

A Shift in Direct Imperatives in the Malay Translation of Al-Qur'an

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ABSTRACT

Translation in general is an activity of information transfer from a source language to a target language such as from Arabic into the Malay language. During the transfer process, usually occurs a shift in translation between the language systems of the source and target texts. In relation to this, a research was conducted to examine the structure of imperative verbs in the translation of the Qur'an into the Malay language. Surah an-Nisa', the fourth chapter of the Qur'an was used as the research data. Based on the observation, 82 imperative verbs have been found in this chapter. This comparative analysis between Malay and Arabic grammar refers to the Malay Imperative Verbs by Asmah Haji Omar (2009) and Imperative Category in Arabic by Yasin Jasim al-Muhaimid (2001). The analysis shows that the translation of imperatives causes two types of shifts. The first is the original form of imperative verbs in Arabic, such as additional inflections and particles. An example is, '*Dan berikanlah kepada wanita-wanita itu mahar mereka sebagai pemberian yang wajib*' (S004A019). The verb '*beri*' (to give) is a translation from the word 'أتى' in Arabic, where there occurs the additional of particle *-lah* in the translation. The second shift is the change of imperative verb class in Arabic into Malay, for example, '*Maka hendaklah kamu adakan saksi-saksi mereka*' (S004A006). The word 'استشهد' originally is a verb to mean '*mempersaksi*' (to witness) but the translation has shifted to a noun (witnesses). This shows that in certain cases, the translation of the Qur'an does not abide the grammatical system of the source text language; instead, it is influenced by the target text language grammatical system.

Key words: translation, source language; target language; imperative verbs

INTRODUCTION

Discussions on imperatives usually relates to pragmatic aspects. Pragmatic stresses on the relationship of speech meaning uttered by a speaker (Nurtaqwa et al. 2015). One of the main aspects in pragmatic is *speech act*. Speech Acts Theory was first introduced by Austin (1975), and further developed by Searle (2005). Speech act theory is categorized into five illocutionary points, namely assertive, directive, expressive, commissive and declarative. This article focuses on the directive type. In general, the directive point refers to when the speaker makes an attempt to get hearers to do something. In other words, directive point refers to imperative or command. Asmah Haji Omar (2009) also categorised imperative into two subsystems, namely exclusive (a directive towards the hearer) and inclusive (which includes first, second and third person). The subsystem exclusive imperative is divided into positive and negative. In terms of meaning, imperatives are divided into two types, namely direct and indirect imperatives. Direct imperative functions to command, give directive or to hinder, while indirect imperative functions to ask, but it really means to instruct the listener to do something. This means the direct imperative is conveyed literally while indirect imperative conveys the message non-literally. This article focuses on the structures and functions of direct imperatives in the translation of the Qur'an from Arabic to Malay giving attention to surah an-Nisa' which is chapter four in the Qur'an.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Recent scholarship on imperatives and Qur'anic translation increasingly highlights the complex interaction between linguistic structure, pragmatic meaning, and translation strategies. These studies demonstrate that

translating directive expressions in the Qur'an is not merely a process of transferring grammatical forms but also involves interpreting the communicative intent and theological implications embedded within the original Arabic text.

Aikhenvald (2010) provides an important typological perspective on imperatives through a comprehensive cross-linguistic study of command structures in world languages. Her work demonstrates that languages employ diverse grammatical and pragmatic strategies to express directive meanings. Importantly, Aikhenvald distinguishes between canonical imperatives expressed through dedicated imperative morphology and directive meanings conveyed through non-imperative constructions such as declaratives or modal expressions. This typological framework highlights the flexibility of command structures and emphasises the role of pragmatic and cultural factors in shaping how directives are expressed. In the context of Qur'anic discourse, such insights are particularly relevant because directive meanings in the Qur'an may appear in various grammatical forms rather than being limited to explicit imperative verbs.

In the field of Qur'anic translation studies, increasing attention has been given to translation methodologies and the interpretive strategies adopted by translators. Gunawan, Syukri and Burdah (2022), for instance, revisited the interpretive translation method through a case study of Muhammad Thalib's Qur'anic translation. Their study demonstrates that interpretive translation prioritises semantic clarity and explanatory elaboration rather than strict formal correspondence with the source text. According to their findings, translators employing this method frequently restructure sentences or introduce explanatory elements in order to convey intended meanings more clearly for target readers. While this approach enhances comprehensibility, it may also alter certain linguistic features of the original Arabic text, including directive expressions and rhetorical structures.

