validity is maintained through analytical consistency, meaning that the same analytical criteria are applied to all data examined, ensuring systematic and scientifically accountable results.

The use of a qualitative-descriptive method with a textual analysis approach is considered appropriate, as it enables an in-depth and contextual exploration of semantic strategies. This method is also relevant for explaining the pedagogical implications of the findings, as the analysis is not only descriptive but also interpretative and applicable.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

The findings of this study are organized based on data selected according to the principle of representativeness. Thus, the analysis does not encompass all words across all Qur'anic verses, but rather focuses on examples considered most representative in demonstrating the patterns of semantic strategies employed by A. J. Arberry. Data selection also takes into account several important aspects, including the level of semantic complexity (such as polysemy and metaphor), the frequency of term occurrence in the Qur'an, conceptual significance within theological discourse, and the relevance of contextual variation in meaning. Additionally, items were selected that exhibit clear distinctions between lexical and contextual meanings, thereby enabling a more in-depth and systematic analysis of translation strategies.

In line with the research questions, the findings cover several aspects of semantic strategies, as follows:

Lexical Semantic Strategy

The analysis reveals that A. J. Arberry, in *The Koran Interpreted*, consistently applies a lexical semantic strategy through the selection of English vocabulary that represents the core meaning of the Arabic text rather than merely providing literal equivalents. This strategy is particularly evident in the translation of key Qur'anic terms that are conceptually dense and semantically loaded.

For instance, the word *al-'ālamīn* in QS. al-Fātiḥah [1]: 2 is translated as "all Being" rather than *worlds*. This choice reflects Arberry's tendency to emphasize a universal ontological dimension—encompassing all existence—rather than a cosmological interpretation limited to the plurality of physical worlds. Such an approach guides readers toward a deeper conceptual understanding.

The term *hudā* in QS. al-Baqarah [2]: 38 is translated as "guidance." Arberry preserves the core lexical meaning without adding interpretive elements such as *divine law* or *religious instruction*, thereby keeping the meaning semantically open and not confined to a specific interpretation.

Another example is the word *āyah* in QS. al-Baqarah [2]: 164, rendered as "signs." This choice reflects its basic meaning as an indicator or sign rather than *verses*, thus expanding its semantic scope to include cosmic and epistemic phenomena rather than merely textual units.

In the case of *ẓulm* in QS. al-An'ām [6]: 82, Arberry translates it as "wrongdoing" rather than *injustice*. This emphasizes a moral-behavioral dimension rather than a socio-legal one, aligning with the verse's context concerning the purity of faith.

In dealing with polysemy, Arberry selects the dominant meaning based on context. The word *fitnah* in QS. al-Baqarah [2]: 191 is translated as "persecution," while in QS. al-Anfāl [8]: 28 it is rendered as "trial." This variation demonstrates that polysemy is not treated uniformly but is determined by the semantic relationship between the word and its contextual discourse.

Overall, Arberry's lexical semantic strategy reflects a strong orientation toward meaning, prioritizing the conceptual representation of the source language. This approach affirms that, in Arberry's view, Qur'anic translation is a process of conveying core meaning rather than reproducing lexical form.

Contextual Semantic Strategy

The contextual semantic strategy is evident in Arberry's adjustment of meaning based on the discourse context of each verse. In *The Koran Interpreted*, he does not treat lexical meaning as static but instead selects equivalents that are most relevant to the semantic and pragmatic context of the verse.

A notable example is the translation of *qawwāmūna 'alā al-nisā'* in QS. al-Nisā' [4]: 34 as "men are the managers of the affairs of women." This reflects a contextual semantic interpretation that avoids narrow literal renderings such as *in charge of*, emphasizing instead dimensions of social responsibility and functional roles.

The phrase *ummatan wasaṭan* in QS. al-Baqarah [2]: 143 is translated as "a nation justly balanced." Arberry does not retain the lexical meaning *middle*, but instead conveys an evaluative and normative meaning appropriate to the ethical context of the verse.

In a metaphysical context, the term *al-ghayb* in QS. al-Baqarah [2]: 3 is translated as "the Unseen." This rendering narrows the broader meaning of *ghayb* into a metaphysical concept that is more accessible to English readers while preserving its transcendental nuance.

Another example is *taqwā* in QS. al-Baqarah [2]: 197, translated as "godfearing." Rather than rendering it literally as *piety*, Arberry adapts the meaning to reflect its ethical-religious context, emphasizing inner attitude and moral consciousness.

Similarly, the term *jāhada / jihād* in QS. al-Ḥajj [22]: 78 is translated as "strive." Arberry avoids narrow, militaristic interpretations and instead selects a contextual equivalent that conveys effort and moral-spiritual struggle in accordance with the verse's context.

