

## Thematic Structure of Rhetorical Imperative Sentences in the Quran as Arabic Literature and Its Translation into Malay

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### Abstract

This study investigates the extent to which the rhetorical functions of Quranic imperative sentences are accurately conveyed in their Malay translations. A total of sixteen Quranic verses containing rhetorical imperatives were identified, from which six were purposively selected for detailed analysis based on their distinct rhetorical functions, including permissibility, disdain, taking lessons, honour, warning and humiliation. The source texts (ST) and their corresponding Malay translations from Tafsir PIMPINAN AR-RAHMAN Kepada Pengertian AL-QUR'AN (25th edition, 2020) were analysed using Halliday's (1994) textual metafunction framework, with a focus on theme and rheme structures. The findings indicate that while the translations effectively convey the directive force of the original imperatives, this is often achieved through thematic adaptations that affect semantic precision and rhetorical tone. Specifically, the Malay translations tend to expand rhemes, introduce explanatory additions, and shift implicit meanings into explicit ones. Although the communicative intent of the source text is preserved, such adaptations occasionally attenuate the rhetorical sharpness of the original. The study concludes that future translations should aim for a balanced approach that preserves structural fidelity, maintains cultural clarity, and retains rhetorical impact to ensure the Quran's persuasive and illocutionary force remains intact across languages.

**Keywords:** Quranic Rhetorical Imperative Moods; Thematic Structure; Halliday's Textual Metafunction; Translation

### INTRODUCTION

The translation of the Qur'an presents unparalleled challenges due to the unique linguistic, rhetorical, and textual features of the original Arabic scripture. As Hussein Abdul-raof, (2001) asserts, achieving a perfect translation is impossible because of inherent cultural, syntactic, and semantic disparities between Arabic and target languages. Every translation attempt inevitably sacrifices aspects of the original style, mystical impact, and intended meaning. Qur'anic translation inevitably entails a loss of meaning

and sacred resonance, as rigid literal approaches often fail to convey the theological, cultural, and rhetorical depth of the source text, necessitating a more integrative and multidimensional translational framework (Al-tarawneh, 2025). Thus, any translated version of the Qur'an should be regarded merely as an interpretation of its meanings rather than a substitute for the sacred text (Abdul-raof, 2001).

The challenges become even more pronounced when translators encounter culturally embedded expressions, such as colour terms, which carry symbolic, idiomatic, and psychological connotations. Amal Abdelsattar Metwally (2019) emphasizes that colours in the Qur'an often function metaphorically black symbolizing sorrow, white denoting bliss or purity, rather than merely describing physical appearances. Translating these terms requires a delicate balance between preserving the original Arabic phrasing (foreignisation) and paraphrasing to convey deeper semantic and emotional meanings. Metwally's comparative analysis of English translations reveals divergent strategies: while Pickthall and Yusuf Ali tend toward foreignisation, Muhammad Asad often opts for paraphrasing. These approaches reflect broader debates in translation studies and highlight the interpretive complexity of Qur'anic figurative language.

The difficulty of rendering Qur'anic discourse into other languages is further compounded by theological considerations. Tijani Boulaouali (2021) notes that classical Islamic scholarship historically resisted Qur'an translation, viewing Arabic as the exclusive and sacred medium of divine revelation. This stance stems from the belief in the Qur'an's linguistic and rhetorical inimitability (*i'jāz*). However, the necessity of making the Qur'an accessible to non-Arabic speakers has led to what Boulaouali terms a "strange paradox": widespread translations coexist with the enduring theological view that the Qur'an remains untranslatable. Consequently, translations are regarded not as the Qur'an itself but as "interpretations of meaning" approximations that acknowledge the impossibility of fully capturing the original's depth (Boulaouali, 2021).

Further complicating the process are linguistic and cultural barriers that hinder precise semantic transfer, a study by Shamsul Jamili Bin Yeob, Nur Nazwan Balki, and Abdulrahman Alosman (2024) underscores the difficulties translators face with words that carry profound or multifaceted meanings. Their research confirms that a complete and accurate translation of the Qur'an or any semantically dense text is unattainable, regardless of the translator's skill. Linguistic proficiency alone is insufficient, as meaning is deeply rooted in extra-linguistic elements such as cultural context, historical connotations, and rhetorical nuances, which resist full transference into another language (Jamili et al., 2024). Given these challenges, Hassan Lafeer Meera Mohideen (2025) propose comparative studies of existing translations as a method to improve quality. By analyzing different renditions, translators can better convey the Qur'an's rhetorical and artistic subtleties while preserving its original spirit and objectives. This approach aims to produce translations that resonate with target audiences without compromising the text's theological and linguistic integrity (Lafeer et al., 2025). Collectively, these studies affirm that while Qur'anic translations are indispensable for cross-cultural understanding, they remain interpretive endeavors rather than definitive reproductions. The interplay of linguistic uniqueness, cultural symbolism, and theological reverence ensures that the Qur'an's full essence remains inextricably tied to its original Arabic form.

The study of imperative sentences in Arabic, particularly their literal (*ḥaqīqī*) and figurative (*majāzī*) meanings, reflects the broader linguistic and cultural significance of Arabic in Islamic scholarship. As Nadia Selim (2017) highlights in her examination of

Muslim societies' ambivalence toward Arabic, the language's sacred role in conveying Quranic commandments has historically positioned it as a cornerstone of Islamic education and intellectual tradition. Regarding figurative meanings, scholars have differing opinions on their number in Arabic. Nor Hashimah (1992) referred to these figurative meanings using modern linguistic terminology as implicature, which refers to the implied message conveyed by a speaker in an utterance. Implicature involves the use of explicit language to deliver an implicit message (Azmi et al., 2021). The information obtained is the inferred meaning derived from what has been explicitly stated.