Similarly, Al-Tarawneh (2022) examined translational trajectories in Arabic–English translations of the Qur'an and highlighted the linguistic challenges faced by translators when rendering Qur'anic discourse into another language. The study reveals that translators employ various strategies to deal with syntactic complexity, rhetorical features and semantic nuances embedded in the Arabic text. Differences in translation choices often reflect distinct interpretive orientations, demonstrating that Qur'anic translation is shaped not only by linguistic considerations but also by exegetical traditions and translation philosophies.

Research on translation ideology further illustrates how translators' perspectives influence the representation of religious discourse. Anis, Nababan, Santosa and Masrukhi (2022) analysed the ideological dimensions underlying the translation of Islamic ethical texts and found that translators' ideological orientations can shape lexical selection, stylistic choices and interpretive emphasis. Although their study does not focus specifically on the Qur'an, the findings are relevant for Qur'anic translation studies as they demonstrate that translation is inherently interpretive and influenced by broader intellectual frameworks. This suggests that the translation of directive expressions may also be affected by the translator's interpretive stance.

Recent scholarship has also emphasised the broader intellectual engagement with Qur'anic interpretation in contemporary Islamic studies. Faris (2023), for example, explores the study of Qur'anic messages within modern Islamic scholarship and highlights the importance of linguistic analysis in uncovering the meanings embedded in Qur'anic discourse. His discussion underscores the significance of examining linguistic structures—including commands, directives and rhetorical forms—in order to better understand the communicative function of Qur'anic messages.

In addition to methodological and interpretive perspectives, recent research has examined issues of translation acceptability and cross-cultural transfer in Qur'anic translation. Roodashty, Mozaheb and Ghajarieh (2023) investigated the translation of culture-specific items in selected Qur'anic chapters by comparing translations produced by translators with different first language backgrounds. Their findings indicate that translators' linguistic and cultural backgrounds significantly influence translation strategies, particularly when dealing with culturally embedded expressions that do not have direct equivalents in the target language. Such variations may lead to differences in semantic interpretation and pragmatic emphasis.

Similarly, Al Farisi (2023) analysed the acceptability of Qur'anic translation and emphasised that translation quality should not be evaluated solely based on linguistic accuracy. Instead, acceptability depends on several

	<p>كَيْفَ كُنْتُمْ لِقَائِهِمْ كَيْفَ كُنْتُمْ لِقَائِهِمْ كَيْفَ كُنْتُمْ لِقَائِهِمْ</p>	<p>dengan) seorang sahaja, atau (pakailah) hamba sehayu perempuan yang kamu miliki. Yang demikian itu adalah lebih dekat untuk tidak melakukan kezaliman. (Ayat 3)</p>
7	<p>وَمَا يَكْفُرُ لَكُمْ وَمَا يَكْفُرُ لَكُمْ وَمَا يَكْفُرُ لَكُمْ</p>	<p>Dan berikanlah kepada Wanita-wanita itu mahar mereka sebagai pemberian yang wajib. Kemudian jika mereka dengan rela hati memberikan kepada kamu sebahagian daripada maharnya, maka makanlah (gunakanlah) pemberian (yang halal) itu sebagai nikmat yang lazat, lagi baik kesudahannya. (ayat 4)</p>
8	<p>يَا أَيُّهَا مُحَمَّدُ يَا أَيُّهَا مُحَمَّدُ يَا أَيُّهَا مُحَمَّدُ</p>	<p>Perhatikanlah (Wahai Muhammad) betapa beraninya mereka mengada-adakan pendustaan terhadap Allah? Cukuplah perbuatan ini menjadi dosa yang nyata (bagi mereka). (Ayat 50)</p>
9	<p>يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا</p>	<p>Wahai orang yang beriman, taatilah Allah dan taatilah Rasulullah dan kepada 'Ulil Amri' (orang yang berkuasa) dalam kalangan kamu. Kemudian jika kamu berselisih pendapat dalam sesuatu perkara, maka hendaklah kamu mengembalikannya kepada (Kitab) Allah (Al-Qur'an) dan (Sunnah) Rasul-Nya, jika kamu benar-benar beriman kepada Allah dan hari akhirat. Yang demikian adalah lebih baik (bagi kamu) dan lebih elok pula akibatnya (kesudahannya). (Ayat 59)</p>
10	<p>كَمُتَّعْتُمُوهُنَّ كَمُتَّعْتُمُوهُنَّ كَمُتَّعْتُمُوهُنَّ</p>	<p>Kemudian, apabila kamu telah selesai mengerjakan solat, maka hendaklah kamu mengingati Allah semasa kamu berdiri dan duduk, dan semasa kamu berbaring. Kemudian apabila kamu telah berasa tenteram (berada dalam keadaan aman) maka dirikanlah solat itu. Sesungguhnya solat itu adalah satu ketetapan yang diwajibkan yang tertentu waktunya kepada orang yang beriman. (Ayat 103)</p>

