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Theological Ideologies in Translation: Rendering Interfaith Qur'anic Verses into Tolaki between Fidelity and Context

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Foreignization and domestication; Interfaith relations; Qur'anic translation; Theological ideologies; Tolaki language; Translation Techniques: Religious Pluralism

Abstract

Although extensive scholarship has explored Qur'anic verses on interfaith relations, limited attention has been paid to how theological ideologies—namely exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism—are mediated through translation strategies. This study addresses this gap by examining how these theological ideologies are represented in the Tolaki-language translation of the Qur'an, a regional language spoken in Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia. The present study employs thematic content analysis of the Tolaki Qur'an translation complemented by Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). A systematic identification and classification process yielded 95 Qur'anic verses directly related to interfaith relations. These verses were categorized into three primary theological orientations: 49 verses reflecting exclusivist, 40 representing inclusivist, and 16 promoting pluralist. The textual analysis further examined the specific translation techniques applied to these verses. The findings indicate that seven core translation techniques are employed: established equivalence, borrowing, modulation, transposition, adaptation, compensation, and reduction. Among these, established equivalence and borrowing are the most frequently used. Their predominance suggests a strong translational preference for preserving the formal structure and core semantic content of the Arabic source text, reflecting a foreignization-oriented approach that prioritizes fidelity to the original. Concurrently, the notably limited use of domestication strategies indicates a cautious and restrained engagement with local Tolaki cultural expressions. This caution is motivated by the sacred status of the Qur'anic text and prevailing concerns over theological distortion or misinterpretation. These findings collectively demonstrate that Qur'an translation functions as a vital ideological and interpretive site in which foundational theological meanings are actively negotiated and recontextualised, rather than as a purely technical or neutral linguistic activity. The study contributes theoretically to translation studies by foregrounding the role of ideology in religious translation and to Islamic studies by elucidating the concrete mechanisms through which macro-level theological orientations are shaped and disseminated via micro-level translation choices. Practically, the findings have clear implications for Islamic education, particularly in developing curricula that promote theological literacy, translation awareness, and intercultural sensitivity. Furthermore, the study highlights the dual role of local-language Qur'an translations in supporting thoughtful interfaith engagement while simultaneously sustaining local languages as meaningful and dynamic resources for Islamic communication and education.

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Kata kunci

Bahasa Tolaki; Forenisasi dan Domestikasi; Hubungan antarumat beragama; Ideologi Teologis; Teknik Penerjemahan; Pluralisme Agama; Terjemahan Qur'an;

Abstrak

Meskipun banyak kajian telah mengeksplorasi ayat-ayat Al-Qur'an tentang hubungan antaragama, perhatian terhadap peran strategi penerjemahan dalam menyampaikan ideologi teologis—khususnya eksklusivisme, inklusivisme, dan pluralisme—masih terbatas. Penelitian ini menjawab kesenjangan tersebut dengan mengkaji bagaimana ideologi-ideologi teologis tersebut direpresentasikan dalam terjemahan Al-Qur'an berbahasa Tolaki, sebuah bahasa daerah di Sulawesi Tenggara, Indonesia. Penelitian ini menggunakan analisis konten tematik terhadap terjemahan Al-Qur'an bahasa Tolaki, yang dilengkapi dengan Diskusi Kelompok Terpumpun (FGD). Melalui proses identifikasi dan klasifikasi sistematis, diperoleh 95 ayat Al-Qur'an yang terkait langsung dengan hubungan antaragama. Ayat-ayat tersebut dikategorikan ke dalam tiga orientasi teologis utama: 49 ayat mencerminkan pandangan eksklusif, 40 ayat mewakili perspektif inklusif, dan 16 ayat mengandung interpretasi pluralis. Analisis tekstual lebih lanjut mengkaji teknik penerjemahan spesifik yang diterapkan pada ayat-ayat tersebut. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa tujuh teknik penerjemahan inti digunakan: kesepadanan lazim, peminjaman, modulasi, transposisi, adaptasi, kompensasi, dan reduksi. Di antara teknik ini, kesepadanan lazim dan peminjaman adalah yang paling sering digunakan. Dominasinya menunjukkan preferensi penerjemahan untuk mempertahankan struktur formal dan muatan semantik inti teks sumber bahasa Arab, yang merefleksikan pendekatan berorientasi forenisasi yang mengutamakan kesetiaan pada teks asli. Secara bersamaan, penggunaan strategi domestikasi yang terbatas mengindikasikan keterlibatan yang hati-hati dan terkendali dengan ekspresi budaya Tolaki lokal. Kehati-hatian ini dilatarbelakangi oleh status sakral teks Al-Qur'an dan kekhawatiran yang umum akan distorsi atau kesalahpahaman teologis. Temuan-temuan ini secara kolektif membuktikan bahwa penerjemahan Al-Qur'an berfungsi sebagai ruang ideologis dan interpretatif yang vital, tempat makna teologis dasar secara aktif dinegosiasikan dan dikontekstualisasikan ulang, bukan sekadar aktivitas linguistik yang teknis atau netral. Studi ini berkontribusi secara teoretis pada studi penerjemahan dengan mengedepankan peran ideologi dalam penerjemahan religius, dan pada studi keislaman dengan menjelaskan mekanisme konkret bagaimana orientasi teologis tingkat makro dibentuk dan disebarluaskan melalui pilihan penerjemahan tingkat mikro. Secara praktis, temuan ini memiliki implikasi yang jelas bagi pendidikan Islam, khususnya dalam pengembangan kurikulum yang mempromosikan literasi teologis, kesadaran akan penerjemahan, dan kepekaan antarbudaya. Lebih lanjut, penelitian ini menyoroti peran ganda terjemahan Al-Qur'an berbahasa daerah dalam mendukung keterlibatan antaragama yang bijak sambil secara bersamaan mempertahankan bahasa-bahasa lokal sebagai sumber daya yang bermakna dan dinamis untuk komunikasi dan pendidikan Islam.

