

# THE ACCEPTABILITY OF RELIGIOUS TERMS TRANSLATION IN *THE COMPLETE IDIOT'S GUIDE TO UNDERSTANDING ISLAM*

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## ABSTRACT

*This research aimed to find out the used translation's techniques and the acceptability of the translation. This was a descriptive qualitative research and an embedded-case study. Based on semantic and relevance theory, the researcher determined good translation. This research was conducted by listing the religious terms found in The Complete Idiot's Guide to Understanding Islam. Then, the researchers compared the source language and target language to identify the translation techniques. Finally, the researchers and raters assessed the acceptability of the translation by conducting Focus Group Discussion (FGD). The result shows that the translator uses established equivalent, borrowing, literal, particularization, generalization, transposition, reduction, addition, explication, and discursive creation. Besides, the average rate for the acceptability of the translation is 2,8 out of 3. It means that the translation is mostly in accordance with the norm and rule of language in the target text.*

**Keywords:** acceptability, translation quality, translation techniques, religious terms

## INTRODUCTION

Religion can be considered as guidance for many people. In Indonesia, there are six religions which are recognized by the government, namely Islam, Christian, Catholic, Hindu, Buddha, and Kongfuzhe. Because of the righteousness in those religions, many people want to do missionary, so that righteousness can be spread all over the world. Moreover, in accordance with the technology development, the missionary work is easier because people do not have to meet directly. Those good values from every religion can be written or told through the Internet. However, this missionary work may be difficult because of the language difference. Therefore, translation is required to overcome this problem.

Translating the terms related to religion is not easy since religion is usually related to culture. According to Newmark (1988), culture is a particular way of living in a society which uses language as a tool for communication. In other words, the source text may have different culture with the target text. It is possible if the terms which exist in the source text may not exist in the target text. Moreover, Nababan (2003) stated that a word might have social or cultural meaning in a particular society, but that word might mean something else in another society. Because of the challenge in translating terms related to culture, there are

already many researchers who conduct researches about it. Most of them use the category from Newmark (1988) in identifying the cultural terms (Ahmad, 2011; Barathayomi, 2012; Khoirunnisa, 2015; Nurhidayah, 2015; Simanihuruk et al., 2013; Simarmata, 2015). There are five categories of cultural terms from Newmark (1988), and the religious term is one of them. Most of the previous researches use novels as the object of the study. On the other side, there are also some researchers who only focus on religious terms (Elshiekh & Saleh, 2011; Agliz, 2015; Alghamdi, 2016; Elewa, 2014; Hassan, 2016; Mehawesh & Sadeq, 2014; Shariffar, 2010). However, most of those researches only discuss the translation from Arab to English or vice versa. Moreover, a book is rarely used as the object of those previous studies. Moreover, those previous studies do not assess the translation quality based on theory from Nababan, Nuraeni, and Sumardiono (2012).

The researcher decided to use *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Understanding Islam* to be the media of this research. This book is chosen because it is a best-seller book in America. In addition, this book has been translated into Bahasa Indonesia, and it contains many religious terms.

There are two research questions. First, it is what the used translation techniques are to translate religious terms in *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Understanding Islam*. Second, it is how the translation techniques affect

the acceptability of religious terms in the book. These two research questions determine the research objectives. Those are to find out the translation techniques of the religious terms and to see the acceptability of the religious terms.

All of the terms related to religion are considered as religious terms. The researchers use semantic and relevance theory to explain a good translation when it comes to translating religious terms. Furthermore, those theories help the researchers to decide the proper translation techniques which are proposed by Molina and Albir (2002). Meanwhile, the translation quality assessment is based on the theory from Nababan, Nuraeni, and Sumardiono (2012). According to that theory, there are three aspects which are highlighted in assessing translation quality, namely accuracy, acceptability, and readability. Accuracy means the translator translates the message from source text to target text accurately. Meanwhile, acceptability concerns the proper translation based on the norm and rule of language in target text. On the other hand, the readability is whether the translation can be understood easily or not. Every aspect has the score range from one to three. However, this research only focuses on the acceptability of the translation to find out whether the translation is accepted in the target language or not.

There are some benefits which are expected from this research. First, it can give information to the people whether the translation of religious terms in *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Understanding Islam* is acceptable or not. Second, it is expected to give more insight for the translator on how to produce an acceptable translation of religious terms. Third, this research can encourage future researchers to conduct research about the translation of religious terms.