Overall, Arberry's contextual semantic strategy demonstrates a high degree of interpretive flexibility. Meaning is not treated as a fixed lexical entity but as a semantic construct shaped by discourse context, communicative purpose, and the interpretive horizon of the target audience.

Idiomatic and Figurative Semantic Strategy

At the idiomatic and figurative level, A. J. Arberry tends to preserve Qur'anic metaphors as long as they remain semantically and stylistically acceptable in English. This strategy reflects an interpretive orientation aimed at maintaining Qur'anic imagery without reducing it to non-metaphorical paraphrase.

For example, the metaphor in QS. al-Baqarah [2]: 17 is translated as "Their likeness is as the likeness of one who kindled a fire." Arberry retains the original metaphorical structure, preserving the comparative relationship and rhetorical effect.

An interpretive approach is also evident in translating abstract theological terms. The word *al-ṣamad* in QS. al-Ikhlāṣ [112]: 2 is rendered as "the Everlasting Refuge." This is not a literal translation but a semantic interpretation that encapsulates divine self-sufficiency, the dependence of creation, and eternity.

Another example appears in the light metaphor in QS. al-Nūr [24]: 35, translated as "God is the Light of the heavens and the earth." Arberry preserves the metaphor without additional explanation, allowing its symbolic and spiritual dimensions to remain open to interpretation.

In QS. al-Baqarah [2]: 187, the expression *hunna libāsun lakum wa antum libāsun lahunna* is translated as "They are a garment for you, and you are a garment for them." The clothing metaphor is maintained in a literal-metaphorical form, conveying intimacy, protection, and closeness without descriptive paraphrase.

A physical metaphor for psychological meaning is also preserved in QS. al-Ḥajj [22]: 46, where *qulūbun lā yafqahūna bihā* is translated as "hearts wherewith they do not understand." Arberry retains *heart* rather than replacing it with *mind*, thereby preserving the Qur'anic conception of the center of understanding.

Similarly, in QS. al-Baqarah [2]: 7, the phrase *khatama Allāhu ʿalā qulūbihim* is translated as "God has set a seal upon their hearts." The sealing metaphor is fully retained, illustrating the strategy of preserving figurative expressions as carriers of theological and moral meaning.

Overall, Arberry's idiomatic and figurative semantic strategy demonstrates consistency in preserving Qur'anic metaphors through an interpretive approach. He avoids eliminating symbolic imagery and instead selects equivalents that enable English readers to access the depth of figurative meaning in the source text.

Table 1.
Overview of Arberry's Semantic Strategies in The Koran Interpreted

Strategy	Core Tendency	Representative Examples	Key Finding
Lexical semantic	Selecting English vocabulary that conveys the core meaning rather than the literal equivalent	*al-ʿālamīn*, *hudā*, *āyah*, *ẓulm*, *fitnah*	Translation is oriented toward conceptual representation of the source language
Contextual semantic	Adjusting meaning to the discourse and pragmatic context of each verse	*qawwāmūna ʿalā al-nisāʾ*, *ummatan wasaṭan*, *al-ghayb*, *taqwā*, *jāhada*	Meaning is treated as a context-shaped construct, not a fixed lexical entry
Idiomatic and figurative	Preserving Qur'anic metaphors and imagery through an interpretive approach	Fire, light, garment, heart, and seal metaphors; *al-ṣamad*	Symbolic imagery is retained so readers can access figurative depth

Pedagogical Implications for Arabic Language Teaching

The findings indicate that Arberry's semantic strategies in *The Koran Interpreted* have significant pedagogical implications for Arabic language teaching, particularly in vocabulary learning, semantic awareness, and text-based comprehension of Qur'anic meaning. His

translation demonstrates a consistent tendency to select dominant meanings, adapt meanings to context, and preserve metaphorical structures. These strategies function not only as translation techniques but also as pedagogical models for text-based Arabic instruction.

First, the findings have implications for vocabulary teaching. Arabic is characterized by complex polysemy, where a single lemma may have multiple meanings depending on context. Arberry's handling of terms such as *fitnah*, *hudā*, and *ẓulm* illustrates that vocabulary understanding cannot rely solely on dictionary meanings but must involve contextual linguistic and pragmatic analysis. This aligns with contextual vocabulary learning approaches that emphasize authentic discourse as the primary source of meaning (Mardiyah, A & Sofa, A, 2025).

