

Translating the Qur'anic Collocation *Ṣibghatallāh* in the *Quran for Android App*: Reiss's Functional Model and Its Implications for Educational Transformation

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Abstrak

Penerjemahan digital teks-teks keagamaan menghadapi tantangan kebahasaan dan ideologis yang signifikan, terutama ketika menangani metafora teologis yang kompleks serta kolokasi yang sulit diterjemahkan secara harfiah. Penelitian ini mengkaji dinamika dan gaya terjemahan kolokasi *ṣibghatallāh* dalam aplikasi *Quran for Android* berdasarkan model fungsi teks Katharina Reiss. Penelitian ini **bertujuan** untuk mengklasifikasikan dan menganalisis sebelas (11) varian terjemahan dari bahasa Inggris ke bahasa Indonesia ke dalam fungsi informatif, ekspresif, dan operatif guna mengevaluasi presisi semantis, kelestarian estetika, serta implikasi pedagogisnya. Dengan menggunakan **metode** kualitatif-deskriptif melalui analisis komparatif historis, penelitian ini menguraikan bagaimana lingkungan media digital memengaruhi penyampaian pesan teologis. **Hasil** penelitian mengungkapkan tiga pola fungsional yang konkret: (1) fungsi informatif didominasi oleh varian eksplanatif (seperti Kemenag RI dan Sahih International) yang mengutamakan kejelasan doktrinal tetapi mereduksi nuansa estetis; (2) fungsi ekspresif dipertahankan oleh varian literal (seperti Pickthall dan Yusuf Ali) yang berhasil menjaga daya jelajah metafora “pewarnaan Allah”; dan (3) fungsi operatif mengalami pergeseran ideologis pada varian sektarian (seperti Hilali-Khan) serta glosa historis-kolonial yang mengaitkan istilah tersebut dengan “baptisan”. **Kontribusi** penelitian ini tidak hanya memberikan wawasan teoretis bagi studi penerjemahan literatur suci, tetapi juga menawarkan implikasi strategis bagi transformasi pendidikan. Temuan ini dapat menjadi landasan dalam merancang kurikulum dan model pembelajaran yang berpusat pada peserta didik (*student-centered learning*). Melalui kerangka *Outcome-Based Education* (OBE), pemahaman terhadap ragam fungsional terjemahan digital ini dapat dimanfaatkan untuk mengembangkan literasi teologis yang kritis, sehingga menghasilkan pembaca global kontemporer yang adaptif, objektif, dan relevan dengan tantangan era digital.

Keywords: *Ṣibghatallāh*, Model Reiss, *Quran for Android*, Terjemahan Digital.

Abstract

Translating digital religious texts presents significant linguistic and ideological challenges, particularly when dealing with complex theological metaphors and collocations that defy literal translation. This study analyzes the dynamics and translation styles of the collocation *şibghatallāh* within the “Quran for Android” application, utilizing Katharina Reiss’s text-function model. It **aims** to classify and analyze eleven (11) English-to-Indonesian translation variants categorized into informative, expressive, and operative functions to evaluate semantic precision, aesthetic preservation, and pedagogical potential. Employing a qualitative-descriptive **method** with comparative-historical analysis, the study elucidates how the digital media environment influences the interaction of theological messages. **The findings** reveal three distinct functional patterns: (1) the informative function is dominated by explanatory variants (such as Kemenag RI and Sahih International) that prioritize doctrinal clarity at the expense of aesthetic nuance; (2) the expressive function is upheld by literal variants (such as Pickthall and Yusuf Ali), which successfully preserve the evocative power of the “dyeing of Allah” metaphor; and (3) the operative function exhibits ideological shifts in sectarian variants (such as Hilali-Khan) and historical-colonial glosses that equate the term with “baptism.” **This research contributes** not only theoretical insights to the study of sacred text translation but also offers strategic implications for educational transformation. The findings can serve as a foundation for designing curricula and student-centered learning models. Within the framework of Outcome-Based Education (OBE), an understanding of these functional translation varieties can be leveraged to foster critical theological literacy, thereby cultivating contemporary global readers who are adaptive, objective, and equipped to meet the challenges of the digital era.

Kata Kunci: *Şibghatallāh, Reiss’s Model, Quran for Android, Digital Translation*

Introduction

Al-Qur’an, as the holy book of Muslims, contains many unique collocations that frequently pose significant challenges in translation. The Qur’an is a holy book because its inspiration comes directly from Allah. It is holy because it encompasses transcendent matters, possesses absolute certainty, and cannot be fully understood by the human mind (Chirzin, 2007). In Indonesian lexicography, collocation is defined as a fixed association between words in the same environment, signifying a cohesive link (Badan Pengembangan dan Pembinaan Bahasa, 2016). Consequently, a collocation represents a fixed combination of words creating a new meaning that cannot be understood literally from its constituent parts, comparable to everyday idioms. Similarly, the Qur’an contains collocations that resist literal translation, such as in QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 138:

صِبْغَةَ اللَّهِ وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ مِنَ اللَّهِ صِبْغَةً وَنَحْنُ لَهُ عَبِيدُونَ

(Peliharalah) *sibghah Allah*. Siapa yang lebih baik *sibghahnya* daripada Allah? Hanya kepada-Nya kami menyembah. (QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 138). (This translation is based on data from the NU Online website. “QS. Al-Baqarah, verse 138,” NU Online Translation of the Qur'an, accessed September 20, 2025, <https://quran.nu.or.id/al-baqarah/138>).

The collocation *ṣibghatallāh* in QS. Al-Baqarah verse 138 is a *hapax legomenon* appearing only once in the Qur'an, traditionally possessing a literal meaning of “*the dyeing of Allah*” which expands into the symbolic representation of Allah's religion, namely Islam (Al-Sīrājī, 2015; ‘Aqīl, 2009; Al-Ṭabarī, 2001). In the modern era, classical and modern exegetes like Ibn Ashur describe this collocation as a metaphor for pure faith, contextualized alongside baptismal rituals (*ma'mūdiyyah*) (Al-Ṭāhir Ibn ‘Āsyūr, 1984; Lane, 2006).