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1. Introduction

Interfaith relations have become a critical issue with far-reaching implications for social peace, cultural integration, and political stability in an increasingly interconnected world. The Qur'an, as the sacred scripture of Islam, encompasses a spectrum of narratives and theological stances regarding other religions (Gobillot, 2021). These narratives serve as primary reference points in constructing Islamic discourse on gender (Mahmoud, 2025), Islamophobia (Lumbard & Samsel, 2016), representation of Muslims (Elimam, 2019), The misrepresenting of Islam (Al-Tarawneh, 2021), Muslim feminine identities (Hassen, 2016), politics (Lukman, 2022; Ouahmiche, 2016), terrorism (Munip, 2023), and religious moderation (Gunawan & Khairunnisa, 2024). However, when these verses are translated into other languages, significant challenges arise. Translators must safeguard fidelity to the Qur'anic theological message while simultaneously enabling target readers to apprehend it effectively and with due cultural sensitivity (Gunawan, 2022; Rosi et al., 2025).

To date, scholarly work on translations of Qur'anic verses addressing interfaith themes has attracted considerable attention. Watson (2023) argued that translations of Qur'anic verses are never ideologically neutral. In Western contexts marked by Islamophobia, English translations often served as instruments of interreligious mediation (Hare, 2014). The political and ideological dimensions were evident in Haroun's (2024) analysis of Saudi state-sponsored translations, which promoted Wahabi theology to global audiences. Comparative works by Rosi, Maram, and Wara (2025) revealed significant differences between Indonesian renderings and the Hilali–Khan version in framing Muslim–non-Muslim relations, reflecting divergent ideological positions. These findings reinforced Saeed's (2006) argument that context-sensitive, thematic translation is essential for safeguarding interfaith integrity. Across this literature, a recurring issue was the tension between fidelity to the Arabic source and contextual relevance.

Abdel-Haleem's (2004) English translation was frequently cited as successfully balancing textual accuracy with theological inclusivity. The debate also encompassed questions of translational authority, as Bano (2025) highlighted both the contributions and the contestation surrounding non-Muslim translators in South Asia. Moreover, existing works rarely provide technique-annotated analyses that explicitly link micro translation decisions to macro theological categories in a vernacular Indonesian setting. Although scholars such as Infante (2022) and Troll (2022) addressed cultural and historical framings, they did not examine localized vernacular practices. Despite this substantial body of work, an empirical gap has persisted. Little is known about how interfaith-related verses are rendered into local languages such as Tolaki in Indonesia, a setting of profound linguistic and religious diversity, and how translators negotiate fidelity with cultural contextualization. Hence, the present study poses two research questions:

- Which Qur'anic verses address interfaith relations?
- How are these verses translated into the Tolaki language?

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This study seeks to answer these questions while offering theoretical, empirical, and practical contributions. Theoretically, it aims to expand our understanding of how theological ideologies embedded in the Qur'an are either transformed or preserved through translation techniques into local languages. This exploration is grounded in a synthesis of theological comparison theories by Eck (2005) and Knitter (1995), and the translation techniques framework by Molina and Albir (2002). Empirically, the study identifies the Qur'anic verses that address interreligious relations and examines the translation strategies applied in rendering these verses into Tolaki. Practically, it offers strategic recommendations for Qur'anic translators to approach the task with greater sensitivity to the intricate theological meanings, local sociocultural contexts, and the sociopolitical implications of their translations. When Qur'anic translation promotes inclusive values, it functions not merely as a linguistic bridge but as a catalyst for social transformation and the reinforcement of a tolerant Islamic identity. Translation should not be seen merely as a tool of communication, but as a discursive space that shapes public perceptions, both of Islam and other religious communities. Accordingly, this research contributes not only to the advancement of Qur'anic translation studies but also to the promotion of interfaith diplomacy, context-sensitive Islamic education, and the construction of peaceful discourse in pluralistic societies.

2. Literature Review

The present study integrates two major theoretical domains: the interfaith theological framework developed by Eck (2005) and Knitter (1995), and the theory of translation techniques formulated by Molina and Albir (2002). These two perspectives are employed to analyze Qur'anic verses related to interreligious relations and to examine how their translations into the Tolaki language construct and represent specific ideological and theological positions.

The theory of interfaith relations was developed by modern theologians to understand how one religion positions itself to the existence of other religions. Among the most influential scholars in this discourse are Eck (2005) and Knitter (1995), who categorize theological approaches toward other faiths into three main typologies: exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism. Exclusivism holds that only one religion is absolutely and universally true, while all others are considered deviant or incapable of offering salvation.

