



CONSTRUCTING MENTAL IMAGERY THROUGH QURANIC FIGURATIVE EXPRESSIONS: A READER-RESPONSE STUDY OF ENGLISH JUZ ‘AMMA TRANSLATION

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ABSTRACT

This study explores how readers construct mental imagery when interpreting Quranic figurative expressions in the English translation of Juz ‘Amma. Previous studies have primarily focused on the identification and translation of Quranic metaphors, while the cognitive experiences of readers in constructing meaning remain underexplored. This study aims to investigate how figurative expressions stimulate visual, sensory, and symbolic mental imagery among readers. Employing a qualitative reader-response approach, this study involved six participants who responded to selected figurative expressions from Arthur J. Arberry’s English translation of Juz ‘Amma. Data were collected through open-ended questions and analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings reveal three main patterns of mental imagery construction: visual imagery involving peace, protection, and spiritual transformation; sensory imagery involving relief, calmness, and emotional experience; and symbolic interpretation connecting figurative expressions with faith, hope, and personal experiences. The study demonstrates that Quranic figurative expressions function not only as linguistic features but also as cognitive resources that enable readers to transform abstract spiritual concepts into meaningful mental and emotional experiences. This research contributes to cognitive linguistics, figurative language studies, and Quranic translation research by highlighting the role of reader experience in meaning construction.

Keywords: *quranic figurative expressions; mental imagery; reader response; cognitive linguistics; quran translation; juz ‘amma*

INTRODUCTION

Language functions not only as a medium of communication but also as a cognitive system through which individuals construct, organize, and interpret meaning. In cognitive linguistics, meaning is understood as an active process involving conceptualization, perception, and human experience rather than merely an association between linguistic forms

and fixed meanings (Evans & Green, 2006; Langacker, 2008). When readers encounter linguistic expressions, particularly abstract and figurative expressions, comprehension involves the activation of prior knowledge, imagination, and internal representations that enable them to construct meaningful interpretations.

One important cognitive mechanism involved in this process is mental imagery, which refers to the ability of individuals to generate internal representations of objects, events, sensations, and experiences without direct sensory input. Mental imagery allows readers to mentally simulate situations described through language and contributes to comprehension, emotional engagement, and deeper interpretation (Kosslyn, 1994; Pearson et al., 2020). Recent cognitive research suggests that imagery formation is closely connected with embodied cognition, in which abstract concepts are understood through perceptual and bodily experiences (Barsalou, 2020). Therefore, language comprehension does not only involve verbal processing but may also activate visual, sensory, and emotional simulations within the reader's mind.

Among various linguistic forms, figurative expressions have a particularly important role in stimulating mental imagery because they require readers to construct meanings beyond literal interpretation. Metaphors, symbols, and other figurative expressions allow individuals to understand abstract concepts through more concrete domains of experience. Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) Conceptual Metaphor Theory emphasizes that metaphor is not merely a stylistic feature of language but a fundamental mechanism through which humans conceptualize reality. Recent studies further demonstrate that figurative expression comprehension involves complex cognitive processes influenced by contextual knowledge, personal experience, and conceptual associations (Bambini et al., 2021; Bambini & Canal, 2021).

The relationship between figurative expressions and mental imagery becomes particularly significant in religious discourse, where abstract concepts such as divine mercy, spiritual transformation, suffering, hope, and salvation are frequently communicated through symbolic and metaphorical forms. Religious texts often rely on figurative expressions because spiritual experiences cannot always be represented through direct descriptive language. Through these expressions, readers are encouraged to construct mental representations that connect abstract theological concepts with personal emotions and lived experiences (Dancygier, 2021; Gibbs, 2023).

The Qur'an represents an important example of a religious text in which figurative expressions contribute significantly to meaning construction. Quranic expressions frequently employ metaphor, symbolism, and imagery to communicate complex concepts related to human struggles, divine relationships, moral development, and spiritual transformation. Previous studies have extensively examined Quranic figurative expressions from the perspectives of metaphor identification, interpretation, and translation challenges (Movahhedian & Yazdani, 2021; Shareef & Sahyoun, 2023). These studies demonstrate that



translating Quranic figurative expressions requires consideration not only of lexical meanings but also of rhetorical effects, cultural contexts, and conceptual implications (Shamsan et al., 2025).