Amidst modern digital technological developments, Islamic applications such as *Quran for Android*, downloadable via the Google Play Store on smartphones, provide access to Qur'anic translations across numerous global languages. Over recent decades, Qur'anic translation studies have undergone significant evolution since the latter half of the 20th century, shifting from linguistic to interdisciplinary approaches, as outlined by García de Toro (2014). She highlights how equivalence theories and functional approaches aid in understanding the translation challenges of Qur'anic collocations. According to Qassem (2021), collocations like *ṣibghatallāh*, if not handled with advanced literary techniques, obstruct natural translation into English and other foreign languages, thereby triggering potential translation loss.

Every language possesses distinct specific tendencies that prevent direct, exact equivalents in target languages. A proficient translator aims to minimize translation loss rather than eliminate it entirely through strategic decision-making (Qassem, 2021). In Qur'anic translation, contemporary Indonesian exegete M. Quraish Shihab (1992) emphasizes that the Qur'an cannot be fully translated, as any translation, no matter how excellent, beautiful, or objective, remains an interpretation rather than the Qur'an itself. Further complications arise when translations fail to capture the historical and semantic dynamics of the source text. While classical exegetes like al-Ṭabarī (2001) viewed *ṣibghatallāh* as an aesthetic metaphor of faith, modern translations like Mustafa Khattab's render it through explanatory expansions (*tafsīl*).

Such translational shifts create two critical outcomes: first, *translation loss*, where metaphorical dimensions vanish, and second, *semantic deviation*, exemplified by Abdullah Yusuf Ali's (1937) rendering as the “baptism of Allah,” which introduces Christian

theological connotations. Critiquing such variants, Abdo and Abu Mousa (2019) argue that translator ideology frequently manipulates meaning in sacred texts. In the Indonesian context, digital translations must remain faithful to the original source text without unwarranted additions or omissions, while aligning with local cultural sensibilities without forfeiting core Qur'anic essences.

Deviative translations running counter to literal meanings risk severe misinterpretations, such as equating *ṣibghatallāh* with Christian rituals rather than Islamic *fiṭrah*. This research holds vital significance for the decolonization of Qur'anic understanding, ensuring freedom from ideological biases and alignment with local contexts, as explored by Mujahidin (2018) in his analysis of *Tafsir al-Azhar* and *Tafsir al-Mishbah*. Hermeneutics, as noted by Suwardi and Syaifullah (2022), acts as a tool to uncover hidden meanings through contextual engagement, ensuring digital Qur'anic applications offer authentic and relevant textual access.

Despite growing scholarly literature on digital Qur'anic translation, prior studies generally focus on technical software attributes or broad lexical comparisons without deeply probing the functional dimensions of specific collocations using rigorous translation frameworks. Consequently, a critical gap persists between the technological expansion of digital halal ecosystems and systematic models capable of preserving theological fidelity.

Addressing these limitations, the novelty and theoretical contribution of this research lie in its pioneering formulation of an integrative framework connecting *hapax legomenon* collocation analysis (*ṣibghatallāh*), digital platform evaluation (*Quran for Android*), and Katharina Reiss's functional text model (Reiss, 2014; Reiss & Vermeer, 2014). While prior scholarly works have fragmented the discourse—either isolating digital pedagogical tools or treating sacred text translation purely through a general descriptive lens this study introduces a novel conceptual synthesis. It repositions functional translation evaluation not merely as a linguistic verification tool, but as a macro-strategic mechanism that ensures digital religious tools balance informative, expressive, and operative dimensions to mitigate ideological distortion and translation loss.

Based on these identified gaps, this study addresses how digital platforms mediate theological concepts by investigating the translational dynamics of a unique Qur'anic expression. Specifically, the overarching research questions guiding this research are formulated as follows:

First, how are the stylistic variations and meanings of the *hapax legomenon* collocation *şibghatallāh* (QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 138) manifested across English and Indonesian digital translation variants within the *Quran for Android* application?

Second, to what extent do these digital translation variants achieve functional effectiveness across informative, expressive, and operative dimensions when evaluated through Katharina Reiss's Text-Type Theory?

Third, how can an integrative functional framework mitigate ideological bias, theological distortion, and translation loss to ensure authentic Qur'anic comprehension for global and local digital readers?

By answering these questions, this study **aims** to describe the stylistic variations and meanings of *şibghatallāh* translations within the *Quran for Android* application (restricted to English and Indonesian variants) and measure their functional effectiveness using Katharina Reiss's Text-Type Theory (Reiss, 2014). Reiss categorizes text functions into informative, expressive, and operative dimensions. This model is selected because it dictates that translation procedures must align with text types to prevent semantic deviation and over/undertranslation. In analyzing *şibghatallāh*, the expressive function preserves aesthetic metaphors, the informative function secures clear theological tenets, and the operative function encourages readers to internalize its core spiritual mandate.

This research contributes significantly to contemporary Qur'anic and translation studies, particularly within the Indonesian digital landscape. Utilizing interdisciplinary insights from Bassnett (2002), Fadal and Heriyanto (2020), Al Farisi (2020), and Gunawan et al. (2022), this study provides an analytical template for examining metaphorical collocations, post-colonial translation ideologies, and meso-level interpretive methods. The **scope** of this study focuses strictly on QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 138 as featured in *Quran for Android* version 3.5.0, drawing data from available English and Indonesian digital translation variants.