Implicature is a crucial aspect of pragmatics, a field that studies the relationship between sentences and their context. Carston (1998) defines implicature as the implicit message intended to be conveyed through explicit utterances. Implicature encompasses both explicitly stated content and meanings that are implicitly inferred (Hashimah, 1992). Pragmatic ambiguity in translation is best understood not as an optional interpretive layer but as a culturally and structurally encoded phenomenon that requires translators to engage in pragmatic reconstruction, mediating between divergent conventionalisations to preserve the illocutionary force and communicative essence of the source text rather than merely transferring lexical meaning (Francesch, 2024).

In Arabic, scholars have identified various types of implicatures or figurative meanings in imperative sentences. Al-Qazwiniy (2003) identified 10 types, Fadl Hasan Abbas (1997) found 13, Al-Hashimy (1999) identified 18, and Ahmad Maṭlūb (1983) discovered 31 types of figurative meanings in Arabic imperative verses. However, since the present study focuses on Quranic imperative verses, only the types of figurative meanings found in the Quran will be examined. Al Amidi (2003), a prominent scholar of *Uṣūl al-Fiqh*, identified 16 types of figurative meanings in Quranic imperative sentences. According to Fadl Hasan Abbas (1997), some of these figurative meanings overlap due to their close semantic relationship, such as the distinction between *wājib* and *fard* (both referring to obligatory actions). This has led to scholarly disagreement and debate, with some scholars distinguishing between the two terms, while others consider them synonymous (Azmi et al., 2021).

Rhetorical imperative sentences are an important rhetorical device that has attracted the attention of scholars from different languages and perspectives. In Arabic, rhetorical imperative sentences have drawn the concern of both rhetoricians and grammarians due to their wide occurrence in the Holy Quran and the Hadith (sayings and deeds) of the Prophet Muhammad. Being non-seeking information, rhetorical imperative sentences are intended to serve specific purposes or functions. Under this circumstance, scholars working on Arabic and Malay have provided numerous purposes or functions served by rhetorical imperative sentences. In Malay, commands or directives are not classified into literal and non-literal meanings. Similarly, the purpose of imperative sentences is limited to only two categories: exclusive commands and inclusive commands (A. Omar, 1986). With respect to translation, rhetorical imperative sentences must be taken into consideration. Abdul-raof (2001) claims that the imperative mood in the Qur'an carries various rhetorical functions that are context-dependent; thus, translators must carefully consider these functions to convey the intended meanings accurately. In this situation, the thematic structure of the source text (ST) is important. On this ground, the translator needs to pay special attention to the thematic structure of the source text's rhetorical imperative sentences to produce a translation that sustains its function, since

any differences between the thematic structure of the source text and target text (TT) may lead to a change or distortion of the function of the rhetorical imperative sentences.

The textual metafunction pertains to the organization of information within a text, focusing on thematic structure and information structure. A key aspect of thematic structure involves the concepts of theme and rheme. According to Halliday (1994), the theme serves as the "point of departure" for a clause, establishing what the message is about (p. 37). The rheme, on the other hand, constitutes the remainder of the clause, elaborating on the theme (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). Halliday (1994) identifies three primary categories of theme. The first is the topical (ideational) theme, which is the essential component of the clause, representing real-world experiences or abstract concepts. It typically appears at the beginning of the clause and is followed by the rheme. Grammatically, it may be realized as a nominal group, prepositional phrase, or adverbial group. The second type is the interpersonal theme, which reflects the speaker's attitude or engagement with the listener. It may include vocatives, modal adjuncts, or mood-marking elements such as finite verbs, wh-words, or imperatives. The third category is the textual theme, which functions to connect clauses and structure discourse. It encompasses continuatives (e.g., "oh," "yes," "no") that signal a new discourse move, structural markers (e.g., conjunctions for subordination or coordination), and conjunctive adjuncts that link clauses to prior text.

Halliday & Matthiessen (2004) further classify themes based on their composition. A simple theme consists of a single structural unit, such as a noun, adverb, or prepositional phrase. In contrast, a multiple theme incorporates two or more elements, potentially combining textual, interpersonal, and topical themes—for example, a conjunction followed by a prepositional phrase. Additionally, themes can be categorized as marked or unmarked. An unmarked theme occurs when the theme aligns with the grammatical subject, which is the most common structure in declarative clauses. A marked theme, however, arises when the theme occupies a position other than the subject, such as an adverbial phrase placed at the start of a clause for emphasis or stylistic effect. In summary, the textual metafunction examines how themes structure discourse, while the rheme develops the thematic content, ensuring coherent communication. The interplay between theme and rheme, along with their different types and structural variations, contributes to the overall organization and flow of a text. Like other clause types, imperatives in both Malay and Arabic exhibit distinct thematic structures while serving similar communicative functions such as giving commands, making requests, or offering suggestions. While their pragmatic purposes overlap, their grammatical realization of theme and rheme differs in interesting ways.

In Malay imperative clauses, the theme typically consists of the verb alone, as subjects are usually omitted (Nik Safiah Karim et al., 2008). For example, in "*Buka pintu!*" ("Open the door!"), "*Buka*" ("Open") functions as the theme, while "*pintu*" ("the door") constitutes the rheme. When the subject is explicitly stated for emphasis (e.g., "*Kamu duduk!*" - "You sit!"), both the pronoun and verb form part of the theme. Malay imperatives may also include politeness markers like "*Tolong*" ("Please") or "*Jangan*" ("Don't"), which serve as interpersonal themes preceding the main verb (A. H. Omar, 2008).