## METHODS

This research highlights the use of translation techniques to translate the religious terms in *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Understanding Islam* and the effect of those techniques on the quality of the translation (acceptability). Since translation techniques are always related to the translation in the target language, this research is called translation research which focuses on the product (Nababan, 2007). Moreover, this research uses a descriptive qualitative method to explore and describe the translation of religious terms in multicultural society.

It has been mentioned that this research goal is to find out the translation techniques and the translation quality of religious terms in the book. Therefore, the researchers only focus on the religious terms in the book. Moreover, these terms are only limited to words and phrases. These terms are the data of this research.

There are two data in this research. Those are main data and secondary data. The main data consist of the religious terms in the form of words and phrases. Meanwhile, the secondary data is the result of previous researches related to the translation of religious terms. These secondary data is not included directly in this research. These data are only used as references to get the main data.

The researchers also use document analysis in this research. This technique is used in to collect the religious terms from the book. In addition, it is used to identify the translation techniques. The translation techniques of religious terms can be decided by comparing the source text and the target text.

For the translation quality, the researchers use Focus

Group Discussion (FGD). It is a discussion with the raters to decide the score of acceptability. This is done by involving two raters and the researchers. Those raters already have the master degree in translation, and they also have experiences in assessing translation quality. The raters and researchers give the score to each translation based on the acceptability assessment instrument which is proposed by Nababan, Nuraeni, and Sumardiono (2012). This instrument has three levels of the qualitative parameter. The raters and researchers give the score to every religious term translation based on the parameter. If the score is one, it means that the translation is not acceptable. If it is two, it means that the translation is less acceptable. Meanwhile, three means that the translation is acceptable in the target language.

After collecting the data, the researchers analyze them by comparing the source text and the target text to determine the translation techniques and calculated the numbers. Then, the researchers calculate the average score of acceptability of the translation from FGD. Finally, the researchers try to seek the pattern between the used translation techniques and the effect of those techniques to the acceptability of the translation.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Around 240 religious terms are used as the linguistics data of this research. After listing the religious terms, the researchers decide the translation techniques using theory by Molina and Albir (2002). From 18 translation techniques, there are 10 techniques which are mainly used to translate the religious terms (established equivalent, borrowing, literal, particularization, generalization, transposition, reduction, addition, explication, and discursive creation). Moreover, the raters give the score of acceptability to each translation from range one to three. The score indicates whether the translation is not acceptable, less acceptable, or acceptable.

Table 1 Examples of Established Equivalent

No.	Source Text	Target Text	Acceptability
1.	Heaven	<i>Surga</i>	3
2.	Hell	<i>Neraka</i>	3
3.	A sin	<i>Suatu dosa</i>	3
4.	The Qur'an	<i>Al Qur'an</i>	3

Established equivalent means the translator uses the correct translation which exists in the dictionary or the daily life in the target language. The examples of religious terms which are translated using this technique in *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Understanding Islam* book can be seen in Table 1. The first and second examples have established equivalent technique because the Indonesian translation of "heaven" is "*surga*" and "hell" is "*neraka*". Those terms refer to the places where all people will go after the end of the world. "Heaven" is a place where all good people will go to because it is a place full of beauty and favor. Meanwhile, "hell" is a place to torment people who do bad things when they live. Then, "sin" is a term which refers to the burden that a person has after he or she disobeys God's rules. "The Qur'an" is the holy book for Muslims, and it is usually known as "*Al Qur'an*" in Bahasa Indonesia.

As for the translation quality, all of the examples are translated accurately and can be well-accepted in

bahasa Indonesia. The raters give the highest score to each translation. It means that the translator already uses the right techniques to translate those religious terms.

Table 2 Examples of Borrowing

No	Source Text	Target Text	Translation Techniques	Acceptability
1.	Masjid al Haram	<i>Masjid al Haram</i>	Pure Borrowing	2
2.	Moham-medanism	<i>Moham-madisme</i>	Naturalized Borrowing	3
3.	Rabbi	<i>Rabbi</i>	Pure Borrowing	2
4.	Umar ibn al Khattab	<i>Umar bin Khattab</i>	Naturalized Borrowing	3

There are two kinds of borrowing, namely pure borrowing and naturalized borrowing. Pure borrowing means the translator borrow the term from the source text directly to be the translation in the target text. Meanwhile, naturalized borrowing means the translator also borrow the term from the source text, but it has been naturalized to be more acceptable in the target text. The examples of those techniques are presented in Table 2.