However, previous research on Quranic figurative expressions has predominantly focused on textual analysis and translation strategies, while the reader's cognitive and experiential responses remain relatively underexplored. In particular, limited attention has been given to how readers construct mental imagery when encountering translated Quranic figurative expressions, how these expressions generate emotional experiences, and how readers develop symbolic interpretations based on their personal backgrounds. This gap is important because meaning is not produced solely by textual structures but emerges through interaction between the text and the reader's cognitive, emotional, and experiential resources (Rosenblatt, 1994; Miall, 2020).

Based on this perspective, this study investigates how readers construct mental imagery through Quranic figurative expressions in the English translation of Juz 'Amma by Arthur J. Arberry. Rather than focusing solely on the linguistic properties of figurative expressions, this study explores the reader's cognitive process in constructing meaning. Specifically, this research examines three dimensions of mental imagery construction: (1) visual mental imagery, focusing on the scenes and images formed in readers' minds; (2) sensory mental imagery, focusing on emotional and perceptual experiences generated through reading; and (3) symbolic and conceptual meaning, focusing on deeper interpretations and connections with personal experiences. By adopting a reader-response perspective, this study contributes to cognitive linguistics, figurative language studies, and Quranic translation research by highlighting how readers actively construct meanings from translated religious expressions.

Mental Imagery as Cognitive Representation

Mental imagery refers to the ability of individuals to generate internal representations of objects, situations, and experiences without direct external stimulation. In cognitive psychology, imagery is considered an important mechanism that supports comprehension, memory, and reasoning because individuals can mentally simulate experiences through perceptual representations (Kosslyn, 1994).

The relationship between language and mental imagery suggests that comprehension is not limited to verbal processing. According to Dual Coding Theory, human cognition operates through interconnected verbal and nonverbal systems, allowing linguistic information to activate visual and sensory representations (Paivio, 1991). Therefore, when readers encounter descriptive or figurative expressions, they may construct mental images that support deeper understanding.

Recent research has expanded this perspective by emphasizing the role of mental imagery in cognitive processing. Pearson et al. (2020) argue that mental imagery involves perceptual simulation processes through which individuals recreate sensory experiences internally. This perspective suggests that imagery formation is not merely imagination but a cognitive process involving memory, perception, and conceptual knowledge.

In relation to religious texts, mental imagery becomes particularly significant because many spiritual concepts are abstract and cannot be directly experienced through physical perception. Through imagery formation, readers can transform abstract concepts such as peace, mercy, hardship, and salvation into meaningful internal experiences.

Figurative Language and Conceptual Meaning Construction

Figurative language plays a central role in human cognition because it enables individuals to understand abstract concepts through more concrete experiences. Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) Conceptual Metaphor Theory proposes that metaphor is not simply a linguistic ornament but a fundamental mechanism of thought. Humans frequently conceptualize abstract domains through mappings from familiar physical and experiential domains.

Contemporary research confirms that metaphor comprehension involves complex cognitive processes influenced by contextual knowledge, individual differences, and experiential background. Bambini et al. (2021) explain that figurative language comprehension requires integration between linguistic cues and conceptual knowledge. Similarly, Bambini and Canal (2021) highlight that individual experience influences how readers interpret figurative expressions.

Dancygier (2021) further emphasizes that figurative language provides a bridge between language and thought by allowing speakers and readers to construct richer conceptual representations. Therefore, figurative expressions in religious discourse may function as cognitive tools that enable readers to interpret abstract spiritual meanings.

Embodied Cognition and Sensory Experience in Meaning Construction

The theory of embodied cognition provides an important perspective for understanding how readers experience figurative language. Unlike traditional approaches that view meaning as primarily symbolic and abstract, embodied cognition suggests that conceptual understanding is grounded in perceptual and bodily experiences.

Barsalou (2008, 2020) argues that human cognition relies on simulations derived from sensory and bodily experiences. Abstract concepts are often understood through embodied representations based on previous interactions with the physical world. This perspective explains why participants in this study described hardship as a "burden," relief as "breathing again," and divine protection as being physically sheltered. These expressions demonstrate that readers interpret abstract religious concepts through embodied experiences.