This position typically entails absolute truth claims, delegitimization of other beliefs, and rejection of interfaith dialogue. Inclusivism, on the other hand, affirms the superiority and truth of one's religion while acknowledging that other religions may contain partial truth and provide a path to salvation, insofar as their values align with universal principles. It embraces the value of good deeds performed by followers of other faiths, limited interfaith dialogue, and appeals to shared values. Pluralism represents the most open model, positing that all religions offer valid paths to salvation and truth. It emphasizes religious diversity as part of divine will and promotes absolute tolerance,

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freedom of belief, mutual respect among religious systems, and theological recognition of faith plurality. In this context, Eck (2005) stresses active pluralism, which involves engaged, respectful, and equal dialogue among religious communities in pluralistic societies, while Knitter (1995) introduces the *theocentric model*, a theological orientation that prioritizes shared universal values and a common mission for global peace.

To examine how meaning is represented in the translation of the Qur'an, this study applies the theory of translation techniques by Molina and Albir (2002), who define these techniques as micro-level linguistic procedures used to transfer meaning from the source language to the target language. They identified 18 translation techniques, including: adaptation, where a culture-specific element is replaced with a more culturally appropriate equivalent in the target language; borrowing, where a term is taken directly from the source language, either unchanged (*pure borrowing*) or with some phonetic or orthographic adjustment (*naturalized borrowing*); calque, a literal translation that conforms to the target language's syntax; literal translation refers to a word-for-word rendering that maintains grammatical accuracy in the target language.

To address grammatical differences, transposition shifts the grammatical category (e.g., from verb to noun), and modulation changes the semantic perspective without altering meaning**.** Established equivalence is used when there is a recognized equivalent in the target language, while discursive creation refers to the invention of new expressions, often found in titles or figurative language. Further strategies include generalization (using a broader term), particularization **(**using a more specific term), description (explaining a culturally bound term), amplification (adding implicit information), and reduction (omitting redundant content). Linguistic amplification and linguistic compression are particularly relevant in subtitling and interpreting, with the former involving expansion and the latter, conciseness. Compensation allows for conveying lost meaning in one part of the text elsewhere. Substitution involves replacing linguistic or non-verbal elements (e.g., gestures or idioms) with equivalents more suitable for the target culture. Finally, variation addresses changes in tone, style, or register to suit different communicative contexts.

These techniques are not ideologically neutral. The translator's choice is often shaped by translation goals (*Skopos*) and the expectations of the target audience (Gunawan, 2024), and the translator's ideological stance (Gunawan, 2022). In the case of translating interfaith-related Qur'anic verses, these techniques carry theological implications either supporting foreignization (preserving the Arabic form and original meaning) or domestication (adapting to local cultural contexts). This study thus positions translation not merely as a linguistic operation but as a site of ideological and theological negotiation. Prior research has further shown that the status of Indonesian as a lingua franca and local languages as media of *da'wa* (religious outreach) and education creates a dual layer of mediation, shaping whether an approach that appears 'domestic' at the lexical level in fact preserves 'foreignness' at the conceptual level or vice versa (Gunawan et al., 2022).

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This study does more than simply combine two theoretical perspectives. It constructs a novel interdisciplinary framework that links interfaith theological models (Eck, 2005; Knitter, 1995) with translation procedures (Molina & Albir, 2002), specifically in the context of Qur'anic verses related to interreligious relations. This integration allows for a deeper categorization of how particular translation techniques—such as established equivalence, modulation, or borrowing—correspond to underlying theological positions, namely exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism. As such, the research offers a new theoretical contribution: a model that categorizes translation techniques based on their ideological-theological implications. This model extends Molina and Albir's typology by embedding a theological lens into the analysis of linguistic choices, while also enhancing interfaith theories by operationalizing them within textual translation analysis. By doing so, the study not only explores how the Qur'an is translated but also how theological meaning is reinterpreted through linguistic mediation.

3. Methodology

This study adopts a product-oriented translation research design informed by a theology-based approach to examine how Qur'anic verses concerning interfaith relations are translated into the Tolaki language and how translation techniques shape the theological representation of meaning. This design enables a nuanced analysis of the translation product as an ideological space rather than merely a linguistic outcome. By focusing on the relationship between translation techniques and theological positions such as exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism, this approach proves relevant in linking the micro-level of language with the broader construction of religious discourse within a local context.

3.1. Research Context

Tolaki is one of the regional languages spoken in Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia, particularly in the districts of Konawe, South Konawe, North Konawe, East Kolaka, and Kolaka. As part of the Austronesian language family, Tolaki is widely used by the Tolaki ethnic community in daily communication and also functions as a medium for conveying religious teachings in several local communities. The translation of the Qur'an into Tolaki represents both a cultural initiative to preserve local languages and a form of Islamic propagation rooted in indigenous traditions. In this context, translation is not merely a linguistic activity but also serves as a vehicle for constructing local Islamic discourse that reflects specific ideological, theological, and pragmatic orientations.