Second, the findings support the development of learners' semantic awareness. The translation of *ummatan wasaṭan* as "a nation justly balanced" shows that Arabic meaning often contains evaluative dimensions not explicitly expressed lexically. Comparing the Arabic text with its English translation enables learners to identify implicit meanings arising from context. This comparative approach strengthens semantic analysis skills and enhances sensitivity to the relationship between linguistic form and conceptual meaning (Mekheimer, 2026).

Third, the findings are relevant to advanced semantic instruction, particularly in understanding metaphor and figurative expressions. Arberry's tendency to preserve Qur'anic metaphors allows readers to experience the rhetorical and symbolic dimensions of the text. In Arabic language teaching, metaphors such as light, fire, and spiritual journey can serve as materials for explaining figurative meaning mechanisms in Qur'anic Arabic (Suri & Tanjung, 2025).

Fourth, the findings highlight the importance of an interpretive approach in Arabic learning. Understanding Qur'anic meaning cannot be reduced to grammatical analysis alone but requires broader semantic interpretation. Overemphasis on syntactic accuracy may neglect deeper layers of meaning. The use of Arberry's translation as a learning resource can shift instructional orientation from grammatical correctness to semantic accuracy (Hidayat et al., 2022).

Pedagogically, the study also supports the use of text-based learning approaches in Arabic instruction. In this approach, the Qur'anic text and its translation are used as sources of linguistic analysis, enabling learners to understand meaning through interaction between source and target texts. This strategy does not replace the authority of the Arabic text but enriches meaning comprehension and enhances learners' interpretive competence.

In conclusion, Arberry's semantic strategies are not only relevant to Qur'anic translation studies but also offer practical contributions to the development of more contextual and reflective Arabic language teaching models. Integrating semantic analysis of translation into Arabic instruction has the potential to enhance learners' ability to understand vocabulary meaning, semantic relations, and the rhetorical dimensions of the Qur'anic language more comprehensively.

Table 2.
Pedagogical Implications for Arabic Language Teaching

Pedagogical Aspect	Supporting Evidence from Arberry's Translation	Implication for Arabic Teaching	Source
Vocabulary teaching	Handling of *fitnah*, *hudā*, *ẓulm*	Vocabulary must be taught through contextual linguistic and pragmatic analysis, not dictionary meanings alone	Mardiyah & Sofa (2025)
Semantic awareness	*ummatan wasaṭan* → "a nation justly balanced"	Comparing Arabic and English helps learners identify implicit, evaluative meaning	Mekheimer (2026)
Metaphor and figurative language	Preserved fire, light, and spiritual-journey imagery	Metaphors serve as materials for explaining figurative mechanisms in Qur'anic Arabic	Suri & Tanjung (2025)
Interpretive approach	Orientation toward semantic accuracy	Shifts instruction from grammatical correctness toward deeper semantic interpretation	Hidayat et al. (2022)
Text-based learning	Source and target texts used together	Enriches comprehension and interpretive competence without replacing the authority of the Arabic text	n/a

Discussion

Theoretical Perspective

The findings of this study demonstrate that the semantic strategies employed by A. J. Arberry in *The Koran Interpreted* are contextual, interpretative, and consistent, with a primary orientation toward conveying the core meaning of the Qur'anic text into English. This consistency is reflected in the selection of lexical meanings that align with the context of the verses, the adaptation of meaning to the discourse of the surah, and the preservation of Qur'anic metaphors and figurative expressions. Accordingly, Arberry's translation cannot be understood as a mechanical process of language transfer, but rather as a directed and reflective practice of linguistic meaning-making.

From the perspective of contemporary semantics, these findings reinforce the view that lexical meaning is not autonomous but is shaped by contextual relations within the linguistic system (Giulianelli et al., 2020).The analysis of polysemous words such as *fitnah*, *ẓulm*, and *ghayb* indicates that meaning selection in translation cannot rely solely on dictionary definitions. Instead, actual meaning is determined by the interaction between linguistic structure and the discourse context of the verse. This approach is consistent with modern semantic paradigms that conceptualize polysemy as a network of meanings whose realization depends on context of use (Haber & Poesio, 2024).

Furthermore, the findings suggest that a semantic approach is more effective than a literal approach in translating religious texts. The Qur'an contains complex theological, rhetorical, and symbolic dimensions; therefore, literal translation risks reducing the conceptual richness of the text. Arberry's semantic approach enables the preservation of the Qur'an's conceptual message, even when expressed through a different linguistic system (Hidayat et al., 2022).

From the standpoint of translation theory, Arberry's strategy aligns closely with the concept of *semantic translation*, which emphasizes preserving the contextual meaning of the source text. Within this framework, the translator does not merely seek formal equivalence but strives to represent the nuanced meanings embedded in the original text. This is particularly evident in the translation of theological terms and Qur'anic metaphors, where Arberry tends to adopt interpretive equivalents capable of reflecting the depth of the source text.