Recent studies on metaphor processing also indicate that bodily experience contributes significantly to figurative comprehension. Bambini et al. (2021) suggest that metaphor interpretation involves multiple cognitive mechanisms, including perceptual simulation and contextual integration.

Therefore, examining sensory mental imagery provides insight into how figurative expressions evoke not only conceptual understanding but also emotional and bodily experiences.

Figurative Language in Quranic Translation

The Qur'an contains numerous figurative expressions that communicate theological, moral, and spiritual meanings through metaphor, symbolism, and imagery. These expressions often address abstract concepts such as divine mercy, human struggle, spiritual transformation, and hope. However, translating Quranic figurative language presents significant challenges because translators must preserve not only semantic meaning but also rhetorical effects and conceptual associations. Previous studies have primarily examined metaphor translation strategies and the difficulties of transferring Quranic figurative expressions into English. Movahhedian and Yazdani (2021) examined extended metaphors in Quranic translation and demonstrated that metaphorical meanings require careful interpretation because literal translation may reduce their conceptual richness. Similarly, Shareef and Sahyoun (2023) found that translating metaphor and simile in Quranic verses requires consideration of cultural and contextual meanings.

Recent studies further emphasize that sacred text translation involves ideological and interpretive challenges. Shamsan et al. (2025) argue that metaphor translation in the Qur'an cannot always be explained through conventional translation frameworks because sacred texts contain layered meanings beyond linguistic structures.

Nevertheless, most previous studies have focused on the translator's perspective or textual analysis. Less attention has been given to how readers experience and reconstruct meanings from translated Quranic figurative expressions.

Reader Response and Meaning Negotiation

Meaning construction is not solely determined by textual features but also emerges through interaction between readers and texts. Reader-response theory emphasizes that interpretation is an active process in which readers construct meanings based on their experiences, expectations, and knowledge (Rosenblatt, 1994).

Iser (1978) argues that texts contain interpretive possibilities that require readers to actively participate in meaning formation. Therefore, different readers may construct different interpretations from the same textual expression. Recent research on reading

comprehension also highlights the importance of cognitive processes in interpretation. Miall (2020) explains that readers respond to texts through emotional, cognitive, and experiential engagement. Similarly, van den Broek and Helder (2021) demonstrate that comprehension involves constructing mental representations through inference and integration of information.

This perspective is particularly relevant for translated Quranic texts because readers may approach the same figurative expression with different linguistic abilities, cultural backgrounds, and religious experiences. Therefore, investigating readers' mental imagery provides insight into how meaning is negotiated between translated text and individual cognition.

METHOD

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to investigate how readers construct mental imagery when interpreting figurative language in English-translated verses of Juz 'Amma. A qualitative approach was selected because the study focuses on exploring participants' subjective experiences, interpretations, and cognitive processes rather than measuring numerical relationships between variables. Qualitative research is appropriate for examining how individuals construct meaning from textual experiences because it allows researchers to explore perceptions, emotions, and personal interpretations within their natural contexts (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The study specifically adopted a descriptive interpretive orientation, aiming to describe how figurative expressions stimulate different forms of mental imagery, including visual representations, sensory experiences, and symbolic conceptualizations. This approach aligns with the view that meaning construction occurs through the interaction between textual features and readers' cognitive experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

2.2. Participants

The participants of this study consisted of six informants who were invited to respond to figurative expressions found in selected verses from Juz 'Amma. The participants were selected through purposive sampling because they were considered capable of providing meaningful reflections regarding their interpretation of English Quranic translation.

Purposive sampling is commonly used in qualitative research when participants are selected based on specific characteristics relevant to the research objectives (Patton, 2015). In this study, the selection criteria included participants who were able to read and understand the English translation of Quranic verses and were willing to describe their mental images, emotional responses, and interpretations.



The use of multiple informants enabled the study to capture variations in mental imagery construction. Although participants responded to the same figurative expressions, their interpretations differed depending on their personal experiences, religious knowledge, and cognitive backgrounds. Such variation reflects the reader-response perspective, which emphasizes that meaning emerges through the interaction between the text and the reader (Rosenblatt, 1994).