Research Method

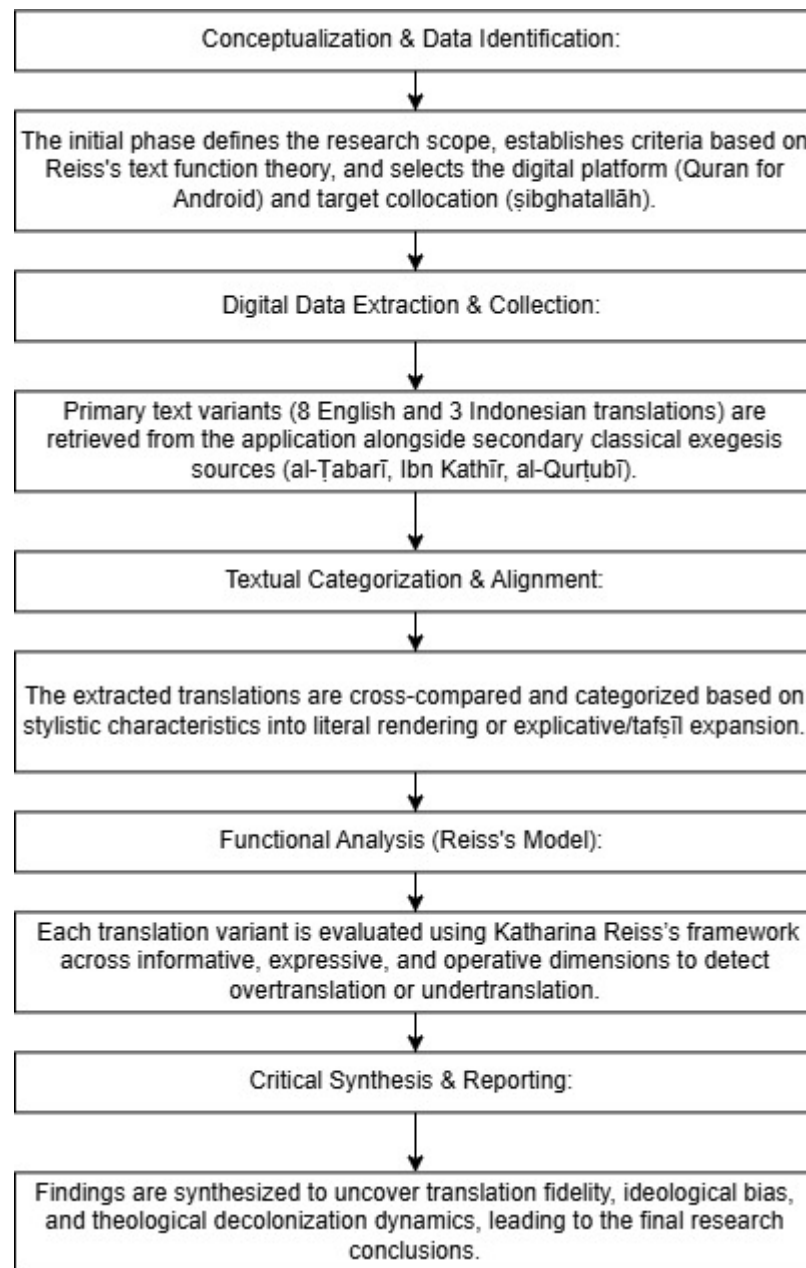
This study employs a qualitative-descriptive approach integrated with historical-comparative analysis to examine the digital translation dynamics of religious texts within the *Quran for Android* mobile application, conducted between August and September 2025. The qualitative-descriptive framework is specifically chosen to capture and describe translation phenomena in detail, while the historical-comparative method compares the evolution of theological meaning from classical antiquity to the digital era. Reiss

emphasizes that this dual approach is particularly effective for translation criticism because it enables a holistic identification of text functions. Within the domain of Qur'anic studies, this method is highly relevant for uncovering the historical dynamics of the collocation *ṣibghatallāh* across classical-modern exegesis (*tafsīr*) and contemporary digital translations. By addressing micro-level linguistic reconstructions, this approach overcomes the limitations of meso-level interpretive methods (Gunawan et al., 2022), while maintaining research ethics, respect for copyright in digital applications, and analytical neutrality to ensure valid and reliable findings.

The primary object of this study is the translation variations of the collocation *ṣibghatallāh* (QS. Al-Baqarah: 138) retrieved from the *Quran for Android* mobile application. The primary data consist of the original Arabic text along with eleven (11) digital translation variants available within the application, comprising eight (8) English translations (including Abdul Haleem, Fadel Soliman, Pickthall, Yusuf Ali, and Mustafa Khattab) and three (3) Indonesian translations (Sabeq Company, Quran Complex, and the Ministry of Religious Affairs / Kemenag RI). Secondary data sources include classical and modern Qur'anic exegeses, notably the *tafsīr* works of al-Ṭabarī, Ibn Kathīr, and al-Qurṭubī, which provide the theological and historical baseline for evaluating translation fidelity.

The research execution process was carried out systematically through three sequential phases: pre-field, field execution, and post-field analysis. The pre-field stage involved identifying the research problem, formulating functional criteria based on Katharina Reiss's text typology, and selecting target translation variants within the application. The field execution phase focused on extracting, cataloging, and aligning the primary translation texts alongside secondary exegesis entries. Finally, the post-field phase comprised data reduction, functional categorization, cross-comparative evaluation, and synthesis of findings to draw concrete conclusions regarding translation strategies and ideological shifts in digital media.

Data collection was executed using non-interactive digital documentation techniques supported by textual observation protocols. The research instrument comprised a structured data extraction sheet designed to capture literal, explicative (*tafsīl*), and functional features of each translation variant. Data verification and reliability were ensured through data triangulation, cross-referencing the digital English and Indonesian translations against classical *tafsīr* authorities and established Arabic lexicographical sources to prevent subjective bias or misinterpretation during textual categorization.