The Tolaki Qur'an translation used in this study is based on the Indonesian-language version produced by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia. It was selected as the primary source for analysis because it is currently the only existing Qur'an translation in a local language within Southeast Sulawesi, despite the province's linguistic diversity. The primary data for this study consists of Tolaki-language

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translations of Qur'anic verses that relate to interfaith relations. To ensure the relevance and focus of the analysis, the following inclusion criteria were applied: (1) verses that explicitly or implicitly address interaction, dialogue, conflict, or theological positioning toward other religions (e.g., Judaism, Christianity, Sabians, etc.); (2) verses that have been fully translated into Tolaki and are available in official print or digital formats; and (3) verses that represent exclusivist, inclusivist, or pluralist tendencies in interreligious relations, as supported by recognized tafsir or scholarly analysis. Conversely, verses that have not been translated into Tolaki, or that appear only partially—such as in social media excerpts or local sermons—were excluded from the analysis. Also excluded were translations lacking contextual commentary or translator's notes. These exclusion criteria were applied to maintain data integrity and ensure that the theological context of the verses remains intact for analysis.

3.2.Data Collection and Analysis Techniques

This study employed two primary methods for data collection: document analysis and focus group discussions (FGDs). The document analysis was conducted systematically on the Tolaki-language translation of the Qur'an using the print version. This process involved mapping exclusivism, inclusivism, or pluralism verses, identifying the translation techniques categorized by Molina and Albir (2002), and classifying the theological tendencies of each verse into exclusivism, inclusivism, or pluralism. This allowed for a detailed examination of how translation choices relate to the construction of religious meaning in a localized context.

In addition to textual analysis, the study employed focus group discussions (FGDs) with several participants: one translator of the Qur'an into the Tolaki language, one local scholar of tafsīr, one expert in translation studies, one religious leader, and one traditional leader from the Tolaki community. Recruitment began by inviting potential participants to a discussion held at one of the largest hotels in Kendari, Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia, which was attended by ten individuals. Those who expressed a genuine interest in participating were asked to contact the researcher privately and voluntarily. Prospective participants were informed that they could withdraw at any time without penalty. Of the fifteen individuals who subsequently joined the discussion group, only five consented to take part in the research itself, entirely without coercion as stated at the outset.

Before data collection, participants were asked to sign a consent form indicating their willingness to be involved. The researcher explained the study's aims, methods, and any foreseeable risks (Hammersley & Traianou, 2012). To safeguard privacy and uphold research ethics, the study does not disclose participants' full names. The discussions were directed toward exploring the translators' motivations in selecting specific techniques, their ideological and cultural considerations in dealing with sensitive religious terms, and the challenges they faced in preserving the theological integrity of the Qur'anic message. These conversations also shed light on the broader socio-cultural dynamics and values that influence the act of translating the Qur'an within this community.

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The data gathered from both the documents and FGDs were analyzed using thematic content analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), which enabled us as researchers to identify patterns and construct thematic categories from the textual data. The analysis proceeded in five stages. First, initial coding was performed, where each verse and its translation were tagged with codes indicating their theological orientation (exclusive, inclusive, or pluralist) and the translation techniques employed (such as established equivalence, transposition, modulation, etc.). Second, the coded data were grouped into sub-themes based on recurring semantic structures, including themes such as truth claims, recognition of religious others, and religious freedom. Third, each theme was analyzed concerning its theological and linguistic implications, particularly regarding how the selected translation technique affected the preservation or transformation of the Qur'anic meaning. In the fourth stage, findings from the document analysis were validated by comparing them with the FGD results, ensuring consistency between the translated text, the translators' intentions, and the cultural interpretations of the local community. Finally, all analytical insights were interpreted within the theoretical frameworks of Eck (2005), Knitter (1995), and Molina and Albir (2002), allowing for a comprehensive understanding of the link between translation strategy and ideological positioning in Qur'anic translation.

This methodological approach not only uncovers the linguistic techniques used in rendering the Qur'an into the Tolaki language but also offers a critical lens through which to examine how interfaith discourse is constructed through translation. It highlights the role of translation as both a linguistic and ideological act, one that negotiates religious meaning and cultural identity within a specific socio-religious setting.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1.1. Interfaith Relations in the Qur'an

The findings of this study reveal that Qur'anic verses addressing interfaith relations can be categorized into three theological orientations: religious exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1.

Verses of Interfaith Relations

VARIABLES	INDICATORS	FREQUENCY (N)	PERCENTAGE (%)
RELIGIOUS EXCLUSIVISM	Assertion of exclusive truth	24	51, 58%
	Rejection of interfaith dialogue	15	
	Judgment of other faiths	10	

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RELIGIOUS INCLUSIVISM	Acknowledgment of religious truth	15	31,58%
	Partial acceptance of interfaith dialogue	15	
RELIGIOUS PLURALISM	Respect for other religions	9	16,84%
	Acceptance of relative truth	7	
		95	100%

4.1.1.1. Religious Exclusivism

Exclusivism in the context of interreligious relations refers to the belief that only one religion, Islam, is the absolute truth, while all others are theologically and soteriologically invalid. In the Qur'an, this approach is reflected through three content-based subcategories: the assertion of absolute truth, the rejection of interfaith dialogue, and the condemnation of other religious beliefs. Each subcategory is supported by specific verses that function as normative texts explicitly conveying exclusivist messages.

The first subcategory, assertion of exclusive truth, includes 24 verses that prescriptively affirm Islam as the sole path to salvation. For example, Surah Āli 'Imrān (3:85) states unequivocally that any religion other than Islam will not be accepted by Allah. From a content analysis perspective, this verse carries an authoritative and final tone, denying the theological validity of religious pluralism. Verses such as Az-Zumar (39:2–3) and Al-An'ām (6:161) further reinforce Islamic monotheism (tawḥīd) and reject all forms of shirk (polytheism), presenting Islam as a doctrinally exclusive system. Meanwhile, verses like Al-Mumtaḥanah (60:8–9) and As-Ṣaff (61:9) proclaim Islam's destined triumph over all other religions, serving as eschatological and apologetic messages.