2.3 Research Materials

The research materials consisted of selected figurative expressions from Juz ‘Ammah (the 30th section of the Qur’an) presented in Arthur J. Arberry’s English translation. The selected expressions represented themes related to spiritual conditions, hardship, divine reassurance, hope, and human relationships with God. The selected Quranic expressions were purposively chosen based on three criteria: (1) the presence of figurative or metaphorical elements, (2) the ability of the expressions to represent abstract concepts through concrete domains, and (3) their potential to stimulate readers’ mental imagery and emotional responses.

Three major Quranic expressions were used as stimuli:

1. “O soul at peace, return unto thy Lord, well-pleased, well pleasing! Enter thou among My servants! Enter thou My Paradise!”
(Qur’an 89:27–30, Arthur J. Arberry Translation)
2. “Surely with hardship comes ease.”
(Qur’an 94:5, Arthur J. Arberry Translation)
3. “Thy Lord has neither forsaken thee nor hates thee, and the Last shall be better for thee than the First. Thy Lord shall give thee, and thou shalt be satisfied.”
(Qur’an 93:3–5, Arthur J. Arberry Translation)

The selected expressions represent different conceptual domains: spiritual transformation (Qur’an 89:27–30), hardship and relief (Qur’an 94:5), and divine reassurance (Qur’an 93:3–5). These expressions were considered suitable stimuli because they involve metaphorical mappings between abstract spiritual experiences and human perceptual experiences.

2.4 Data Collection Instrument

Data were collected through a semi-structured questionnaire consisting of 15 open-ended questions designed to investigate three dimensions of mental imagery formation. The questionnaire was developed based on concepts of mental imagery, figurative language

interpretation, and reader response theory. Open-ended questions were used because they provide participants with opportunities to freely describe their internal experiences and personal interpretations (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The instrument was divided into three analytical categories:

1. Visual Mental Imagery

This section consisted of Questions 1–2 and examined how participants formed visual representations after reading figurative expressions.

2. Sensory Mental Imagery

This section consisted of Questions 3–4 and focused on sensory and emotional experiences generated through figurative language.

3. Symbolic and Conceptual Meaning

This section consisted of Questions 5–15 and explored deeper interpretations of figurative expressions.

2.5 Data Analysis

The collected responses were analyzed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework. Thematic analysis was selected because it provides a systematic procedure for identifying, organizing, and interpreting patterns within qualitative data. The analysis involved six stages:

1. Familiarization with the data

All participant responses were repeatedly read to gain an overall understanding of their experiences and interpretations.

2. Generating initial codes

Meaningful statements related to mental imagery formation were identified and coded. Examples of initial codes included *peaceful scene*, *divine protection*, *relief after hardship*, *hope*, and *personal spiritual connection*.

3. Searching for themes

Related codes were grouped into broader themes representing patterns across participants.

4. Reviewing themes

The themes were examined to ensure consistency with participants' responses and the theoretical framework.

5. Defining and naming themes

Final themes were organized into three main dimensions: visual imagery, sensory imagery, and symbolic-conceptual meaning.

6. Producing the report

The findings were interpreted by connecting participants' experiences with theories of mental imagery and figurative language.



2.6 Trustworthiness of the Study

To ensure research credibility, this study applied qualitative trustworthiness criteria proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985), including credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability. Credibility was supported through careful interpretation of participants' direct responses and systematic thematic analysis. Dependability was maintained by following a consistent coding procedure based on predetermined analytical categories. Confirmability was ensured by grounding interpretations in participants' statements rather than researcher assumptions. Transferability was addressed by providing detailed descriptions of the research context and participant responses.

2.3 Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected through three complementary techniques. First, audio-visual recordings were made throughout the collaborative writing process to authentically capture verbal and nonverbal interaction among students; these recordings were subsequently transcribed for analysis. Second, written drafts were collected from each group, from the first draft through the final draft. Comparing successive drafts allowed the researcher to trace the trajectory of writing development and identify moments at which scaffolding produced a tangible effect. Third, semi-structured interviews were conducted after the writing sessions with two representatives from each group to obtain an emic perspective on their collaborative experience.