Arabic imperatives follow a similar verb-initial pattern but with more morphological complexity. The basic imperative verb (e.g., "افعل" - "Do!") always

appears in sentence-initial position as the theme (Al-Rajhi, 2009). In "اكتب الرسالة" ("Write the letter"), "اكتب" ("Write") is the theme, while "الرسالة" ("the letter") forms the rheme. Unlike Malay, Arabic imperatives require specific verb conjugations that encode gender and number (Ryding, 2005). Negative imperatives show particularly interesting contrasts. Malay uses the pre-verbal particle "Jangan" (e.g., "Jangan lari!" - "Don't run"), where "Jangan" becomes part of the theme. Arabic employs the prohibitive "لا" plus the present tense verb (e.g., "لا تفعل" - "Don't do"), with both particles considered thematic (Bardi, 2008). The Arabic structure thus creates a more complex thematic unit compared to Malay's simpler pre-verbal negation. Both languages demonstrate how imperative clauses adapt their thematic structure to grammatical requirements while maintaining similar communicative functions. Malay's analytic structure allows for simpler theme-rheme organization, while Arabic's synthetic nature creates more morphologically complex thematic elements.

## METHOD

The present study investigates Quranic rhetorical imperative sentences and their Malay translations, with the aim of determining whether the rhetorical functions of these sentences are accurately conveyed in the translation. The data corpus comprises 16 rhetorical imperative verses identified from the Quran, each representing a distinct rhetorical function as outlined by Arabic rhetorical scholars (Abbas, 1997). A comprehensive review of the entire Quranic text was undertaken to locate verses that contain rhetorical commands. From these, six (6) verses were purposively selected for detailed analysis. The selection was based on specific characteristics relevant to the study's objectives, following purposive sampling methodology (Long, 2014). The selected verses reflect rhetorical functions such as permissibility, disdain, taking lessons, honour, and warning. Each verse was examined alongside its Malay translation found in Tafsir PIMPINAN AR-RAHMAN Kepada Pengertian AL-QUR'AN, 25th edition (Basmeih., 2020). The analysis of the source text (ST) and the target text (TT) was conducted using Halliday's (1994) textual metafunction, with a focus on theme and rheme structures. The comparison between the ST and TT highlights key differences in thematic organisation that may affect the interpretation of rhetorical intent.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As previously stated, this study will present and analyse only six (6) samples, each representing a different type of rhetorical function of the imperative in the Quran, selected from a total of sixteen identified types, along with their corresponding Malay translations. The selected samples are as follows:

### Rhetorical Imperative Serves Permissibility

ST (Quranic Text) [Surah al-Baqarah, Verse 187]

﴿وَكُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا حَتَّىٰ يَتَبَيَّنَ لَكُمُ الْخَيْطُ الْأَبْيَضُ مِنَ الْخَيْطِ الْأَسْوَدِ مِنَ الْفَجْرِ﴾

TT (Malay Translation):

"Dan makanlah serta minumlah sehingga nyata kepada kamu benang putih (cahaya siang) daripada benang hitam (kegelapan malam), iaitu waktu fajar." [Tafsir PIMPINAN AR-RAHMAN Kepada Pengertian AL-QUR'AN, Surah al-Baqarah, Verse 187]

### Analysis of Sample 1

1. Multiple Themes in the ST; the source text (ST) begins with the phrase **وَكُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا** ("And eat and drink"), which serves as a topical theme in the form of imperative verbs. In contrast to interrogative sentences that may involve interpersonal themes such as question particles, imperative clauses in Arabic conventionally foreground the verb, thereby positioning the command as the point of departure for the clause. In this instance, the verbs **وَكُلُوا** ("And eat") and **وَاشْرَبُوا** ("and drink") function as unmarked themes, as they naturally occupy the initial position typical of imperative constructions. Additionally, the conjunction **"وَ"** ("and") performs the role of a textual theme, effectively linking the current command to the preceding discourse.
2. Rheme Development in the ST; the rheme, defined as the "development of the message," appears subsequent to the theme and serves to provide the temporal condition that governs the command. In the source text (ST), the rheme is encapsulated in the phrase **حَتَّى يَتَبَيَّنَ لَكُمُ الْخَيْطُ الْأَبْيَضُ مِنَ الْخَيْطِ الْأَسْوَدِ مِنَ الْفَجْرِ**, which is rendered as "sehingga nyata kepada kamu benang putih daripada benang hitam, iaitu waktu fajar." This segment delineates the temporal limit up to which the action of eating and drinking is permissible, thereby introducing a new thematic element, namely the time boundary that defines the scope of the directive.
3. Comparison with Malay Translation (TT); the comparison with the Malay translation (TT) reveals that while the TT preserves the imperative theme "Dan makanlah serta minumlah" in alignment with the source text, it simultaneously modifies the rheme structure to enhance clarity and accessibility for Malay readers. The topical theme is retained through the imperative verbs, effectively mirroring the Arabic syntactic structure. In terms of rheme development, the TT introduces explanatory elements in parentheses, such as "cahaya siang" and "kegelapan malam," to elucidate the metaphorical contrast between the "white thread" and the "black thread." Furthermore, the inclusion of the phrase "iaitu waktu fajar" (that is, dawn) serves to explicitly define the temporal boundary implied in the source text, thereby facilitating a more precise comprehension among the target audience.
4. Key Differences in Thematic Structure; key differences in the thematic structure between the source text (ST) in Arabic and the target text (TT) in Malay reveal several noteworthy aspects. In terms of theme, both texts maintain imperative verbs as unmarked themes, with the Arabic phrase **"وَكُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا"** rendered directly in Malay as "makanlah serta minumlah", reflecting structural symmetry. The rheme, however, exhibits a shift from a metaphorical time indicator in Arabic ("**الْخَيْطُ الْأَبْيَضُ...**") to an explicit explanatory phrase in Malay ("benang putih (cahaya siang)..."), enhancing semantic transparency. Interpersonally, both texts refrain from additional evaluative or modal elements, preserving the tone of direct command. Finally, the textual adaptation shows a transformation from a synthetic structure in the Arabic original, characterized by compact phrasing, to an analytic structure in the Malay version, where clarifying parentheses are introduced to aid comprehension.