The second subcategory, rejection of interfaith dialogue, consists of 15 verses suggesting that non-Muslims are unfit for theological engagement due to their persistent rejection of divine revelation. Al-Baqarah (2:6–7) and Al-Baqarah (2:171) depict the spiritual deafness and epistemological indifference of disbelievers, a rhetorical strategy that reflects internal protectionism. Fussilat (41:26) and Al-Kahf (18:56) illustrate active resistance to *da'wah*, portraying non-believers as disruptive agents opposing the spread of Islam. These verses convey a polemical and resistant tone, indicating that the rejection of dialogue is often reciprocal rather than a doctrinal ban imposed by Islam.

The third subcategory, judgment of other faiths, is represented in 10 verses that confront the doctrines of Christianity and Judaism, particularly in theological aspects. Al-Mā'idah (5:72–73) and At-Tawbah (9:30–31), for instance, reject the doctrines of the Trinity and the divinity of Jesus. These verses carry a corrective and didactic tone, positioning Islam as the final and rectifying revelation. Similarly, Al-Baqarah (2:111–113)

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critiques the salvific claims of earlier faith communities as flawed epistemological constructs lacking alignment with the final divine message.

4.1.1.2. Religious Inclusivism

Religious inclusivism in the Qur'an represents a moderate stance, acknowledging the presence of truth in other faiths while maintaining Islam as the most complete and authoritative path to salvation. Though Islam remains central, the Qur'an recognizes elements of truth and virtue in other religious traditions, making inclusivism a theological position between strict exclusivism and full pluralism. Based on content analysis, verses supporting inclusivism fall into two main thematic categories: acknowledgment of truth in other religions, and partial acceptance of interfaith dialogue, represented in 15 verses.

The first theme, acknowledgment of religious truth, emphasizes theological openness by recognizing the faith and righteous deeds of earlier communities. Al-Baqarah (2:62) asserts that Jews, Christians, and Sabians who believe in God, the Last Day, and do righteous deeds will receive their reward and need not fear or grieve. This verse affirms the spiritual and moral integrity of other faiths as long as they uphold universal values of belief and ethics. A similar message appears in Āli 'Imrān (3:199), which mentions that some People of the Book believe in God and bow to Him in worship. These verses serve a normative-inclusive function, indicating that theological acknowledgment of others stems not from mere social tolerance but from the Qur'an's worldview. Moreover, Al-An'ām (6:108) prohibits insulting the deities of other religions to prevent reciprocal disrespect toward Allah, promoting an interfaith ethic grounded in mutual respect.

The second theme is the partial acceptance of interfaith dialogue. The Qur'an does not entirely close the space for engagement with people of other faiths, as long as such dialogue is conducted in the spirit of justice and peace. Āli 'Imrān (3:64) instructs the Prophet Muhammad to call the People of the Book toward a common theological foundation—"kalimatun sawa'," or the shared belief in worshiping only Allah without associating partners with Him. This highlights the Qur'an's endorsement of dialogue based on shared values. Similarly, Al-Mumtaḥanah (60:8) states that Allah does not forbid Muslims from treating with kindness and justice those who do not fight them on account of religion, indicating an ethical distinction between hostile and peaceful communities. Al-Mā'idah (5:48) further emphasizes that God has ordained different laws for each community and that human beings are tested in virtue, not required to hold identical beliefs, recognizing religious diversity as divinely intended rather than deviant.

4.1.1.3. Religious Pluralism

Among the three positions, religious pluralism represents the most open and inclusive approach to interfaith relations. It upholds that all religions possess elements of truth and salvific potential and that religious diversity is part of divine design. In the Qur'anic context, pluralism is reflected in verses that promote respect for other religious traditions and acknowledge the relativity of religious truth in human life. Content analysis

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identifies two primary subcategories within this framework: respect for other faiths and acceptance of religious diversity as God's will.

The first subcategory, respect for other religions, is evident in nine key verses. Surah Al-Kāfirūn (109:1–6) is often cited as a foundational verse for absolute tolerance: "To you your religion, and to me mine." This verse affirms Islam's non-coercive stance and upholds religious freedom. An-Nahl (16:125) advises Muslims to invite others to faith with wisdom and good counsel and to engage in dialogue in the best manner, underscoring that theological differences should not lead to hostility but respectful engagement. Al-Baqarah (2:256) proclaims, "There is no compulsion in religion," a principle that frames religious freedom as a fundamental right protected by revelation. Al-Mā'idah (5:48) further supports this by stating that every community has been given its law and path, and that God tests them through their distinct responses to goodness, an acknowledgment of religious diversity as a valid expression of divine will.

The second subcategory, acceptance of relative truth, recognizes that religious diversity is not an error but part of God's plan, allowing humans to exercise free will in their spiritual choices. Surah Yūnus (10:99) declares, "Had your Lord willed, all people on earth would have believed," affirming that differences in belief are part of divine will rather than human failure. Al-Ḥajj (22:67) and Az-Zumar (39:18) assert that each community has its religious law and is free to choose what path to follow. Similarly, Al-Kahf (18:29) presents a clear moral option: "Whoever wills, let him believe; and whoever wills, let him disbelieve." This verse affirms moral agency and personal responsibility in faith, not promoting moral relativism, but affirming freedom of conscience and diversity in religious conviction.