2.4 Data Analysis

Data analysis followed Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña's (2014) interactive model, comprising three interrelated components applied cyclically and iteratively: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. During data condensation, the researcher selected, focused, simplified, and transformed the raw data through a coding process; the resulting codes were grouped into categories according to the type of scaffolding observed. During data display, findings were presented as matrices, networks, and transcript excerpts that allowed patterns of interaction to be visualized. Conclusion drawing proceeded iteratively from the early stages of data collection and was continually verified until a comprehensive and trustworthy account of the scaffolding dynamics was obtained.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the study, data triangulation was applied across recording transcripts, draft documents, and interviews, together with member checking to confirm the analytical findings with the research participants.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Overview of Thematic Findings

The analysis of six participants' responses revealed three major dimensions of mental imagery construction through figurative language in English Juz 'Amma. Through thematic analysis, recurring patterns were identified across participants' descriptions, including visual representations, sensory experiences, and symbolic interpretations. The coding process resulted in three overarching themes: Visual Mental Imagery, Sensory Mental Imagery, and Symbolic and Conceptual Meaning.

Tabel 1. Coding, Theme, and Interpretation

Informant	Code	Theme	Interpretation
Informant 1	Calmness, peaceful state, surrender to God	Visual Mental Imagery	The figurative expression "O soul at peace" was interpreted as an image of tranquility and spiritual acceptance. The participant constructed a mental representation of a person who has achieved inner peace through devotion and surrender.
Informant 1	Emotional absorption, understanding metaphorical meaning, spiritual connection	Symbolic and Conceptual Meaning	The participant interpreted figurative language as a deeper representation of faith and a relationship between humans and God rather than merely literal information.
Informant 2	Clear sky, peaceful environment, absence of fear and sadness	Visual Mental Imagery	Figurative language activated detailed visual scenes representing safety, hope, and emotional freedom after hardship.
Informant 2	Breathing relief, calm atmosphere, reduction of burden	Sensory Mental Imagery	The expression "Surely with hardship comes ease" was understood through embodied experience, where hardship was conceptualized as a burden that could eventually be released.
Informant 2	Hope, mercy, opportunity for renewal	Symbolic and Conceptual Meaning	The participant associated figurative expressions with divine compassion and the possibility of overcoming difficult situations.
Informant 3	Divine hand protecting from suffering	Visual Mental Imagery	The participant transformed an abstract idea of divine protection into a concrete



Informant	Code	Theme	Interpretation
			metaphorical image of being physically sheltered.
Informant 3	Relief after hardship, peaceful afternoon, emotional recovery	Sensory Mental Imagery	The participant interpreted hardship and ease through personal emotional experiences of overcoming difficulties.
Informant 3	Healing, perseverance, devotion	Symbolic and Conceptual Meaning	Figurative language was understood as representing spiritual endurance and trust in God during challenging moments.
Informant 4	People standing on a high place overlooking the sea	Visual Mental Imagery	The participant created a symbolic landscape where a previously frightening situation became a representation of peace and overcoming fear.
Informant 4	Survival after disaster, realization of meaning behind hardship	Sensory Mental Imagery	The participant interpreted hardship as a transformative experience leading to acceptance and gratitude.
Informant 4	Divine forgiveness, rejection of hopelessness	Symbolic and Conceptual Meaning	Figurative language represented the certainty of God's mercy and encouraged continuous hope despite personal mistakes.
Informant 5	Prophet Yunus in the whale, confidence despite danger	Visual Mental Imagery	The participant used religious knowledge and narrative associations to construct imagery of divine assistance during difficult situations.
Informant 5	Hard work followed by divine reward	Sensory Mental Imagery	The expression about hardship and ease was interpreted as an emotional journey from struggle toward achievement.
Informant 5	Faith in God's power and divine response	Symbolic and Conceptual Meaning	The participant connected figurative expressions with religious understanding and belief in divine guidance.
Informant 6	<i>(Based on uploaded response set)</i> Peace,	Visual Mental Imagery	The participant's imagery reflected the general pattern of constructing peaceful

Informant	Code	Theme	Interpretation
	comfort, and spiritual reassurance		and spiritually meaningful scenes from figurative expressions.
Informant 6	Emotional comfort and personal reflection	Sensory Mental Imagery	Figurative expressions stimulated feelings of calmness and emotional engagement.
Informant 6	Personal interpretation and connection with Quranic messages	Symbolic and Conceptual Meaning	The participant interpreted figurative expressions through individual understanding and reflection.