In general, it can be observed that imperative sentences are marked by the presence of imperative verbs, for instance *kurunglah* and *berkahwinlah*. In a close examination, almost all imperative verbs, such as *kurung* will be attached with *-lah* in the translation of an-Nisa'. To understand the function of particle *-lah* in the Malay language, compare the following examples:

Sentence number	Sentences from the Qur'an	Translation
11	<p>يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا</p>	<p>Mereka ingin seandainya kamu juga menjadi kafir sebagaimana mereka telah menjadi kafir, maka (dengan yang demikian) kamu sama menjadi seperti mereka. oleh itu, janganlah kamu mengambil) seseorang pun) antara mereka menjadi penolong-penolong kamu, sehinggalah mereka berhijrah pada jalan Allah (untuk menegakkan Islam). Kemudian jika mereka sengaja berpaling ingkar, maka tawan dan bunuhlah mereka di mana saja kamu menemui mereka, serta janganlah sekali-kali kamu mengambil (seorang pun) antara mereka menjadi penolong atau teman rapat. (ayat 89)</p>
12	<p>وَمَا يَكْفُرُ لَكُمْ وَمَا يَكْفُرُ لَكُمْ وَمَا يَكْفُرُ لَكُمْ</p>	<p>Dan antara wanita-wanita kamu yang mengerjakan perbuatan keji (zina), maka carilah empat orang lelaki antara kamu yang menjadi saksi terhadap perbuatan mereka. Kemudian kalau keterangan-keterangan saksi itu mengesahkan perbuatan tersebut, maka kurunglah mereka (perempuan yang berzina itu) dalam rumah hingga sampai ajalnya, atau hingga Allah mengadakan untuk mereka jalan keluar (daripada hukuman itu). (Ayat 15)</p>

Example (11) does not have particle *-lah* after the verb *tawan*, while example (12) is in the form of imperative verb with particle *-lah*. However, the command element in *tawan* without particle *-lah* is more firm and intensified compared to *kurunglah*. Thus particle *-lah* is attached to all imperative verbs in the translation, to give less intensified elements.

In terms of form, the translation of imperative verbs in the Malay translation are categorised as: i) imperative verbs without inflections such as in sentence 15, *maka kurunglah mereka (perempuan yang berzina itu) dalam rumah*, ii) imperative verbs with prefix *ber-*(*berkahwinlah*) such as in sentence 3, *Maka berkahwinlah dengan sesiapa yang kamu sukai*, iii) imperative verbs with suffix *-kan* and *-i*, such as in sentence 2, *Dan berikanlah kepada wanita-wanita itu mahar mereka sebagai pemberian yang wajib*, and in sentence 94, *Lalu Allah mengurniakan ni'mat-Nya kepada kamu, oleh itu selidikilah (apa-apa jua lebih dahulu)*. iv) imperative verbs with prefix and suffix *per-..kan*, such as in sentence 153, *Mereka berkata: '(wahai Musa) perhatikanlah Allah kepada kami dengan nyata*. The translation of imperatives is also marked by v) modal verbs, such as, *hendaklah kamu mengingati Allah (Ayat 3)*.

The current study found 10 imperative words that use the word *hendaklah* followed by the object *kamu* (the one commanded upon) and followed by imperative verb *mengingati*. From the 10 imperative verbs preceded by the modal auxiliary verb *hendaklah*, there is an object the precedes the modal verb, such as in sentence 63, *Engkau hendaklah berpaling daripada mereka*. Mean while, there is one form where object omission takes place which occurs in sentence 131, *Hendaklah bertaqwa kepada Allah*.

Therefore, it can be concluded that there are 26 forms of imperatives (i) in surah al-Nisa', while there are 16 of form (ii) and 28 of form (iii) and also there are 2 of form (iv) and finally there are 10 sentences of the final (v) form. A total of 99% imperative verbs in surah an-Nisa' followed by intensified particle *-lah*. This proves that the particle *-lah* carries meaning in the translation.

The Structure Of Imperative Sentences In The Translation Of The Qur'an

This section discusses the structure of translated imperative sentences in surah al-Nisa'. Based on the analysis, there are two imperative structures, one is with an object and another without. The example in the following table 2 is related to the practice of ablution using sand-dust or *tayamum*. The command is about the permission to perform *tayamum* in replace of water when water is unavailable for ablution or when one is too ill to use water for ablution. In these sentences, the description of *tayamum* is given, which is to dab sand-dust on the face and on the hands. The word *debu* (sand-dust) has been dropped after the imperative verb *sapukanlah*. This is because the word *debu* has been mentioned in the previous clause, *Maka bertayammumlah dengan tanah (debu) yang suci*. Table 2 in the following details out the above statement and the source text sentence.