The translation preserves the imperative's thematic function while adapting the rheme for cultural-linguistic accessibility. Unlike interrogatives (which may alter tense/particles), imperative themes remain stable across languages, with changes

primarily in rheme elaboration. The Malay TT's explanatory additions (e.g., "cahaya siang") enhance understanding without disrupting the original theme-rheme progression.

### Rhetorical Imperative Serves Disdain

ST (Quranic Text) [Surah Yunus, Verse 80]

﴿فَلَمَّا جَاءَ السَّحَرَةُ قَالَ لَهُم مُّوسَى أَلْقُوا مَا أَنْتُمْ مُلْقُونَ﴾

TT (Malay Translation):

Setelah datang ahli-ahli sihir itu, Nabi Musa berkata kepada mereka: "Campakkanlah kamu dahulu apa yang kamu hendak campakkan (dari benda-benda yang kamu jadikan sihir itu)!" [Tafsir PIMPINAN AR-RAHMAN Kepada Pengertian AL-QUR'AN, Surah Yunus, Verse 80]

### Analysis of Sample 2

1. Multiple Themes in the ST; the source text (ST) begins with the phrase *فَلَمَّا جَاءَ السَّحَرَةُ* ("So when came the magicians"), which functions as a temporal theme that establishes the narrative context of the clause. This is subsequently followed by *قَالَ لَهُم مُّوسَى* ("said to them Moses"), wherein the verbal process *قَالَ* operates as the topical theme, thereby foregrounding the speech act as the central event of the discourse. Within this structure, the imperative verb *أَلْقُوا* ("Throw") serves as the unmarked topical theme, consistent with the syntactic norm of Arabic imperatives, wherein the verb typically assumes the initial position in the clause. Meanwhile, *فَلَمَّا* ("So when") functions as a textual theme that cohesively links the current episode to the preceding narrative, and *قَالَ* ("said") additionally serves as a secondary textual theme, signalling the transition towards direct speech.
2. Rheme Development in the ST; the rheme in the source text develops the thematic elements by specifying the object of the imperative action, as illustrated in the phrase *مَا أَنْتُمْ مُلْقُونَ* ("what you are to throw"), which completes the imperative structure. The original Arabic preserves a compact construction wherein the rheme straightforwardly identifies what is to be thrown, without further elaboration or expansion.
3. Comparison with Malay Translation (TT); the Malay translation (TT) demonstrates a structural adaptation while preserving the imperative force of the source text. The thematic structure in the TT, exemplified by the phrase "Campakkanlah kamu dahulu" ("You throw first"), reflects a deliberate expansion of the theme through the explicit addition of the pronoun "kamu" to reinforce agency, and the insertion of "dahulu" as an interpersonal element underscoring the sequential nature of the action. The rheme in the TT, expressed as "apa yang kamu hendak campakkan" ("what you want to throw"), indicates a shift from the Arabic's generic form "what you are to throw" to a more volitional and intentional construction. Furthermore, the TT enhances contextual clarity by incorporating a parenthetical explanatory phrase (dari benda-benda yang kamu jadikan sihir itu) to specify the magical context underlying the act of throwing.
4. Key Differences in Thematic Structure; the comparative analysis between the source text (ST) in Arabic and the target text (TT) in Malay demonstrates various textual adaptation strategies applied without altering the original content. In terms of narrative theme, the simple temporal conjunction "فَلَمَّا" in the ST is expanded in the TT into a

fuller temporal phrase such as "Setelah datang...". For the imperative theme, the bare verb "الْفُؤَا" is translated into a more explicit structure involving a verb, pronoun, and adverb: "Campakkanlah kamu dahulu", which also introduces an interpersonal element using the emphatic adverb "dahulu". Regarding rheme structure, the simple object phrase "مَا أَنْتُمْ مُتَّفُونَ" is rendered with an added volitional nuance in the TT as "apa yang kamu hendak campakkan". Although there are no explicit interpersonal elements in the imperative form of the ST, the TT introduces one to enhance emphasis. Textual adaptation further reflects a shift from the synthetic structure of the ST to a more analytic and explanatory form in the TT.

The Malay translation preserves the imperative force of the original text while rendering it more explicit through the addition of the pronoun "kamu" and the temporal marker "dahulu". Furthermore, it elaborates the rheme by specifying intentionality using the verb "hendak", which is not explicitly present in the Arabic source, and by incorporating culturally relevant explanations regarding magical objects. Despite these modifications, the translation maintains the original thematic progression, while simultaneously adapting to the Malay language's preferences for clearer personal references, more explicit temporal sequencing, and contextualized elaboration of culturally specific practices such as magic.

Unlike the previous example (Sample 1) which added explanatory parentheses about dawn, this translation adds interpersonal and explanatory elements directly into the theme-rheme structure, demonstrating how imperative translations adapt based on contextual needs while maintaining the original's directive function.