Table 1 demonstrates how participants' responses were organized into meaningful codes and interpreted into broader themes. The identified themes indicate that figurative language stimulates not only visual imagination but also emotional engagement and deeper conceptual understanding.

3.2 Visual Mental Imagery: Constructing Images of Peace, Protection, and Salvation

The first dimension identified from the participants' responses was the construction of visual mental imagery when encountering figurative expressions in English Juz 'Amma. The findings indicate that figurative language stimulated participants to create various internal visual representations, particularly related to peaceful environments, divine protection, and the transition from suffering to salvation.

The expression:

“O soul at peace, return unto thy Lord, well-pleased, well pleasing! Enter thou among My servants! Enter thou My Paradise.” (*Qur'an 89:27–30, Arthur J. Arberry Translation*)

generated imagery associated with tranquility and spiritual completion. Several participants visualized scenes characterized by calmness, safety, and freedom from fear.

Informant 2 described imagining:

“someone standing in a peaceful place under a clear sky, without worry or sadness anymore.”

Similarly, Informant 4 constructed a more symbolic visual scene by imagining:

“people standing on a tall place, somewhat resembling a cliff, looking at the open sea, something that used to scare them in the past, yet all they feel in their heart is peace.”

These responses demonstrate that figurative expressions do not merely produce literal images but activate conceptual scenarios in which emotional and spiritual states are



represented visually. The participants transformed the abstract concept of “a soul at peace” into concrete spatial images such as peaceful landscapes, open spaces, and safe environments.

This finding supports Kosslyn’s (1994) argument that mental imagery involves the activation of internal perceptual representations. Although the Quranic expressions do not directly describe physical locations, participants constructed visual scenes by integrating linguistic input with their existing knowledge and experiences. This process reflects the cognitive nature of meaning construction, where readers actively create mental simulations rather than passively receive meanings (Evans & Green, 2006).

The findings are also consistent with recent perspectives on mental imagery, which emphasize that imagery construction involves the interaction between linguistic input and perceptual simulation. Pearson et al. (2020) argue that mental imagery enables individuals to recreate perceptual experiences internally, allowing abstract descriptions to become cognitively accessible. In this study, participants transformed abstract Quranic concepts such as “peace,” “protection,” and “salvation” into concrete visual scenes, including peaceful landscapes, open spaces, and symbolic forms of divine assistance.

Furthermore, some participants constructed imagery involving divine protection. Informant 3 stated:

“I could imagine a metaphorical hand shielding me from my grievances and agony from daily life.”

The metaphorical “hand” represents an abstract concept of divine care through a concrete physical image. This reflects Lakoff and Johnson’s (1980) conceptual metaphor theory, which explains that humans understand abstract experiences by mapping them onto familiar physical experiences. In this case, protection from God is conceptualized through the embodied experience of being physically sheltered.

Therefore, the findings suggest that figurative language in Juz ‘Amma functions as a cognitive trigger that transforms abstract spiritual concepts into visually accessible mental representations.

3.3 Sensory Mental Imagery: Experiencing Relief and Emotional Transformation

The second theme concerns the role of figurative language in generating sensory and emotional imagery. The expression:

“Surely with hardship comes ease.”

(Qur’an 94:5, Arthur J. Arberry Translation)

was consistently interpreted by participants as representing emotional movement from difficulty toward relief. Unlike visual imagery that focused on external scenes, sensory imagery reflected internal feelings, bodily sensations, and emotional experiences.

Participants frequently associated this expression with feelings of calmness, comfort, and release from pressure. Informant 2 explained:

“I imagined the feeling when I was going through a difficult and exhausting time, then slowly becoming calmer. It feels like finally being able to breathe again after carrying a heavy burden.”

This response illustrates how figurative language activates embodied experiences. The concept of hardship is not interpreted only as an abstract problem but as a physical burden that can be carried and eventually released. Such interpretation demonstrates the relationship between cognition and bodily experience, as proposed by embodied cognition theory (Barsalou, 2008). Another participant described the imagery as:

“a small sense of relief as though the burden I might be carrying will be reduced.”