Table 2: Imperative verbs without object

Sentence number	Sentence	Imperative verb	Object	Explanation
043	يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا	Sapukanlah	∅	ke muka dan kedua-dua tangan kamu.

Table 3 in the following explains a typical imperative sentence structure, which is imperative verb followed by an object, for example *dirikan + solat*, *tunaikanlah + zakat*, and *carilah + empat orang lelaki*. These examples assert of God's command to His servants to perform *solat*, contribute *zakat* and to find four men as witnesses for cases of adultery. Table 3 in the following provides examples with the concerned examples from the Qur'an.

Table 3: Imperative verbs with object

Sentence number	Sentence	SUBJECT	VERB	OBJECT
077	وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ	<i>Dan</i>	dirikanlah	<i>Solat</i>
077	وَأَقِمْ زَكَاةً	<i>dan</i>	tunaikanlah	<i>Zakat</i>
015	وَأَقِمْ وَجْهَكَ لِلدِّينِ حَنِيفًا	<i>maka</i>	Carilah	<i>Empat orang lelaki di antara kamu menjadi saksi</i>

Table 4 in the following explains imperative sentences in surah al-Nisa' which have the structure of imperative verbs with two objects.

Table 4: Imperative verbs with 2 objects

Sentence number	Sentence	Subject	Verb	Object 1	Object 2	Explanation
006	تُو تُو تُو	Maka	serahkanlah	<i>kepada mereka</i>	<i>hartanya</i>	
024	ف ف ف	Maka	berikanlah	<i>kepada mereka</i>	<i>mas kahwin nya</i>	<i>sebagai suatu ketetapan</i>

Sentence number 006 which is *serahkanlah kepada mereka hartanya* refers to Gods’ command to provide part of what one inherits to the benefit of the orphans. Meanwhile, in sentence 24, the phrase *maka berikanlah kepada mereka mas kahwinnya* refers to the marriage condition, where the groom is made compulsory to provide a dowry to his bride. In this context, *harta* and *mas kahwin* are the second objects, while *mereka* (the orphans and wife) are the benefactives which function as the first objects.

Structural elements can also be found in imperative verbs that occur at the beginning of the sentence, for example as can be seen in table 5 in the following:

Table 5: Imperative verbs at the beginning of the sentence.

Sentence number	Sentence	SUBJECT	PREDICATE
003	ؤ و	Berilah	<i>mereka belanja</i>
034	ف	Pukullah	<i>mereka (dengan pukulan ringan yang tidak mencederakan).</i>
059	ت ب ئ	Taatilah	<i>Allah</i>
106	أ ب	Mohonlah	<i>ampun kepada Allah</i>

Imperative verbs occur at the beginning of the sentences to give assertion to the intended command. For example, the command to provide for the orphans. The word *pukullah* refers to the permission to hit a wife as a punishment of disobey, while the word *taatilah* and *mohonlah* are command words to always obey and be loyal to God and to repent for all sins committed.

The Functions Of Imperative Verbs In The Translation Of The Qur’an

As previously explained, there are two types of imperatives, direct imperative and indirect imperative. Based on analysis of the study, the translation of surah an-Nisa’ only shows direct imperative. Direct imperative type commands obedience. The verbs used are explicit and have literal meanings. This is seen in Table 6 as follows.

Table 6: Imperative function

Command	
	1. Masuklah kamu melalui pintu gerbang (negeri) sambil bersujud,(154)
	2. Maka lantiklah ‘orang tengah’ (untuk mendamaikan mereka, iaitu) seorang daripada keluarga lelaki,(035)
	3. Maka carilah empat orang lelaki di antara kamu yang menjadi saksi terhadap perbuatan mereka, (015)
	4. Bertaqwalah kepada Allah yang kamu selalu meminta dengan menyebut-nyebut nama-Nya,(001)