### Rhetorical Imperative Serves Taking Lessons

ST (Quranic Text) [Surah al-An'am, Verse 99]

﴿وَهُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَخْرَجْنَا بِهِ نَبَاتَ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ فَأَخْرَجْنَا مِنْهُ خَضِرًا نُخْرِجُ مِنْهُ حَبًّا  
مُتَرَاجِبًا وَمِنَ النَّخْلِ مِنْ طَلْعِهَا قِنْوَانٌ دَانِيَةٌ وَجَنَّاتٍ مِّنْ أَعْنَابٍ وَالزَّيْتُونَ وَالرُّمَّانَ مُشْتَبِهًا وَغَيْرَ  
مُتَشَابِهٍ ۗ انظُرُوا إِلَىٰ ثَمَرِهِ إِذَا أَثْمَرَ وَيَنْعِهِ ۗ إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكُمْ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ﴾

TT (Malay Translation):

"Dan Dialah yang menurunkan hujan dari langit lalu Kami tumbuhkan dengan air hujan itu semua jenis tumbuh-tumbuhan, kemudian Kami keluarkan daripadanya tanaman yang menghijau, Kami keluarkan daripada tanaman yang menghijau itu bijian yang banyak, daripada mayang kurma, mengurai tangkai-tangkai yang menjuntai dan kebun anggur, zaitun serta buah delima yang serupa dan yang tidak serupa. Perhatikanlah kamu kepada buahnya apabila ia berbuah dan ketika ia masak. Sesungguhnya pada yang demikian itu ada tanda-tanda kekuasaan Allah bagi orang yang beriman". [Tafsir PIMPINAN AR-RAHMAN Kepada Pengertian AL-QUR'AN, Surah al-An'am, Verse 99]

### Analysis of Sample 3

1. Multiple Themes in the ST; the verse opens with the expression "وَهُوَ الَّذِي" ("And He is the One who"), functioning as a topical theme that introduces Allah as the primary actor. This nominal theme establishes the divine subject as the point of departure for the entire discourse. Subsequently, the imperative clause "انظُرُوا" ("Look/Observe") appears later in the verse, serving as a second topical theme in the form of a command.

- Unlike the initial descriptive themes, this imperative verb functions as an unmarked theme by occupying its natural clause-initial position, operates as a pure command devoid of additional interpersonal elements such as question particles, and acts as a textual link that connects to the preceding descriptions through an implied logical sequence: "Since God created these signs → you should observe them."
2. Rheme Development in the ST; the rheme in the source text develops through three distinct yet interconnected phases, each contributing to the progression of meaning and argumentation. In Phase 1 (Descriptive Rheme), the focus is on divine actions, beginning with the verse "أَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً" ("sent down water from the sky"), which presents a natural phenomenon as evidence, followed by "فَأَخْرَجْنَا بِهِ نَبَاتَ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ" ("then We produced with it all vegetation"), illustrating a clear cause-effect relationship. Phase 2 (Imperative Directive Rheme) introduces a command to observe, as in "انظُرُوا إِلَى ثَمَرِهِ إِذَا أَثْمَرَ وَإِن كُنْتُمْ فِي شَكٍّ مِنْهُ لِيَرْسَلْ عَلَيْكُمُ الْغُلَامَ الْغَنِيَّ الْأَعْرَابِيَّ الَّذِي يَحْكُمُ بِحُكْمِ اللَّهِ" ("Look at its fruit when it bears and ripens"), wherein the rheme is structured to include both a spatial direction ("إِلَى ثَمَرِهِ") and a temporal condition ("إِذَا أَثْمَرَ"), reinforcing the imperative tone. Finally, Phase 3 (Argumentative Rheme) concludes with a theological affirmation: "إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَُمْ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ" ("Indeed in this are signs for people who believe"), which encapsulates and legitimizes the preceding descriptive and directive rhemes as cumulative evidence directed toward a believing audience.
  3. Comparison with Malay Translation (TT); the comparison between the source text (ST) in Arabic and its Malay translation (target text, TT) reveals a meticulous effort to preserve the original content while adapting certain linguistic features to suit the target audience. The topical theme "وَهُوَ الَّذِي" is rendered as "Dan Dia lah" in Malay, maintaining the nominal structure and faithfully retaining the divine subject. The imperative theme "انظُرُوا", originally a pure verb, becomes "Perhatikanlah kamu", with the explicit addition of the pronoun "kamu" to enhance naturalness in Malay. Descriptive rhemes, particularly synthetic botanical terms such as "خَضِرًا", are expanded into analytic phrases like "tanaman menghijau" and "butir bergugus-gugus", thereby enhancing clarity for the target readers. The command rheme "إِلَى ثَمَرِهِ إِذَا أَثْمَرَ" is translated as "kepada buahnya apabila ia berbuah", preserving both the directional and temporal aspects. Interpersonal elements, absent in the ST, are introduced in the TT through parentheses such as "(Kami keluarkan)" and "(kurma)", which serve to clarify divine agency and culturally specific references.
  4. Key Differences in Thematic Structure; in the comparative analysis of Arabic and Malay linguistic structures, Arabic demonstrates notable lexical economy, as exemplified using a single imperative verb such as انظُرُوا to convey a complete thematic directive. Furthermore, complex botanical imagery is efficiently encapsulated within synthetic morphological constructs, as seen in expressions like حَبًّا مُتَرَاكِبًا. In contrast, the Malay translation exhibits a tendency toward greater explicitness, often incorporating second-person pronouns such as kamu to clarify the addressee, and employing parentheses to explicitly denote divine intervention, as in (Kami jadikan). This contrast underscores the interplay between semantic compactness in Arabic and explanatory elaboration in Malay.

The translation of the verse operates strategically by preserving the directive force of the imperative using "Perhatikanlah," thus maintaining its authoritative tone. It also adapts descriptive rhemes with cultural and linguistic accommodations, as seen in the interpretation of "حَضِرًا" as "tanaman menghijau," which provides clarity and contextual relevance. Theologically, the translation retains coherence by consistently positioning Allah as the primary thematic agent. Furthermore, it enhances the persuasive impact of the verse using explicit logical connectors such as "Sesungguhnya," which reinforce the intended emphasis. Unlike interrogative forms that often necessitate tense adjustments, this imperative-embedded verse illustrates how unmarked command themes tend to resist structural shifts across languages. Consequently, translation adjustments are primarily concentrated in the elaboration of the rheme, while divine attribution exemplified using "Kami" remains thematically stable and consistent across both source and target texts.