“Masjid al Haram” is translated into “Masjid al Haram”. There is no difference between the target text and the source text. Therefore, it is called pure borrowing. This also happens to the third example. In fact, those translations have more common translation in the target text (“*Masjidil Haram*” and “*Rabi*”). Meanwhile, the second and fourth examples are translated using naturalized borrowing because the translation is almost the same as the source text. It can be seen that pure borrowing technique causes the translation less acceptable in the target text, while naturalized borrowing technique is acceptable.

Table 3 Examples of Literal

No	Source Text	Target Text	Acceptability
1.	Abraham’s Bosom	<i>Pelukan Ibrahim</i>	1
2.	Books of Vision	<i>Kitab Visi</i>	1

Literal is the applied technique of translating word per word. Usually, the translation is out of context. The examples of the translation which use this technique are shown in Table 3. “Abraham’s bosom” is a religious term from Christian. It is related to purgatory (a step which is done after people die to clean their sins before they enter heaven). However, this term is literally translated into “*pelukan Abraham*” (Abraham’s hug) since the meaning of “bosom” is chest or hug. As for the second example, the translator literally translated the term “books of vision” into “*kitab visi*”. In fact, the term “*kitab visi*” does not exist in the target language. Therefore, this technique causes the translations become unacceptable in the target language.

Moreover, particularization is a translation technique which translates a term using more specific term than the source text. This happens when there is more specific term in the target text than the source text. Thus, the reader may understand the term. Table 4 shows the examples of particularization technique.

Table 4 Examples of Particularization

No	Source Text	Target Text	Acceptability
1.	scarves	<i>Jilbab</i>	3
2.	A religious scholar	<i>Syaikh</i>	3

The term “scarves” has a general meaning if it is translated into Indonesia using semantic theory. It may mean a kind of fabric to cover something. However, it is translated into “*jilbab*” (a veil for Muslim women). Therefore, the meaning which is general is translated more specifically. This also happens to the second example. “A religious scholar” may refer to the scholar from any religions, but it is translated into “*Syaikh*” (a scholar in Islam). It means the translator uses the more specific term in the translation.

Table 5 Examples of Generalization

No	Source Text	Target Text	Acceptability
1.	Alimony and palimony	<i>Tunjangan perceraian</i>	3
2.	Christianity	<i>Nasrani</i>	3

Generalization technique is the opposite of particularization. It means the translator uses more general term than the source text to translate the term. The examples of this technique can be seen in Table 5. “Alimony” means an amount of money that a man has to pay for his partner after the divorce. Meanwhile, “palimony” means a substitute of alimony in case that people are not married but they have lived for a long period then decided to end their relationship. Those terms have slightly different meaning, but they are translated to be more general in the target text. Meanwhile, in the second example, the term “Christianity” refers to the Christian. This term is translated into “*Nasrani*” (a term which refers to Catholic and Christian) which is more general than the source text.

Table 6 Examples of Transposition

No	Source Text	Target Text	Acceptability
1.	Baptized	<i>Pembaptisan</i>	3
2.	A scarf on her head	<i>Berjilbab</i>	3

Transposition technique changes the grammatical category of the source text. For instance, a term which is a verb in the source text is translated into a noun in the target text. The examples are in Table 6.

The first example shows that a verb in the source text is translated into a noun in the target text. Meanwhile, the second example exposes that translation is a verb, and the source text is a noun. This change of grammatical category is called transposition. However, the translations are still acceptable in the Indonesia language because it obeys the language rules.

Reduction technique means to reduce the information of the source text when it is translated into the target text. It aims to compress the information from the source text by removing or stating the information implicitly in the target text. Table 7 shows the examples.

It can be seen that the first and second examples have more information than the translations. However, the translator removes the information because those terms are well known in the target text without translating the information. That is why even though the information is missing, the translations are still acceptable in the target text.

Table 7 Examples of Reduction

No	Source Text	Target Text	Acceptability
1.	The Muslim Holy Book, the Qur'an	<i>Al Qur'an</i>	3
2.	Ayatul Kursi, or Verse of the Throne	<i>Ayat Kursi</i>	3

Table 8 Examples of Addition

No	Source Text	Target Text	Acceptability
1.	Pilgrimage	<i>Berziarah (berhaji)</i>	3
2.	Yarmulkes	<i>Yarmulk (tutup kepala laki-laki Yahudi)</i>	3

Addition is a part of amplification technique. Addition means adding information about the term in the target text. This technique can also be considered as the opposite of reduction. Table 8 shows the examples.