4.1.2.Translation of Interfaith Verses into the Tolaki Language

The findings of the study indicate that the translation of interfaith-related Qur'anic verses into the Tolaki language employed seven primary translation techniques: established equivalence, modulation, borrowing, transposition, reduction, compensation, and adaptation. Among these, the most dominant techniques, in descending order of frequency, are as follows: established equivalence, borrowing, modulation, transposition, adaptation, compensation, and reduction (See Table 2).

Table 2.

Translation Techniques of Interfaith Verses

N°	Translation Technique	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
1	Established Equivalence	188	74,02
2	Borrowing	35	13,78
3	Modulation	22	8,66
4	Transposition	3	1,18
5	Adaptation	3	1,18

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6	Compensation	2	0,79
7	Reduction	1	0,39
	Total	254	100

4.1.2.1. Established Equivalence

Established equivalence emerged as the most dominant translation strategy identified in this study. This technique involves selecting target language equivalents that are widely accepted and commonly used by native speakers of the target language. It ensures that the translated terms are both semantically accurate and culturally appropriate within the linguistic norms of the receiving community. For instance, the Tolaki word *manasaito* is regularly translated as *sesungguhnya* (truly), *La Pinalalo* as *yang diridhai* (the one who is approved/pleased), and *inae* as the equivalent of *siapa* (who). These examples illustrate the translator's effort to maintain semantic clarity and communicative effectiveness. The following table demonstrates additional examples of established equivalence in practice: *mencari* (to search) is translated as *mepolaha*, *sekali-kali* (occasionally) as *saliwa-liwano*, *diterima* (accepted) as *tinarima*, *orang-orang* (people) as *mbera toono*, and *rugi* (loss) as *maruga*. These lexical choices reflect a consistent strategy of aligning source language expressions with functionally and culturally equivalent expressions in Tolaki, thereby enhancing the naturalness, readability, and theological resonance of the Qur'anic message in the local context.

4.1.2.2. Modulation

The translation technique of modulation refers to a shift in the manner of conveying meaning by altering the perspective or point of view within the sentence structure. Modulation involves changing the way a message is expressed without modifying the core meaning of the original message. A shift in perspective is evident in the translation of the Indonesian term *"binatang buas"* (wild beasts) into Tolaki *"kadadi mokombo"* (greedy animals). In Indonesian, *"binatang buas"* denotes animals that are aggressive, dangerous, and often ferocious. However, the translation *"kadadi mokombo"*, literally meaning "greedy animals," redirects the semantic focus from aggression and violence to greed and excessive consumption. While both expressions refer to harmful creatures, the modulation introduces a nuanced difference: *"rakus"* (greedy) emphasizes insatiability, whereas *"buas"* (ferocious) highlights physical aggression and savagery.

In Indonesian, *"binatang buas"* typically connotes uncontrollable and physically dangerous animals. In contrast, the target term *"kadadi mokombo"* refers to insatiable desire, especially in the context of overconsumption. This modulation may stem from cultural or linguistic tendencies within the target language that associate destructiveness more with greed than with violence. The translator thus chooses *"greedy"* to soften the tone while preserving the core meaning. Additionally, this modulation accounts for cultural nuances. In the target language, *"greed"* often suggests excessive materialism, while *"ferocity"* in Indonesian conveys cruelty or brutality. By using *"kadadi mokombo"*,

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the translator aligns the text with local cultural interpretations, facilitating comprehension without compromising the original message of harm.

4.1.2.3.Borrowing

Borrowing as a translation technique is generally divided into two types: pure borrowing and naturalized borrowing. Pure borrowing retains the original form of a word from the source language without modification, such as *Islam*, *Nasrani* (Christian), *Allah*, and *Prophet Muhammad*, which are widely recognized and carry significant theological meaning in Islam. In contrast, naturalized borrowing involves phonological and morphological adjustments to align with the structure of the target language—in this case, Tolaki. Examples include *Islam* becoming *Isilamu*, *mendapatkan* (to obtain) becoming *modapa*, *gereja* (church) as *garedahako*, and *masjid* (mosque) as *masigihako*. These changes ease pronunciation and comprehension for native speakers while adhering to local phonetic and morphological patterns. For instance, the suffix "-hako" is often added to denote places of worship, and "-no" may indicate possession. Beyond structural adaptation, cultural relevance is also considered, as seen in the translation of *bangkai* (carcass) to *obake*, and *umat Islam* (Muslim community) to *umati Islamu*. This borrowing technique reflects a deliberate effort to preserve original meaning while ensuring linguistic and cultural acceptance within the target language, making the translated terms both accessible and faithful to the Islamic concepts they convey.

4.1.2.4.Transposition

This study also identified the use of transposition techniques in the Tolaki translation of the Qur'an. For instance, "orang-orang yang rugi" (those who lose) is rendered as "orang-orang yang merugi" [toono la maruga], "bertakwalah" (be pious) becomes "percayalah dengan sebenar-benarnya" [pombisi menahito], and "paksaan" (compulsion) is translated as "yang memaksa" [laa pombasa]. Transposition involves a grammatical shift, where elements in the source language are replaced with different structures in the target language without altering the core meaning. For example, changing "rugi" (an adjective) to "merugi" (a verb) reflects a dynamic shift, conveying action rather than a static state, thus aligning more naturally with Tolaki language patterns. Likewise, converting the noun "paksaan" to the verbal phrase "yang memaksa" emphasizes agency and action, shifting focus from a passive condition to an active process. This aligns with Tolaki's preference for verbal expressions in action-related contexts.