### Rhetorical Imperative Serves of *al-Ikram* (Honor/Respect)

ST (Quranic Text) [Surah al-Hijr, Verse 46]

﴿ادْخُلُوهَا بِسَلَامٍ آمِنِينَ﴾

TT (Malay Translation):

(Mereka dipersilakan oleh malaikat dengan berkata): "Masuklah kamu ke dalamnya dengan selamat sejahtera serta beroleh aman".

[Tafsir PIMPINAN AR-RAHMAN Kepada Pengertian AL-QUR'AN, Surah al-Hijr, Verse 46]

### Analysis of Sample 4

1. Multiple Themes in the ST; the Quranic verse ادْخُلُوهَا بِسَلَامٍ آمِنِينَ which is rendered in Malay as "(Mereka dipersilakan oleh malaikat dengan berkata): 'Masuklah kamu ke dalamnya dengan selamat sejahtera serta beroleh aman,'" presents multiple thematic structures. The clause-initial imperative verb "ادْخُلُوهَا" ("Enter it") functions simultaneously as a topical theme and an unmarked theme, reflecting the natural syntactic structure for imperative constructions in Arabic, and it constitutes a pure directive devoid of interrogative particles or modal expressions. The subsequent prepositional phrase "بِسَلَامٍ" ("in peace") serves as a secondary textual theme, specifying the manner of the directive, while also acting as a connective element that attaches directly to the main verb without the need for a coordinating conjunction.
2. Rheme Development in the ST; rheme development in the source text unfolds through three distinct phases. Phase 1 presents the core command with the verb "ادْخُلُوهَا" ("Enter it"), which establishes the primary action. Phase 2 elaborates on the manner of this action through a twofold rheme expansion: firstly, "بِسَلَامٍ" ("in peace") introduces the manner specification; secondly, "آمِنِينَ" ("secure"), an active participle, further expands the rheme by indicating the resultant state. Phase 3 encompasses the implied theological context, wherein elliptical divine permission is understood implicitly through the broader Quranic discourse, reinforcing the command's legitimacy and divine origin.
3. Comparison with Malay Translation (TT); the comparison between the Source Text (ST) in Arabic and the Target Text (TT) in Malay reveals several notable differences

in terms of thematic structure, textual elements, and theological implicature, while fully preserving the original content. Regarding the topical theme, the ST begins with "ادْخُلُوهَا," a pure verb form, whereas the TT expands it to "Masuklah kamu ke dalamnya," adding the pronoun "kamu" and a prepositional phrase to align with the natural syntactic structure of Malay. The textual theme represented by the preposition "بِ" in the ST is translated as "dengan," maintaining its instrumental function. The command rheme in the ST, comprising only two words "سَلَامٌ" and "أَمْنِيْنَ" is rendered in the TT as "selamat sejahtera serta beroleh aman," expanding the expression with a conjunction to enhance clarity. In terms of interpersonal elements, the ST contains none, whereas the TT introduces parenthetical framing in its full version, providing narrative context absent in the original. Finally, the theological implicature, which remains implicit in the ST, is made explicit in the TT, as the divine invitation is clearly articulated, reflecting the TT's more inclusive approach to expressing spiritual meaning.

4. Key Differences in Thematic Structure; key differences in thematic structure are evident when comparing the source text and its Malay translation. The Arabic text demonstrates linguistic economy through a concise imperative consisting of only two words, which nonetheless conveys the full directive force. A single preposition "بِ" simultaneously governs two semantic concepts peace and security while the use of the active participle "أَمْنِيْنَ" implies a continuous, ongoing state of safety. In contrast, the Malay version exhibits greater explicitness by introducing the verbal phrase "beroleh aman" to enhance semantic clarity, employing the coordinating conjunction "serta" to link ideas, incorporating a narrative framing element through the phrase "Mereka dipersilakan...", and specifying spatial reference with the inclusion of "ke dalamnya."

The translation exemplifies an academic approach to imperative verse rendering by preserving the verb-initial structure to maintain the original thematic emphasis. It employs strategic rheme expansion to enhance clarity in the target language, as seen in the elaboration of expressions such as "بِسَلَامٍ" into "dengan selamat sejahtera" and "أَمْنِيْنَ" into "serta beroleh aman". Furthermore, the translation incorporates contextual enrichment using added pronouns, narrative framing, and explicit references to divine agency, all while maintaining theological precision and aligning with Malay syntactic preferences. Unlike interrogative verses that necessitate the adjustment of question particles, imperative structures exhibit greater thematic stability across languages, relying primarily on rheme-level modifications. This ensures the consistent preservation of the directive force of the original text, even amidst grammatical shifts.

### Rhetorical Imperative Serves of *al-Indhār* (Warning)

ST (Quranic Text) [Surah Ibrahim, Verse 30]

﴿وَجَعَلُوا لِلَّهِ أَنْدَادًا لِّيُضِلُّوا عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ ۗ قُلْ تَمَتَّعُوا فَإِنَّ مَصِيرَكُمْ إِلَى النَّارِ﴾

TT (Malay Translation):

Dan mereka mengadakan sekutu-sekutu bagi Allah untuk menyesatkan manusia dari jalanNya. Katakanlah (wahai Muhammad): "Bersenang-senanglah kamu (bagi sementara di dunia), kerana sesungguhnya kesudahan kamu ke neraka".