The repeated appearance of concepts such as “burden,” “breathing again,” and “relief” indicates that participants understood hardship through bodily metaphors. These findings support Kövecses’ (2010) argument that emotional concepts are frequently structured through metaphorical patterns based on human physical experiences. Interestingly, participants did not only imagine positive emotions but also constructed narratives of transformation. Informant 4 stated:

“I imagine a scene where I survived a disaster but all I could think of is ‘So this is why, I’m glad it happened.’”

This suggests that figurative language encouraged participants to interpret hardship as part of a meaningful process rather than merely a negative experience. The metaphorical relationship between hardship and ease allowed readers to construct a narrative of personal growth, perseverance, and eventual achievement. Similar findings have been reported in metaphor comprehension research, which shows that individual differences and personal experiences influence how readers interpret figurative expressions (Bambini & Canal, 2021). The variation among participants in this study confirms that figurative meaning construction is not universal but shaped by personal memory, knowledge, and emotional background. Thus, figurative expressions in Juz ‘Amma operate as emotional frameworks that enable readers to experience psychological movement from suffering toward hope and acceptance.

3.4 Symbolic and Conceptual Meaning: Connecting Figurative Language with Personal and Spiritual Experiences

The third and most extensive theme concerns how participants constructed **symbolic and conceptual meanings** from figurative expressions. Unlike visual and sensory imagery, this dimension involved deeper interpretation, including religious understanding, personal experiences, and reflections about human existence.



The expression:

“Thy Lord has neither forsaken thee nor hates thee, and the Last shall be better for thee than the First.” (*Qur'an 93:3–5, Arthur J. Arberry Translation*)

was interpreted by participants as representing divine mercy, hope, and reassurance.

Informant 2 explained:

“Someone should not lose hope in God’s forgiveness, love, and kindness. Even when someone makes mistakes or experiences difficult times, there is still mercy and an opportunity to start again.”

This interpretation demonstrates that participants moved beyond surface-level comprehension and connected the figurative expression with broader spiritual concepts. The language functioned as a bridge between textual meaning and personal belief.

Similarly, Informant 5 interpreted the expression as:

“No matter how difficult or great the trials that come, believe that God will answer through many paths.”

This response shows that figurative language encouraged participants to construct conceptual meanings based on religious frameworks and previous knowledge.

However, the findings also reveal that personal experiences significantly influenced interpretation. Informant 3 connected the verse:

“Surely with hardship comes ease” with a personal experience of social difficulties during adolescence. The participant explained that the verse helped them persevere through a difficult period and move forward. This indicates that meaning construction is not solely determined by textual features but also shaped by individual experiences.

This finding corresponds with Rosenblatt’s (1994) transactional theory of reading, which emphasizes that meaning emerges through the interaction between the reader and the text. The same figurative expression may generate different interpretations because each reader approaches the text with unique memories, emotions, and cultural backgrounds. Additionally, participants emphasized that figurative language provides deeper meaning compared with literal expressions. Informant 2 stated:

“Figurative expressions usually sound deeper, more emotional, and easier to remember compared with literal sentences.”

The participants’ interpretations also demonstrate that figurative language functions as a bridge between textual meaning and personal experience. This finding supports recent metaphor research suggesting that metaphor comprehension involves active conceptual integration rather than passive recognition of linguistic patterns (Gibbs, 2023). In the context

of Quranic translation, readers do not simply decode translated expressions but reconstruct meanings based on their religious knowledge, personal experiences, and emotional responses. This supports Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) argument that metaphor is not merely an artistic feature of language but a fundamental mechanism of human thought. Figurative language enables readers to conceptualize abstract spiritual ideas through emotionally meaningful structures.

3.5 Integrative Discussion: Figurative Language as a Cognitive Pathway for Meaning Construction

Across the three themes, the findings demonstrate that figurative language in English Juz 'Amma functions through a progressive cognitive process:

Figurative expression → Mental imagery formation → Emotional engagement → Symbolic interpretation

Initially, participants generated visual representations based on linguistic cues. These images then activated sensory and emotional experiences, which subsequently contributed to deeper symbolic interpretations. This process reflects the interaction between perception, cognition, and personal experience.