Lastly, "bertakwalah" is transposed into "berimanlah dengan sebenar-benarnya," not only changing the verb but clarifying the abstract notion of "taqwa" into a more accessible and culturally resonant expression of deep, genuine faith. These transpositions ensure greater clarity, naturalness, and fidelity in conveying theological meaning in the target language.

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4.1.2.5.Compensation

The compensation technique in translation is used when certain source-language elements cannot be directly preserved due to structural or stylistic differences in the target language. In this study, a shift from "Aku tidak akan menyembah" to "Tidak akan aku menyembah" illustrates compensation through word order adjustment. This reordering emphasizes negation, enhancing rhetorical force and emotional intensity in the target language. In Indonesian, placing negation at the beginning conveys firm rejection, aligning with the speaker's intended assertiveness. Another example appears in translating "sebenar-benar takwa" into Tolaki *pombisimenahi memena'ano* ("to believe sincerely"). Since the term "takwa" lacks a precise equivalent in the target language, the translator replaces it with an expression combining deep faith (*beriman*) and sincerity (*dengan sungguh-sungguh*). This captures the original concept's essence—devotion, obedience, and conscious religiosity—through a culturally intelligible form. Thus, compensation enables translators to preserve meaning, tone, and emotional depth by adjusting form and emphasis within the linguistic and cultural framework of the target audience.

4.1.2.6. Adaptation

The use of adaptation technique is evident in translating the word *Allah* into local expressions such as *Ombu Sameena* or *The Almighty God*. This choice reflects careful consideration of the cultural, linguistic, and religious context of the target audience. Since *Allah* in Islamic theology refers to the One and Only God—whose concept cannot be directly matched in many languages—adaptation helps preserve the core meaning while ensuring accessibility. In the Tolaki language, *Ombu* denotes God, and *Sameena* (from Arabic, meaning "we hear") highlights divine attributes of omniscience and nearness. Similarly, *the Almighty God* is a more general term yet maintains the essential concept of God's supreme power, making it comprehensible to broader audiences, including non-Muslims. This aligns with Nida's dynamic equivalence theory and the Skopos theory, emphasizing meaningfulness and relevance for the target audience while maintaining the theological depth and integrity of the original Islamic concept of *Allah*.

4.1.2.7. Reduction

The use of reduction technique is observed in the omission of the word *"hanya"* in the sentence: "orang-orang yang diusir dari kampung halamannya, tanpa alasan yang benar *hanya* karena mereka berkata…." [those who were expelled from their homes without just cause *only* because they said...]. Removing *"only"* significantly alters the accuracy of meaning. The word emphasizes that the expulsion occurred solely due to their speech, with no other valid justification. In Arabic, the word *"illā"* (إلا) functions similarly to restrict the cause. Omitting *"only"* makes the statement more general, potentially implying acceptable reasons for expulsion. Thus, retaining *"only"* is crucial to preserving the original nuance of injustice and the violation of human rights.

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4.2. Discussion

The present study identifies three theological tendencies in Qur'anic verses on interfaith relations: exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism. These tendencies appear not only in the content of the verses but also in the way they are translated. The three most frequently used techniques are established equivalence, borrowing and modulation. The use of these techniques serves two purposes: preserving doctrinally significant key terms and adjusting the language to ensure intelligibility for Tolaki readers (Lefevere, 1992; Toury, 1995; Nida & Taber, 1969; Newmark, 1988).

To this end, ideologically laden theological terms are not paraphrased to avert semantic drift. This aligns with Gunawan (2022), indicating that paraphrasing can alter original meanings. Modulation is employed sparingly to clarify intersentential relations without changing core propositions. Borrowed Arabic terms are retained and explained through glossaries or parenthetical notes. This pattern of choices coheres with formal equivalence and foreignization. Also, it should be noted that the Tolaki translation relies on Indonesian as a mediating language. The process follows the pathway *Arabic to Indonesian to Tolaki*. Consequently, certain adaptations have already occurred at the Indonesian stage. Indonesian thus creates a choice architecture that simultaneously constrains and guides Tolaki translators' decisions across dimensions, including ideology.

The literature terms this practice relay or indirect translation from an intermediate text rather than directly from the source (André, 2019). Its advantages include institutionalized equivalents, stable terminology, and a sedimented exegetical tradition, thereby expediting work and improving cross-verse consistency. In the Tolaki context, this explains the frequent recourse to established equivalence and the retention of borrowing when no suitable Tolaki lexeme exists. Nonetheless, this model inevitably carries drawbacks: cumulative normalization, ideological filtration, and doctrinal shift. Normalization accumulates because each mediating stage tends to align form/content with target-system norms (Toury, 1995), so Arabic semantic–rhetorical nuances can be further leveled after passing through Indonesian. Ideological filtration arises because Indonesian texts bear traces of language policy and particular exegetical orientations.