[Tafsir PIMPINAN AR-RAHMAN Kepada Pengertian AL-QUR'AN, Surah Ibrahim, Verse 30]

### Analysis of Sample 5

1. Multiple Themes in the ST; multiple themes in the ST are evident in the structure of the verse, which begins with *وَجَعَلُوا لِيهِ أُنْدَادًا* ("And they have set up rivals to Allah"), functioning as a declarative topical theme that establishes the contextual background. However, the core imperative structure becomes apparent in *قُلْ تَمَتَّعُوا* ("Say: Enjoy yourselves"), where the command verb "قُلْ" ("Say!") operates as an interpersonal theme, signifying the prophetic authority that underpins the utterance; this sets it apart from ordinary imperatives by presenting the directive as a divine message to be delivered. The imperative "تَمَتَّعُوا" ("Enjoy yourselves") that follows functions as the primary topical theme, bearing the main directive force of the clause. Notably, this is a rhetorical imperative, intended as a form of warning rather than an actual grant of permission. The use of the conjunction "فَإِنَّ" ("for indeed") serves as a textual theme, introducing the resulting consequence and marking the shift to the ensuing divine warning.
2. Rheme Development in the ST; rheme development in the source text unfolds in two distinct phases that reinforce the warning embedded in the verse. The immediate rheme, "تَمَتَّعُوا" ("Enjoy yourselves"), conveys a rhetorical implication of temporary enjoyment, thus serving as an initial elaboration of the warning's tone. This is followed by the consequential rheme, "فَإِنَّ مَصِيرَكُمْ إِلَى النَّارِ" ("for indeed your destination is the Fire"), which intensifies the illocutionary force of the statement. Within this clause, "مَصِيرَكُمْ" ("your destination") functions as a secondary topical theme, while "إِلَى النَّارِ" ("to the Fire") constitutes the rheme proper, delivering the ultimate and irreversible warning.
3. Comparison with Malay Translation (TT); the Malay translation (TT) "Katakanlah: 'Bersenang-senanglah kamu...kesudahan kamu ke neraka'" adapts the structure of the source text while preserving its core thematic functions. The interpersonal theme is retained through the imperative "Katakanlah" ("Say!"), which maintains the authoritative prophetic voice but incorporates the Malay suffix "-lah," subtly softening the command in accordance with cultural norms of politeness. As for the topical theme, "Bersenang-senanglah kamu" reflects the Arabic imperative yet introduces the pronoun "kamu" to enhance clarity, along with the parenthetical phrase "(bagi sementara di dunia)" ("for a while in this world"), which explicates the rhetorical undertone inherent in the source text. In terms of rheme adjustments, the phrase "kesudahan kamu ke neraka" ("your end is hell") replaces the Arabic "مَصِير" (destination) with the more idiomatic Malay term "kesudahan" (end), and opts for "neraka" (hell) rather than a literal rendering of "Fire," thereby aligning the translation with familiar Islamic terminology within the Malay linguistic and religious context.
4. Key Differences in Thematic Structure; key differences in thematic structure between the source text (ST) and target text (TT) are observable across several linguistic aspects. Interpersonally, the ST utilises the bare imperative "قُلْ", which reflects a direct and unembellished command, whereas the TT adopts a polished imperative

form "Katakanlah", aligning with norms of politeness and narrative fluency in Malay. In terms of topical theme, the Arabic "تَمَتُّعُوا" presents a concise and direct instruction, while the Malay equivalent expands this into "Bersenang-senanglah kamu", offering greater syntactic clarity. The rheme development in the ST carries an implicit sense of temporality, which is made explicit in the TT through the parenthetical phrase "(bagi sementara di dunia)". Finally, in lexical choice for conveying warning, both texts conclude with terms denoting punishment "النَّارُ" in Arabic and "neraka" in Malay each functioning within their respective linguistic frameworks to evoke the theological concept of hell.

The translation strategically preserves the imperative's illocutionary force by conveying a warning through rhetorical permission, adapts interpersonal themes to Malay speech norms such as the use of the "-lah" suffix elaborates the rheme for cultural clarity without diluting the theological severity, and maintains the theme-rheme progression (command → consequence) that is critical to the verse's overall impact. Unlike interrogatives, which may alter tense or mood, this analysis demonstrates that imperatives in Quranic discourse rely on unchanged topical themes, particularly in the retention of core verbs, the adaptation of interpersonal elements including honorifics, and the explication of rhemes to achieve naturalness in the target language.

### Rhetorical Imperative Serves of *al-Ihānah* (Humiliation)

ST (Quranic Text) [Surah al-Dukhan, Verse 49]

﴿ذُقْ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَزِيزُ الْكَرِيمُ﴾

TT (Malay Translation):

(Serta dikatakan kepadanya secara mengejek): "Rasalah azab seksa, sebenarnya engkau adalah orang yang berpengaruh dan terhormat (dalam kalangan masyarakatmu)" [Tafsir PIMPINAN AR-RAHMAN Kepada Pengertian AL-QUR'AN, al-Dukhan, Verse 49]

### Analysis of Sample 6

1. Multiple Themes in the ST; the Arabic imperative verse ﴿ذُقْ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَزِيزُ الْكَرِيمُ﴾ contains multiple thematic components. The imperative verb "ذُقْ" (Taste!) serves as the primary interpersonal theme, establishing the commanding force of the utterance. This directive form immediately positions the listener as the recipient of the action. The subsequent phrase "إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ" (indeed you) functions as the topical theme, introducing the subject of discussion. The use of emphasis ("إِنَّ") strengthens the thematic focus on the addressee. The honorific titles "الْعَزِيزُ الْكَرِيمُ" (the Mighty, the Noble) serve as a textual theme, creating ironic contrast through their juxtaposition with the punitive command.
2. Rheme Development in the ST; rheme development in the source text unfolds through three key movements that collectively construct the communicative focus of the verse. First, action specification is achieved through the imperative verb "ذُقْ", which establishes the punitive action to be experienced by the addressee. This is followed by subject identification in the clause "إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ", which serves to confirm and emphasize the addressee as the explicit target of both the directive and the subsequent description. Finally, ironic characterization is introduced through the epithets "الْعَزِيزُ

"الكَرِيمِ", which complete the rheme by ascribing noble qualities in an ironic manner to the punished individual, thereby intensifying the rhetorical effect of humiliation through stark and deliberate contrast.