Figure 1. Research Procedure Diagram

Data analysis was conducted using Katharina Reiss's (1971) text function model alongside comparative translation analysis. The analysis began by categorizing translation styles into two primary poles: literal (preserving original metaphorical structures) and explicative/*tafşīl* (adding theological explanations) to assess foreignization and domestication dynamics (Al Farisi, 2020; Qassem, 2021). Subsequently, Reiss's functional framework was applied to classify translations into three primary functions: informative (prioritizing knowledge dissemination, e.g., Sabeq Company), expressive (emphasizing aesthetic and rhetorical quality, e.g., Abdul Haleem), and operative (focusing on persuasive/behavioral appeal, e.g., Mustafa Khattab). This systematic evaluation enabled

the identification of translation loss, semantic deviation, and over- and undertranslation, ensuring a rigorous synthesis of revelation-technology integration in digital Qur'anic translation.

Result Finding

Collocation of *Şibghatallāh* in the Translation of QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 138

Collocations in the Qur'an can be simplified as word pairs that appear together and produce new meanings, which are often idiomatic and deviate from their literal meanings. This definition aligns with the linguistic understanding that collocations are two or more interdependent words that form a new meaning (Qassem, 2021). The collocation *şibghatallāh* in QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 138 constitutes a unique *hapax legomenon* whose literal meaning is “*the dye of Allah*” or “*the color of Allah*” (Qassem, n.d.). According to Al-Ṭabarī (*Jāmi' al-Bayān*), it symbolically represents primordial human nature (*fitrah*) or pure faith, where the metaphor of “*dyeing*” illustrates the spiritual coloring of the soul with divine light, free from external influences (Neuwirth, 2019).

For example, if a verse refers to a concept that was also known in Christian, Jewish, or other religious traditions in the 7th century, a translator who is aware of the context of late antiquity will make more appropriate lexical choices to capture the nuances of that theological debate, compared to a translator who focuses solely on the literal meaning. This approach underscores that the translation of the Qur'an is inseparable from hermeneutics (the science of interpretation) and grounded in history, thus requiring an interdisciplinary approach.

An interdisciplinary approach to translation studies, as highlighted by García de Toro, combines modern linguistics with history to understand the dynamics of such collocations. García de Toro explains that translation studies has evolved since the 20th century, from the theory of linguistic equivalence to cultural approaches, which aid in the analysis of Qur'anic collocations (Toro, 2014). In the context of *şibghatallāh*, these historical dynamics are evident in the shift in its meaning -from the literal meaning of “*hue*,” which refers to “*color*”- a translation choice used by Fadel Soliman, Picktall, and Abdul Haleem to a symbol of human nature and religion in digital-era translations. Literal translation that preserves the metaphors of the original text is a translation strategy known as “*foreignation*.” Furthermore, Qassem adds that translating Qur'anic collocations requires the use of literary techniques, such as the appropriate selection of diction and figures of speech, which can create translation challenges. This evolution underscores the

importance of preserving the multivalence of meaning so that it is not lost in modern translations (Qassem, 2020).

Identity of the *Quran for Android* App and Historical Evolution of Selected Qur'anic Translators

The *Quran for Android* is a digital platform designed to provide easy access to the Quran, featuring translations, commentaries, and recordings by several selected Quran reciters. The *Quran for Android* application, developed by Quran Foundation, Inc. (based in Staten Island, New York), was first launched on August 10, 2010, and updated to version 3.5.1 in September 2025. It has achieved over 50 million downloads on the Google Play Store with an average rating of 4.8 from approximately 591K reviews. The app provides multilingual access (over 20 translation languages, including Indonesian variants like Sabeq Company and the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Kemenag), as well as English variants like Abdul Haleem and Yusuf Ali) and audio recitations from more than 15 reciters. The translators of the Qur'an that I will examine from the "*Quran for Android*" app are Muhammad Pickthall (1930), Abdullah Yusuf Ali (1934), Muhsin Khan (1977), Sahih International (1977), Abdul Haleem (2004), Fadel Soliman (2005), Mufti Taqi Usmani (2007), Dr. Mustafa Khattab (2015), the Ministry of Islamic Affairs, the Quran Complex, and Sabeq Company. Of these eleven translations, the last three are Indonesian translations. No translation of the Qur'an produced by translators is neutral; rather, each is based on the translator's interpretation and background. Consequently, the word choices reflect the intellectual depth and ideology that may influence them. Below, the author provides a brief overview of the identities and biographies of the translators to be examined in this study.

Historically, the development of Quranic translation can be divided into three periods. *First*, Early Pioneers. The emergence of modern English translations of the Qur'an was pioneered by Muhammad Pickthall (1930) and Abdullah Yusuf Ali (1934). As the first native English speaker to translate the Qur'an, Pickthall's work is highly regarded, as Nassimi notes, because it "*faithfully represents the sense of the original*" (Nassimi, 2008). This implies that a translation need not mirror every word verbatim, but must accurately convey the underlying meaning without unauthorized additions or omissions. "Faithfulness" in this sense refers to maintaining harmony with the spirit, intent, and nuances of the source text. Abdullah Yusuf Ali offered a more adventurous and personal approach compared to Pickthall's literalist orientation. Although not a native English speaker, he enriched his translation with extensive explanatory annotations in the form of

detailed footnotes designed to prevent theological misinterpretation. In addition to footnotes, Yusuf Ali infused poetic rhythm and rhyme into his rendering a stylistic choice that has generated both admiration and scholarly critique.

Second, Developmental Phase: Explanatory Approaches and Overtranslation. Following these early pioneers, Qur'anic translation underwent significant developments. From the mid-20th century onwards, there was a growing demand for more explicit renderings. Muhammad Taqī-ud-Dīn Al-Hilali and Muhammad Muhsin Khan (1977), scholars from Morocco and Pakistan respectively, pioneered an informative approach heavily reliant on exegesis (*tafsīr*) by inserting massive glosses and parenthetical notes. Their objective was to present the meaning of the Qur'an as understood by early Muslim generations. However, their work also faced scholarly criticism: a hyper-explicit and informative approach risks overtranslation, providing excessive theological commentary that can obstruct target reader comprehension. In response to this risk, Saheeh International (1997) -translated by three American women: Emily Assami (Umm Muhammad), Mary Kennedy, and Amatullah Bantley- emerged as a refined revision. They streamlined the language and moved extensive commentary into footnotes, thereby clearing the main text. This shift reflected a post-Hilali-Khan awareness of the need to balance theological clarity with narrative readability.