Accordingly, *The Koran Interpreted* can be positioned as a significant representation of semantic Qur'anic translation within the Western tradition. The findings of this study highlight that Qur'anic translation constitutes an interdisciplinary domain that integrates linguistics, hermeneutics, and Islamic studies. In this context, the meaning of the Qur'an in translation is always the result of an ongoing dialogue between the source text, the translator, and the target-language reader.

Strategic Findings

Based on the data analysis and theoretical discussion, this study identifies several strategic findings that clarify the nature of Arberry's semantic translation and its contributions to semantic studies and Arabic language pedagogy.

First, the study reveals the dominance of contextual semantic strategies in Arberry's translation. In determining English equivalents, Arberry consistently uses the context of the verse as the primary basis for meaning selection. Qur'anic words and expressions are not treated as fixed lexical units but as semantic units whose meanings are shaped by their relationship to the discourse of the verse and the thematic structure of the surah. This finding indicates that one-to-one equivalence is not consistently applicable in Qur'anic translation.

Second, the study identifies the consistency of an interpretive approach in Arberry's translation practice. Although Arberry rarely provides explicit exegetical commentary, interpretation is embedded within lexical choices and semantic structures in the English text. This interpretation is internalized in the process of meaning selection, such that each lexical decision reflects a particular interpretive stance. This finding confirms that Qur'anic translation is never entirely neutral, as each equivalent carries an interpretive dimension.

Third, the study underscores the preservation of metaphor as a central semantic strategy. Arberry tends to retain Qur'anic metaphors as long as they remain comprehensible in English. This strategy reflects the view that metaphor functions as a carrier of conceptual meaning that cannot be reduced to literal expression. By preserving metaphor, Arberry maintains both the depth of meaning and the rhetorical richness of the Qur'anic text in the target language.

Fourth, the study highlights the pedagogical relevance of Arberry's semantic strategies for Arabic language teaching. The analysis of Arberry's translation can be utilized as a learning resource for understanding polysemy, contextual meaning shifts, and the function of metaphor in Qur'anic Arabic. Thus, Qur'anic translation serves not only as an aid for content comprehension but also as a medium for developing learners' semantic awareness and interpretive competence.

Overall, these strategic findings position *The Koran Interpreted* as a mature and consistent model of semantic translation. The contextual, interpretive, and metaphorical strategies employed by Arberry demonstrate that Qur'anic translation is a complex linguistic

practice that is also highly productive for advancing the fields of semantics, translation studies, and Arabic language pedagogy.

This study has several limitations. It analyzes a single translation, *The Koran Interpreted*, so the findings cannot be generalized to other translations. The data are limited to representative verses selected purposively, not the entire Qur'an. Moreover, the pedagogical implications are conceptual and have not been tested empirically in classroom settings.

CONCLUSION

This study aims to examine the semantic strategies employed by A. J. Arberry in *The Koran Interpreted* and to explore their implications for Arabic language teaching. Based on the analysis of Qur'anic translation data and the theoretical discussion, it can be concluded that Arberry consistently applies a meaning-oriented translation approach rather than relying solely on formal linguistic equivalence.

The main findings reveal that Arberry's semantic strategies encompass three principal dimensions: lexical semantic strategy, contextual semantic strategy, and idiomatic and figurative semantic strategy. At the lexical level, Arberry selects English vocabulary that represents the core meanings of the Arabic source text and addresses polysemy by determining the dominant meaning according to the contextual framework of each verse. At the contextual level, he adjusts meaning in relation to the discourse of the verse through processes of semantic narrowing or extension, thereby enabling the Qur'anic message to be more coherently understood by English readers. At the idiomatic and figurative level, Arberry tends to preserve Qur'anic metaphors and characteristic expressions while simultaneously applying an interpretative approach to theological terms that lack direct equivalents in the target language.

Overall, Arberry's semantic strategy demonstrates a consistent tendency to avoid extreme literalism and to position translation as a conscious process of linguistic interpretation. This finding reinforces the view that translating the Qur'an cannot be separated from complex semantic negotiation and confirms *The Koran Interpreted* as a semantically oriented and interpretative translation.

In addition to its theoretical contributions to semantic studies and Qur'anic translation, this study also highlights the pedagogical relevance of Arberry's semantic strategies for Arabic language teaching. The findings indicate that Arberry's translation can be effectively utilized as a learning resource to enhance vocabulary acquisition, semantic awareness, and interpretative competence among learners of Arabic, particularly within a text-based learning framework centered on Qur'anic discourse.

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