3. Comparison with Malay Translation (TT); the Malay translation "Rasalah azab seksa, sebenarnya engkau adalah orang yang berpengaruh dan terhormat" adapts the thematic structure of the source text with nuanced adjustments. The interpersonal theme is maintained through the imperative verb "Rasalah," which retains the directive force of the original while slightly softening its directness in alignment with Malay linguistic politeness norms. The topical theme appears in the construction "engkau adalah," which parallels the Arabic structure but adopts a more colloquial Malay phrasing. Additionally, the textual theme is preserved through the rendering of honorifics as "berpengaruh dan terhormat," a phrase that effectively captures the ironic contrast of the original while employing terminology that resonates within the target culture.
4. Key Differences in Thematic Structure; key differences in thematic structure between the Arabic source text (ST) and the Malay target text (TT) can be observed across several linguistic features. In terms of imperative force, the Arabic employs a stronger and more direct command through the use of the verb "ذُقْ", while the Malay version renders it in a slightly mitigated form as "Rasalah". The Arabic text intensifies the statement using the emphatic particle "إِنَّ", whereas the Malay translation mirrors this emphasis with the use of "sebenarnya". Regarding honorific references, the Arabic opts for formal religious titles such as "العَزِيْزُ الْكَرِيْمُ", while the Malay version translates these into societal-status expressions like "berpengaruh dan terhormat". Structurally, the Arabic maintains more compact syntactic units, in contrast to the Malay rendering, which favours more explicit clause connections for clarity and flow.

This analysis reveals how both language versions employ theme-rheme structures to convey divine punishment through ironic humiliation. While the Arabic original utilizes compact, grammatically-rich structures for maximum rhetorical impact, the Malay translation successfully adapts these features to maintain the verse's essential meaning and emotional force within a different linguistic and cultural framework. Both versions effectively use the imperative mood's thematic potential to deliver their message, demonstrating the versatility of theme-rheme analysis in comparing translations of sacred texts. The key differences lie primarily in the degree of directness and cultural adaptation of honorific concepts, while the core rhetorical strategy remains intact across both languages.

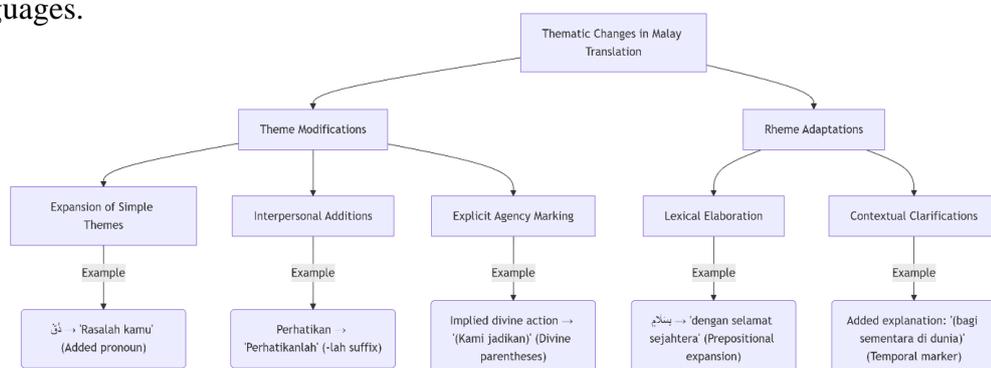


Figure 1: Key Observations on Thematic Changes in Malay Translation

## CONCLUSION

Key observations indicate that in terms of theme, the translator frequently modified the original structure by expanding simple themes, such as adding pronouns like "kamu" to bare imperatives (e.g., "ذُقْ" → "Rasalah kamu"), introducing interpersonal elements like the particle "-lah" in "Perhatikanlah" to align with Malay politeness norms, and shifting implicit divine agency to explicit phrasing through parenthetical additions (e.g., "(dalam kalangan masyarakatmu)"). As for the rheme, the translator often elaborated compact Arabic phrases into more analytic Malay constructions (e.g., "بِسَلَامٍ" → "dengan selamat sejahtera serta beroleh aman"), adjusted semantic specificity, especially in culturally loaded expressions (e.g., "العَزِيزُ الْكَرِيمُ" → "berpengaruh dan terhormat"), and added explanatory clauses (e.g., "bagi sementara di dunia") to clarify rhetorical nuances. While these adaptations enhance accessibility for Malay readers, they occasionally dilute the ST's linguistic economy and theological potency. For instance, the imperative "تَمَتَّعُوا" (enjoy) in a warning context loses some of its ironic sharpness when rendered as "Bersenang-senanglah kamu (bagi sementara di dunia)", where the parenthetical softening reduces the rhetorical force. In conclusion, the Malay translations successfully convey the core directive functions of Quranic imperatives, though this is achieved through certain compromises in thematic fidelity. The study reveals that while imperative constructions—unlike interrogatives tend to resist changes in tense or mood, their rhemes often undergo substantial elaboration during translation, thereby influencing nuances of tone, emphasis, and theological implication. As such, although the target text retains the source text's communicative intent, the original rhetorical precision is at times softened due to the pressures of linguistic and cultural adaptation. Moving forward, future translations of Quranic imperatives should strive to maintain a balance between structural fidelity by preserving verb-initial themes and divine attribution cultural clarity through careful and minimal explanatory additions, and rhetorical preservation by capturing the original sarcasm, irony, or warning using equivalent pragmatic strategies in Malay. This balanced approach can help minimise thematic distortion while ensuring that the persuasive and illocutionary force of the Quran remains effectively communicated across languages.

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