Third, Contemporary Era and Functional Orientation. In contrast to earlier styles, contemporary translators demonstrate a clear functional orientation. M.A.S. Abdel Haleem (2004), an Egyptian-British professor, prioritizes readability, rendering his translation highly expressive and widely accessible. His translation of *ṣibghatallāh* as “*Our life takes its colour from God*” exemplifies Reiss’s expressive function by preserving metaphorical aesthetics. Regarding other functional domains in Reiss’s framework, Mufti Taqi Usmani (2007) and Mustafa Khattab (2015) embody operative and interpretive orientations. Usmani, an Islamic legal scholar, provides a clear translation with a strong call to devotion. Conversely, Khattab, in *The Clear Qur'an*, adopts a *tafṣīl* (explanatory) approach by translating *ṣibghatallāh* as “*the ‘natural’ Way of Allah.*” This choice reflects a willingness to sacrifice the original metaphor for modern theological clarity, risking the loss of aesthetic nuance. Fadel Soliman (2005), on the other hand, maintains a rigid literalism with “*Allah’s hue,*” attempting to balance literal accuracy with informative needs.

In the Indonesian context, translations are primarily driven by domestication and decolonization imperatives. *First*, the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs and Sabeq Company represent informative approaches that prioritize local clarity and standard

Indonesian grammar. Kemenag, through LPMQ, employs domestication tailored to local cultural contexts. *Second*, Sabeq Company leans toward a more literal style by retaining the Arabic transliteration (*Şibghah Allah*), a standard foreignization strategy aimed at minimizing translation loss. Collectively, these eleven translator profiles provide a rich comparative basis due to their distinct methodological approaches. This diversity enables the current study to evaluate how ideological decisions (literal vs. *tafşîl*, aesthetic vs. informative) shape the global understanding of the sacred text.

Translation Datasets of *Şibghatallāh*

Table 1. English Translation Dataset

No.	Translator / Scholar	Year	Translation of <i>Şibghatallāh</i> (QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 138)
1	Fadel Soliman	2005	“(It is) Allah’s hue. And who gives a better hue than Allah? ‘And of Him we are worshipers.’”
2	Muhammad Muhsin Khan & Muhammad Taqī-ud-Dīn al-Hilali	1977	“[Our <i>Sibghah</i> (religion) is] the <i>Sibghah</i> (Religion) of Allāh (Islām) and which <i>Sibghah</i> (religion) can be better than Allāh’s? And we are His worshippers. [Tafsir Ibn Kathīr]”
3	Abdullah Yusuf Ali	1934	“(Our religion is) the Baptism of Allah: And who can baptize better than Allah? And it is He Whom we worship.”
4	Mohammed Marmaduke William Pickthall	1930	“(We take our) colour from Allah, and who is better than Allah at colouring. We are His worshippers.”
5	Mufti Taqi Usmani	2007	“(We dye ourselves with) the colouring of Allah! For who is better in colouring than Allah? We are to worship none but Him.”
6	Sahih International	1977	“[And say, Ours is] the religion of Allāh. And who is better than Allāh in [ordaining] religion? And we are worshippers of Him.”
7	Dr. Mustafa Khattab	2015	“This is the ‘natural’ Way of Allah. And who is better than Allah in ordaining a way? And we worship ‘none but’ Him.”
8	Abdul Haleem	2004	“[Our life] takes its colour from God, and who gives a better colour than God? It is Him we worship.”

Table 2. Indonesian Translation Dataset

No.	Translator / Platform	Year / Version	Translation of <i>Şibghatallāh</i> (QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 138)
1	Sabeq Company	-	“(Peganglah) “ <i>Şibgah Allah</i> ”. Siapa yang lebih baik <i>Şibgahnya</i> daripada Allah? Dan kepada-Nya kami menyembah.”
2	Ministry of Islamic Affairs (Kemenag)	2019	“ <i>Şibgah Allah</i> Siapa yang lebih baik <i>şibgah-nya</i> daripada Allah? Dan kepada-Nya kami menyembah.”
3	Quran Complex (King Fahd Complex)	-	“ <i>Şibgah Allah</i> . Dan siapakah yang lebih baik <i>Şibgah-nya</i> daripada Allah? Dan hanya kepada-Nya-lah kami menyembah.”

Discussion

Textual Dynamics and Functional Typologies of *Şibghatallāh* Translations

Passing from the empirical presentation of the dataset in the Results section, this section critically interprets the functional dynamics and linguistic strategies embedded within the eleven translation variants. By applying Katharina Reiss's text-function model alongside contemporary translation theories, the renderings are analyzed according to their informative, expressive, and operative capacities.

The empirical dataset of *şibghatallāh* retrieved from the *Quran for Android* application demonstrates significant stylistic variations, reflecting the historical evolution of Qur'anic translation. Among the English variants, Abdel Haleem renders the phrase as “[*Our life*] takes its colour from God, and who gives a better colour than God? It is Him we worship.” This choice heavily emphasizes the metaphorical and expressive dimensions. As Qassem notes, such an approach aligns with Reiss's expressive function by preserving the aesthetic metaphor necessary to convey the sacred nuance. Furthermore, Haleem avoids excessive deviation by retaining “color” as a symbol for spiritual transformation (*taşbīgh al-nafs*), reminiscent of classical exegetical traditions (*tafsīr*). Qassem underscores that preserving metaphorical structures safeguards the unique literary qualities of the Qur'an, though it may risk a minor loss of multivalency if unadjusted for target readers (Qassem, 2021).