Lukman (2023), for example, shows that the Indonesian Qur'an translation functions as a state instrument to standardize Islamic discourse while ulama continue to hold interpretive authority, as seen in the translation of *awliyāʾ* in Q 5:51. As a result, the Tolaki translation may inherit forms of ideological domestication that are not always explicit (Lefevere, 1992; Venuti, 1995). Finally, micro-level doctrinal shifts may occur: theological details such as implicatures, presuppositions, intertextual cues, and risk attenuation when transferred twice, particularly in verses sensitive to interreligious relations.

The ensuing debate centers on prudential criteria: when are formal equivalence and foreignization ethically preferable to safeguard theological horizons, and when is micro modulation necessary to secure local intelligibility without doctrinal reduction? A pragmatic consensus favors responsible relay. First, audit key terms at the Indonesian

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stage before transfer into Tolaki. Second, employ micro modulation only for syntactic clarity. Third, provide explanatory apparatus such as glossaries or notes when opting for borrowing. Fourth, disclose the relay pathway for methodological transparency. In this way, Indonesian serves as a guiding rather than constraining pivot that balances theological fidelity with local acceptability.

Hence, this study disputes the claim that relay translation necessarily produces inferior outcomes. In the context of rendering the Qur'an from Indonesian into Tolaki, such shortcomings did not arise because experts in Qur'anic exegesis and translation were actively involved through discussion forums throughout the translation process. Theoretically, these findings extend formal equivalence and foreignization through an ethnolinguistic lens that acknowledges relay practices in sacred-text translation. Equivalence is no longer a simple two-node relation (source and target) but a three-way ecology (Arabic, Indonesian, and Tolaki) requiring the dual commitment to preserve key terms while supplying minimal, targeted explanation (Nida & Taber, 1969; Venuti, 1995). With conscious management of Indonesian's mediating role, translation can remain faithful to the Qur'anic message while supporting interfaith dialogue benefiting linguistics, tafsīr, Islamic education, and interreligious diplomacy.

5. Conclusion

This study aims to address two central questions: first, how Qur'anic verses related to interfaith relations are theologically classified; and second, how the use of translation techniques into the Tolaki language affects the representation of those meanings. An analysis of 95 relevant verses revealed that 49 reflect exclusivist tendencies, 40 embody inclusivism, and 16 represent pluralistic perspectives. These three categories convey distinct semantic features and theological messages, each of which is highly sensitive to interpretive context. In translating these verses into Tolaki, seven principal translation techniques were identified, with established equivalence, borrowing, and modulation emerging as the most dominant. These techniques serve not only to transfer literal meaning but also to reflect the translators' ideological stances and cultural strategies. Their primary aim is to preserve the sanctity of the Qur'anic message while ensuring its intelligibility within the sociocultural context of the target audience. A key finding is the translators' tendency to avoid techniques such as explicitation, paraphrasing. Instead, they favor maintaining the sense of textual "foreignness" by adhering to a formal equivalence approach. This contrasts with other translation projects, such as those by Bakhtiar and Wadud, who adopt more inclusive and gender-sensitive strategies in rendering the text.

Theoretically, this research contributes to the integration of theological classification frameworks in interfaith Qur'anic studies with translation technique theory as proposed by Molina and Albir, especially within the lens of linguistic locality. It broadens the scope of formal equivalence theory (Nida & Taber) and Venuti's foreignization by incorporating an ethnolinguistic dimension into the decision-making process of translation. Additionally, the study proposes a theological classification model

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of verses that can be applied to translation analysis across other local languages. In this way, the research bridges translation studies, Qur'anic exegesis, and local theological discourse.

The present study implies the need to re-evaluate traditional equivalence theories in sacred text translation by accounting for the ideological, cultural, and religious backgrounds of translators. It affirms that translation techniques are not ideologically neutral; rather, they are shaped by the translators' religious affiliations, cultural identities, and social positions. Meanwhile, the findings practically provide a foundation for developing context-sensitive guidelines for translating the Qur'an into regional languages. The insights gained here can inform policymakers, educators, Qur'anic scholars, and religious institutions in promoting interfaith tolerance through fair, transparent, and culturally rooted translation practices. Such an approach is vital for reinforcing a dialogical Islamic identity and for fostering constructive engagement in pluralistic societies.

However, the study is not without limitations. It focuses on only one version of the Tolaki Qur'an translation, limiting the generalizability of its findings. Moreover, the number of participants in the focus group discussions (FGDs) was relatively small and may not fully reflect the diversity of cultural perspectives within the Tolaki community. Future research is therefore recommended to conduct comparative analyses of multiple Qur'anic translations across different regional languages in Indonesia. In addition, incorporating corpus-based methods and engaging lay readers could offer deeper insight into how theological meanings are received and interpreted within the broader framework of religious pluralism and interfaith dialogue.

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Authors' Contributions

This study was conceptualized by F.G., who prepared and wrote the initial manuscript and assumes overall responsibility for the final work. N.C.H. refined the argumentative framing and oversaw substantive editing. M.Y.A. optimized the methodological design and conducted the analyses, while A.A. further advanced the analyses and supervised data curation. S.M. carried out the field data collection.

GenAI Disclosure Statement

We limited the use of generative AI to language enhancement tasks, including grammar, clarity, style, and minor formatting. AI was not utilized for data generation, analytical procedures, coding, or inferential claims. We independently executed and validated all aspects of conceptual design, data acquisition, coding, and interpretive work, and we bear full responsibility for the content.

Declaration of conflicting interest

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