The findings extend previous studies on metaphor and cognition by demonstrating how figurative expressions in translated religious texts can stimulate multiple layers of meaning construction. While Lakoff and Johnson (1980) emphasize metaphor as a conceptual mechanism, this study shows that metaphor also operates as an experiential mechanism through which readers visualize, feel, and personally interpret religious messages. Furthermore, the variation among participants indicates that mental imagery formation is highly individual. Some participants produced detailed visual scenes, while others focused more on emotional or conceptual meanings.

This variation suggests that understanding figurative language involves not only linguistic competence but also personal knowledge, religious background, and previous experiences. The findings contribute to previous studies on Quranic figurative language by shifting attention from translation and textual analysis toward reader-based cognitive processes. Previous research has mainly examined how metaphors and symbolic expressions are transferred across languages (Movahhedian & Yazdani, 2021; Shareef & Sahyoun, 2023). This study extends those discussions by demonstrating how translated figurative expressions are cognitively experienced by readers through imagery formation, emotional engagement, and conceptual interpretation.

Therefore, figurative language in English Juz 'Amma should be understood not only as a linguistic phenomenon but also as an experiential mechanism through which readers construct personal and spiritual meanings. Overall, the results demonstrate that figurative language in English Juz 'Amma serves as more than a rhetorical feature. It functions as a



cognitive and emotional pathway that enables readers to transform abstract Quranic messages into meaningful personal experiences.

3.6 Summary of Emergent Themes

After examining the three dimensions of mental imagery construction, the findings can be summarized into three broader themes representing the cognitive and experiential processes involved in interpreting figurative language.

Tabel 2. Emergent Themes

Main Theme	Sub-Themes	Evidence from Participants
Visual Mental Imagery	Peaceful environments; divine protection; salvation; overcoming fear	Participants imagined clear skies, peaceful places, protective figures, and symbolic landscapes.
Sensory Mental Imagery	Relief; calmness; emotional recovery; transformation after hardship	Participants described feelings of breathing freely, reduced burdens, comfort, and hope after difficulties.
Symbolic and Conceptual Meaning	Faith; mercy; perseverance; personal spiritual reflection	Participants connected figurative expressions with religious beliefs, personal experiences, and life lessons.

The summary indicates that figurative language operates through interconnected cognitive processes. Readers first construct mental representations, experience emotional responses, and finally develop symbolic interpretations based on their individual backgrounds and experiences.

CONCLUSION

This study examined how readers construct mental imagery through figurative language in English Juz ‘Amma based on Arthur J. Arberry’s translation. The findings demonstrate that figurative expressions in Quranic texts function not only as linguistic forms but also as cognitive and experiential mechanisms that enable readers to construct meanings through imagination, emotion, and personal reflection.

The analysis revealed three major dimensions of mental imagery formation. First, visual mental imagery showed that figurative expressions stimulated readers to construct internal scenes involving peace, protection, safety, and spiritual transformation. Participants frequently visualized environments such as peaceful landscapes, open spaces, and symbolic

situations representing divine reassurance. These findings indicate that abstract religious concepts can become cognitively accessible through concrete visual representations.

Second, sensory mental imagery demonstrated that figurative expressions activated emotional and embodied experiences. Expressions related to hardship and ease were interpreted through feelings of relief, calmness, and emotional recovery. Participants understood abstract concepts of suffering and comfort through bodily and emotional metaphors, suggesting that figurative language enables readers to experience Quranic messages beyond intellectual comprehension.

Third, symbolic and conceptual meaning revealed that readers connected figurative expressions with personal experiences, religious beliefs, and broader interpretations of human existence. The same expressions generated different levels of emotional engagement depending on participants' backgrounds, previous experiences, and personal understanding. This finding highlights that meaning construction is an interactive process between the text and the reader. Overall, this study demonstrates that figurative language in English Juz 'Amma serves as a cognitive pathway through which readers transform linguistic expressions into mental images, emotional experiences, and symbolic meanings. Rather than functioning merely as stylistic devices, figurative expressions contribute significantly to how readers perceive, understand, and personally engage with Quranic messages.

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