In contrast, Fadel Soliman provides a more literal rendering: “(It is) Allah's hue. And who gives a better hue than Allah? And of Him we are worshipers.” Soliman's literalism corresponds to Reiss's informative function, prioritizing the direct transmission of denotative meaning without adding interpretative glosses. By selecting “hue,” Soliman

captures the literal sense of “*celupan*” aligned with classical tafsīr while avoiding overtranslation. Conversely, Muhammad Muhsin Khan and Taqi-ud-Din al-Hilali render the phrase as “[*Our Sibghah (religion) is*] the *Sibghah (Religion) of Allāh (Islām) and which Sibghah (religion) can be better than Allāh’s? And we are His worshippers,*” incorporating explicit exegetical additions from Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr. This technique exemplifies amplificatory *tafşīl*, which Al Farisi argues can enhance metaphorical precision when combined with the literal text. However, while highly explanatory, this variant risks overtranslation, potentially diminishing the aesthetic brevity of the original Arabic text (Al Farisi, 2020).

Mufti Taqi Usmani renders the verse as “(*We dye ourselves with*) the coloring of Allah! For who is better in coloring than Allah? We are to worship none but Him,” accentuating an operative dimension through an active imperative toward devotion. This aligns with Reiss’s operative function, which prompts behavioral responses from the reader. Marmaduke Pickthall offers an aesthetically oriented rendering: “(*We take our*) color from Allah, and who is better than Allah at coloring. We are His worshippers,” thereby preserving the sacred resonance articulated in classical exegesis. Conversely, Sahih International adopts a strictly informative approach lacking metaphorical depth by rendering it as “[*And say, Ours is*] the religion of Allāh. And who is better than Allāh in [*ordaining*] religion? And we are worshippers of Him.” Mustafa Khattab’s rendering, “This is the ‘natural’ Way of Allah. And who is better than Allah in ordaining a way? And we worship ‘none but’ Him,” represents a modern *tafşīl* focused on theological disposition (*fiṭrah*). Finally, Abdullah Yusuf Ali’s translation, “(*Our religion is*) the Baptism of Allah: And who can baptize better than Allah? And it is He Whom we worship,” demonstrates a clear semantic deviation by introducing Christian theological terminology (*baptism*), which introduces ideological bias into the Qur’anic text (Ali, 1937).

Regarding the Indonesian variants, Sabeq Company translates the phrase as “(*Peganglah*) ‘*Şibghah Allah*’. *Siapa yang lebih baik Şibghahnya daripada Allah? Dan kepada-Nya kami menyembah,*” employing transliteration to prevent translation loss. This literal foreignization strategy matches Reiss’s informative function by maintaining the original Arabic form without unwarranted additions, though it requires supplementary commentary for lay readers. Similarly, the Quran Complex provides a direct rendering with minimal explanation “*Şibghah Allah. Dan siapakah yang lebih baik Şibghah-nya daripada Allah? Dan hanya kepada-Nya-lah kami menyembah*” fulfilling an informative function. Lastly, the Ministry of Religious Affairs renders it as “*Şibghah Allah. Siapa yang*

lebih baik şibghah-nya daripada Allah? Dan kepada-Nya kami menyembah.” By incorporating local contextual adjustments in line with Al Farisi’s domestication framework, the Indonesian translations generally maintain theological purity and avoid the colonial or orientalist biases observed in certain Western English renderings.

Foreignization (Literal) vs. Domestication (*Tafşīl*) Strategies in Digital Platforms

Etymologically, the term *şibghah* derives from the past tense verb *şabaghtu*, meaning “*I dyed*” or “*I colored*.” Consequently, *al-şabghu* (as a verbal noun/*maşdar*) primarily denotes “*dyeing*,” “*the process of coloring*,” or “*the color itself*,” emphasizing the act of imparting identity through color. According to classical Qur’anic lexicographer Al-Rāghib al-Işfahānī, *şibghah* in QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 138 represents an intrinsic divine grace embedded within human nature -namely, the intellect (*‘aql*)- which serves as the primary divine “*dye*” distinguishing humanity from other creations (Al-Asfahani, 2017). Based on the evaluation of the eleven translation variants of *şibghatallāh* retrieved from the *Quran for Android* application, two primary methodological trajectories emerge: literal approaches (foreignization) and explicative/interpretative approaches (*tafşīl*/domestication).

The literal approach (foreignization) seeks to preserve the original metaphorical form and source-text structure (*mabnā*), thereby minimizing translation loss (Al Farisi, 2023). This strategy is exemplified in the English corpus by Fadel Soliman’s “*Allah’s hue*”, Abdel Haleem’s “*[Our life] takes its color from God*”, and Pickthall’s “*(We take our) color from Allah*”. In the Indonesian corpus, this is reflected in Sabeq Company’s and the Ministry of Religious Affairs’ retention of the transliterated term “*Şibghah Allah*”. These renderings align closely with 9th-century classical exegesis; Al-Ṭabarī explicitly interprets the phrase as “*the dye of faith*,” symbolizing the purification of the soul without introducing unwarranted explanatory glosses (Al-Ṭabarī, 2001). From a functionalist perspective, foreignization preserves the authentic sacred aesthetic; however, when applied to a *hapax legomenon* like *şibghatallāh*, it risks imposing cognitive barriers on non-Arabic readers unfamiliar with classical Arabic rhetoric unless accompanied by explanatory notes (Toro, 2013).