The first and second examples use addition technique. It is because the translations have information in the brackets. Even though there is added information in the translations, they are still acceptable in the Indonesia language.

Table 9 Examples of Explication

No	Source Text	Target Text	Acceptability
1.	Paradise	<i>Surga Firdaus</i>	3
2.	A level Plain	<i>Padang Makhsyar</i>	3
3.	Muhammad	<i>Nabi Muhammad</i>	3

Explication is also a part of amplification. It means the translator explicitly mentions the added information in the target text. It is different from addition because the added information in explication aims to make the term is more specific for the readers. The examples can be seen in Table 9.

"Paradise" means the highest level of heaven. In Indonesia, most of the people are Islam and *Surga Firdaus* is also the highest level of heaven according to Islam. That is why the first example is acceptable in the target text. "A level plain" is translated into *Padang Makhsyar* (a plain where people wait for their judgment after they die). This technique is called explication because the translator explicitly mentions the name of the plain in the target text. For the third example, the translator also explicitly mentions the term *Nabi* (prophet) even though the source text does not mention it.

Discursive creation refers to the use of temporary relevance to translate a term. It is usually out of context. Table 10 shows the examples.

Table 10 Examples of Discursive Creation

No	Source Text	Target Text	Acceptability
1.	Welcoming Consecration	<i>Berkah Bayi yang baru lahir</i>	3
2.	Fallen angels	<i>Malaikat yang dikutuk</i>	1

The first example uses discursive creation technique because the common term in the target language is *Upacara Aqiqah* (ceremony to welcome newborns in Islam). Therefore, the translator makes up a translation which is not related to the actual meaning. However, the translation is still acceptable in the target language because it is based on the rule of language in bahasa Indonesia. Meanwhile, the common or correct translation of "fallen angels" is actually "*malaikat yang diusir dari surga*" (angels that are expelled from heaven). In the book, the translation of "fallen angels" becomes "*malaikat yang dikutuk*" (angels that are cursed). It proves that the translator makes a new translation which is not related to the actual meaning. Moreover, in the culture of target text, all of the angels are considered kind, and they are not cursed. However, if they do not behave, they can be expelled from heaven according to Christian. It means that the concept of the cursed angel is not quite accepted in Indonesia.

It can be seen from Table 1 to Table 10 that the use of translation technique may affect the quality of the translation regarding acceptability. There are some techniques which lead to the highest score of acceptability, and the others may lead to the lower score of it. Some techniques which cause the translation acceptable in the target language are established equivalent, naturalized borrowing, particularization, generalization, transposition, reduction, addition, and explication. Meanwhile, pure borrowing causes the translation to be less acceptable because the translation is still in the foreign language. On the other hand, literal and discursive creation techniques make the translation unacceptable in the target language because the translations do not fulfill the norm and the rule of language in the target language. However, there is an exception, such as in the first example in Table 10. The translation in that example is acceptable in the target language because it fulfills the rule of language in the target language even though the translator makes the translation out of context. However, the acceptability of the translation of religious terms is high with the average score of 2,8. It means that the translations are mostly in accordance with the norm and rule of language in the target language.

## CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, translating the terms which are related to religion is quite challenging for a translator. This may happen because there are some terms which exist in the source language but it does not exist in the target language. However, this problem can be overcome by using the proper translation technique to achieve high acceptability in the target language.

The translation techniques which are used to translate the religious terms in *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Understanding Islam* are established equivalent, borrowing, literal, particularization, generalization, transposition, reduction, addition, explication, and discursive creation.

The most frequently used technique to translate religious terms in the book is established equivalent. This technique is mostly used by the translator because it produces the frequently used term which exists in the dictionary. This will make the translation automatically acceptable since it is in accordance with the norm and language rule in the target language. There are also other techniques which make the translation acceptable, namely naturalized borrowing, particularization, generalization, transposition, reduction, addition, and explication.

On the other hand, the translation techniques which produce less acceptable translation are literal, pure borrowing, and discursive creation. All of those translation techniques cause the translation to get an average score of 2,8 in acceptability. This score is given by the raters and researcher through FGD. This score is quite high because the maximum score is 3. In other words, the translation of religious terms in *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Understanding Islam* is acceptable. It means that almost all of the translations follow the norms and language rule in the target text. Hence, the target readers can accept the translations without any complaints on the suitability of the translations and the language rule in the target language.

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