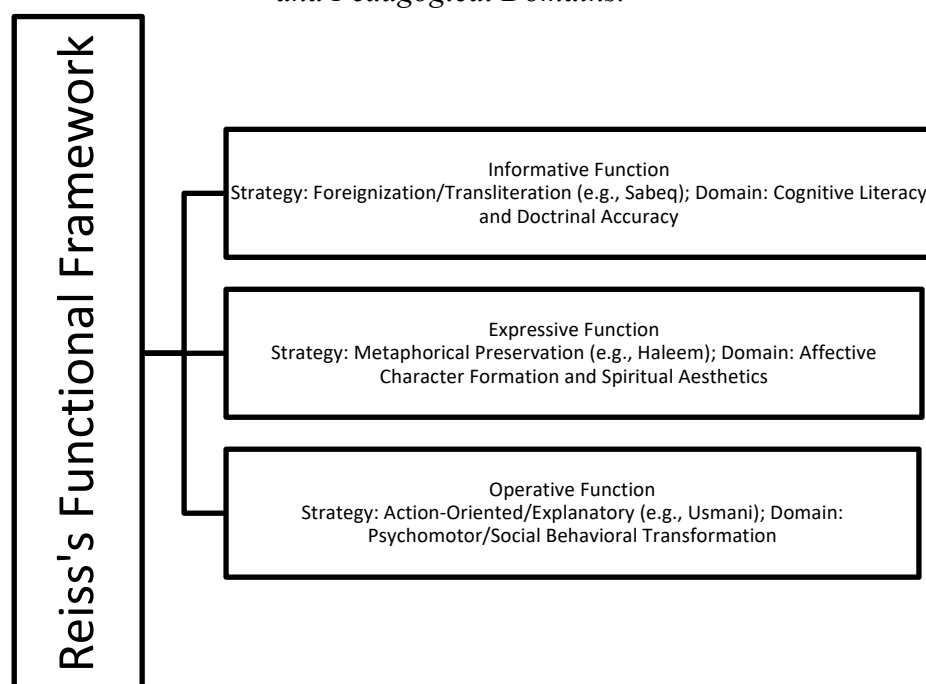
Conversely, the *tafşīl* approach (domestication) represents an evolutionary shift toward explanatory theological interpretation aimed at enhancing accessibility for modern readers. In this category, the aesthetic metaphor of “*dye*” is adapted into abstract theological concepts, such as Mustafa Khatib’s “*natural Way of Allah*”, Sahih

International's "*the religion of Allāh*", and Muhsin Khan's insertion of parenthetical commentary derived from Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr. While this domesticating shift facilitates immediate cognitive comprehension among contemporary readers, it risks overtranslation and semantic reduction, flattening the multivalent aesthetic dimensions historically emphasized by exegetes such as Al-Qurṭubī (Al-Qurṭubī, 1964). The tension between historical-literal preservation and modern explanatory adaptation underscores the need to evaluate digital translation quality through a structured functional framework.

Expressive vs. Informative Functions and Their Educational Implications

Within the context of digital Qur'anic education, Katharina Reiss's functional categories - informative, expressive, and operative- provide a robust framework for assessing how translation strategies influence religious literacy and character formation (Reiss, 2014).

Figure 2. Integration of Reiss's Functional Framework with Translation Strategies and Pedagogical Domains.



The informative function serves as the foundation for basic Qur'anic cognitive literacy (basic Qur'anic literacy). Independent learners utilizing mobile application interfaces rely heavily on denotative accuracy to avoid doctrinal misunderstandings (Gunawan, 2022). As Dinia et al. demonstrate, expressions with complex semantic structures require precise lexical rendering to prevent conceptual ambiguity among lay readers (Dinia et al, 2024). Indonesian transliterated variants, such as Sabeq Company's

“(Peganglah) ‘*Ṣibghah Allah*’”, fulfill this informative role through strict foreignization. By maintaining the original Arabic form, these renderings achieve minimal translation loss and protect textual purity, though they require supplementary marginal commentary to fulfill their educational potential for novice readers (Al Farisi, 2020).

From a pedagogical perspective, the expressive function plays a crucial role in affective character formation and spiritual identity development (ethical formation). Preserving *ṣibghatallāh* as an aesthetic metaphor -symbolizing the divine “coloring of the soul” (*taṣbīgh al-naḥs*)- allows readers to internalize faith as an active, beautiful process of spiritual transformation rather than a mere adherence to legalistic dogma (Al-Qurṭubī, 1964). Renderings such as Abdel Haleem’s “*Our life takes its color from God*” and Pickthall’s “(*We take our*) *color from Allah*” successfully maintain this expressive resonance, mirroring Al-Qurṭubī’s aesthetic commentary. As Qassem and Boulaouali observe, preserving the unique stylistic and metaphorical features of the Qur’an prevents the loss of affective depth, bridging linguistic precision with spiritual education (Boulaouali, 2021).

Ideological Bias, Theological Decolonization, and Social Transformation

The operative function connects directly to behavioral transformation and active social piety. Operative translations act as practical guides that prompt readers to translate the spirit of *ṣibghatallāh* into daily social action (Reiss, 2014). As Samsudin notes, digital engagement with Qur’anic texts should culminate in the active embodiment of normative values that reinforce ethical conduct in society (Samsudin, 2026). This operative orientation is evident in Taqi Usmani’s active phrasing -“(We dye ourselves with) the coloring of Allah... We are to worship none but Him” -and Khattab’s focus on the “Way of Allah.” By framing the verse as a direct call to worship and ethical living, operative renderings guide readers from passive consumers of information into active moral agents (Reiss and Vermeer, 2014).

However, the operative capacity of digital translation can be severely compromised when texts carry ideological bias or semantic deviation. The most critical instance of deviation in the analyzed corpus appears in Abdullah Yusuf Ali’s rendering: “(*Our religion is*) the Baptism of Allah.” By introducing the term “Baptism,” Ali superimposes Christian sacramental terminology onto the Qur’anic concept of *ḥiṭrah*, resulting in an ideological deviation that distorts the original denotative and connotative meaning (Abdo and Mousa, 2016). Analyzed through the theoretical framework of Edward Said’s Orientalism (1978),

such translational choices reflect the subtle infiltration of Western-centric theological paradigms into Islamic translation literature (Said, 1978).

In digital platforms, offering multi-variant translations has the potential to provide critical counter-narratives against colonial residues and orientalist distortions. The inclusion of localized, verified translations -such as the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs version- ensures that digital Qur'anic learning remains authentic, contextually grounded, and resistant to ideological bias (Maisya and Rohman, 2021). Crucially, this analysis extends Katharina Reiss's functionalist model by integrating a critical cultural and decolonial dimension into text-function evaluation (Reiss, 2014). While Reiss's classical model evaluates translation primarily through linguistic and textual typology, this study demonstrates that in digital, cross-cultural environments, functional efficacy must also be measured by a translation's ability to preserve theological integrity, decolonize sacred terminology, and foster authentic social transformation.

Educational Implications and Digital Qur'anic Literacy Enhancement

Building upon the analysis of textual dynamics, functional typologies, and ideological decolonization, these theoretical insights yield direct implications for digital Qur'anic pedagogy and educational transformation. The shift from printed mushafs to mobile applications like *Quran for Android* redefines how contemporary Muslim societies engage with scripture, transforming translation from a static textual product into an active pedagogical medium.

The findings of this study offer significant theoretical and practical contributions to the development of Qur'anic literacy in the digital era. The presence of mobile applications such as the *Quran for Android* app can no longer be viewed merely as software-based reading tools; rather, they have evolved into primary mediums for self-directed Qur'anic learning among modern Muslim societies (Maisya and Rohman, 2021). The unparalleled accessibility offered by mobile technology enables non-Arabic-speaking users to engage directly with the sacred text and translate divine messages into daily life practice (Boulaouali, 2021). Consequently, digital Qur'anic translations perform a vital pedagogical role in shaping users' worldviews, theological understandings, and religious practices (Qassem, 2020). This shift from print to digital media necessitates heightened scrutiny regarding the quality and accuracy of translations consumed on a mass scale by the public (Gunawan, 2022; Fathur Rosi et al., 2025).

Within the framework of Qur'anic pedagogy, the informative function of translation serves as the foundational pillar for basic religious literacy (basic Qur'anic literacy). Independent learners studying the Qur'an via mobile apps rely heavily on the clarity and denotative accuracy of translated texts to avoid misinterpreting legal rulings or core tenets of faith (Mukminin, 2026). As demonstrated in the translation of lexemes and collocations with complex semantic structures -such as *kutiba* or *ṣibghatallāh*- lexical imprecision can induce ambiguity among target readers (Dinia et al., 2024). As established in translation acceptability criteria, informative accuracy is an absolute prerequisite for ensuring that the denotative message of the source text is conveyed without unwarranted translation loss or uncontextualized additions (Yahaya et al., 2024).

Conversely, the expressive function in digital translation plays a vital role in ethical formation and spiritual identity development among learners. Rendering metaphorical collocations like *ṣibghatallāh* while retaining their aesthetic resonance -specifically the concept of “*the coloring of the soul with faith*”- allows readers to deeply internalize the affective values of the Qur'an. This approach prevents a reductionist, overly rigid reading, transforming Qur'anic learning from a mechanical cognitive exercise into a process of spiritual purification (*tazkiyat al-nafs*). Lexical adaptations and stylistic shifts in modern translations must preserve sacred metaphors and original theological nuances so that the text's aesthetic and spiritual resonance remains palpable to contemporary readers.

Furthermore, the most critical implication of evaluating digital translation lies in activating the operative function, which drives behavioral transformation and active social piety (Living Qur'an). Operative and communicative translations empower readers to translate textual comprehension into practical social action, guiding Muslim communities away from purely formalistic or mystical treatments of scripture toward an inclusive embodiment of monotheism and ethics. The choice of diction and translation techniques carries ideological weight, directing readers to become moderate and tolerant agents of moral change within pluralistic societies. Accordingly, digital Qur'an developers and religious authorities, such as the Lajnah Pentashihan Mushaf Al-Qur'an (LPMQ), must look beyond user interface and user experience design alone. The development of technology-based Islamic educational media requires a careful balance between visual usability, hermeneutic accuracy, and pedagogical efficacy (Al Farisi, 2020). Educators and developers must judiciously select translation variants that balance informative, expressive, and operative functions. Such strategic alignment is essential to holistically enhance public

religious literacy, safeguard divine message authenticity, and support adaptive Islamic educational transformation in the digital age.

Ultimately, these findings expand upon the existing literature on Qur'anic translation studies by demonstrating that Katharina Reiss's functionalism is not merely a static linguistic tool, but rather an adaptable analytical framework capable of addressing digital hermeneutics. While previous research, such as studies by Qassem (2020) and Al Farisi (2020), focused predominantly on static printed texts, this study reveals how the digital application environment intensifies the friction between foreignization and domestication due to a highly diverse, global user base. By pinpointing the risks of overtranslation and ideological deviation within mobile platforms, this research bridges classical exegesis (*tafsīr*) with contemporary digital translation theory, offering a decolonial perspective for future digital Qur'anic studies.

Conclusion

This study concludes that applying Katharina Reiss's text function model is highly effective for analyzing the historical dynamics and stylistic variations in translating the collocation *ṣibghatallāh* within the *Quran for Android* applications. Two primary poles emerge in these translations: literal and explicative. Literal translations preserve the aesthetic dimension and original meaning, whereas explicative or *tafsīl* translations prioritize theological clarity, though often at the cost of aesthetic nuance and semantic precision. Reiss's functional framework categorizes translations into three main functions: informative, expressive, and operative, each playing a vital role in balancing authentic meaning with readability for modern readers. Furthermore, this study highlights the importance of theological decolonization in digital translation to ensure Qur'anic renderings align with local contexts and remain free from ideological bias.

Consequently, Reiss's model not only aids in identifying and preventing loss and deviation in translation but also serves as a crucial catalyst for educational transformation. The findings provide a vital foundation for designing flexible, modern curricula that constructively integrate digital religious resources. By adopting an Outcome-Based Education (OBE) approach and student-centered learning methodologies, educators can utilize these functional translation variations to cultivate critical theological and digital literacy among students. Ultimately, this approach supports the development of a more holistic, critically engaged, and contextually relevant Islamic education tailored to the complex realities of the contemporary digital age.

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