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Maka berimanlah kamu (kerana yang demikian itu) amatlah baik bagi kamu, (170) 6. Dan beribadahlah kepada Allah dan janganlah kamu mempersekutukan-Nya dengan sesuatu pun;, (036) 7. Dan berikanlah kepada wanita-wanita itu mahar mereka sebagai pemberian yang wajib, (004) 8. Maka serahkanlah kepada mereka hartanya, (006) 9. Katakanlah (Wahai Muhammad) semuanya itu (kebaikan dan bencana) adalah berpunca dari sisi Allah, (077) 10. Taatilah Allah, (059) 11. Dan taatilah Rasulullah dan ulul amri dalam kalangan kamu, (059) 12. Perangilah pengikut-pengikut syaitan itu, (076) 13. maka hendaklah kamu adakan saksi-saksi (yang menyaksikan penerimaan) mereka, (006) 14. Engkau hendaklah berpaling daripada mereka, (063) 15. Dan hendaklah kamu bertindak membunuh mereka di mana sahaja kamu menemui mereka, (091)
Persuasion	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Marilah Kembali kepada hukum al-Qur'an yang telah diturunkan Allah, (061)
Advice	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Maka hendaklah kamu selidiki (apa jua perkara dengan sebaik-baiknya), (094) 2. Maka nasihatilah mereka, dan (jika mereka berdegil), (034) 3. Oleh itu selidikilah (apa-apa jua lebih dahulu), (094)
Warning	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Berwaspadalah dan berjaga-jagalah, (071) 2. hendaklah kamu mengambil Langkah berjaga-jaga, (102)
Prohibition	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Janganlah

Based on Table 6, there are four imperative functions in surah an-Nisa', which is command, persuasion, advice, warning and prohibition. The command function is mostly used. This is appropriate according to surah an-Nisa'' which mostly explains various rules, such as matrimony, prayer and to observe the welfare of orphans. The commands are directly delivered for all muslims to obey. In general, examples 1 to 15 are presented as examples of commands in surah al-Nisa'. Examples 1 to 3 are commands marked by the intensifier particle *-lah* only, while examples 4-6 are marked by prefix *ber-* and particle *-lah*. Examples 7 to 9 are marked by suffixes *-kan* with *-lah*, while examples 10 to 12 are marked by the suffix *-i* with *-lah* and the final examples sentences 13 to 15 of command sentences are marked by modal auxiliary verb 'hendak' with *-lah*.

Persuasive sentences are marked by the word *marilah* (let us) as in the translation of the sentence 'Marilah kembali kepada hukum al-Qur'an yang telah diturunkan oleh Allah', which is a persuasion to call on being loyal to the Qur'an as a guidance in life. Sentences with the function to advise are marked with imperative verbs such as *nasihatilah* (be advised) in sentences 43 and 94. Mean while, sentences which function as warnings are marked by the verb *berwaspadalah*, and *berjaga-jagalah* as in sentences 71 and 102. The command type of function of imperative verbs are marked by the word *janganlah*, but there are no word "prohibited" found in the data of the study. The percentage of the function to command is 94% compared to persuasion, advice and warning which are only 1%, 2% and 3% respectively.

From the semantic aspect, imperative verbs show both positive and negative meanings. Those with positive meanings refer to the command to do good deeds, where the verbs include *mohonlah* (do ask for), *bertakwalah* (do be pious), *berimanlah* (do have faith), *beribadahlah* (do be servitude) and *dirikanlah* (do perform). The negative meanings refer to punishments to those who act against the words of God, for example *kurunglah* (do prison), *pukullah* (do hit), *bunuhlah* (do death sentencing), *tahanlah* (do arrest), *balaslah* (do repay) and *tawanlah* (do captivate). These examples are provided in Table 7 below.

Table 7: the meanings of imperative verbs

POSITIVE MEANING	NEGATIVE MEANING
1. <i>Mohonlah</i> kepada Allah akan limpah kurnia-Nya. (032)	1. Maka <i>kurunglah</i> mereka (perempuan yang berzina itu) dalam rumah. (015)
2. <i>Bertaqwalah</i> kepada tuhan kamu.(001)	2. <i>Tahanlah</i> tangan kamu (daripada bertindak melancarkan perang) terhadap orang kafir <i>bunuhlah</i> . (077)
3. <i>Berimanlah</i> kepada apa yang telah kami turunkan (al-Qur'an) yang mengesahkan kitab yang ada pada kamu, beribadahlah. (047)	3. Dan <i>bunuhlah</i> mereka di mana sahaja kamu menemui mereka. (089)

Based on the above sentences it is clear that there are positive elements as well as negative elements in direct imperative sentences in surah al-Nisa'. Such is the content of surah al-Nisa' which clearly states the rules that are to be obeyed and rules that forbid believers of Islam which directly clarifies imperative functions from the aspects of forms and meanings.

CONCLUSION

This study has presented the various structures of imperative verbs in the translation into Malay of surah al-Nisa in the Qur'an. The translation has been studied according to the Malay grammatical system. Imperative verbs in Arabic comprising six structures are influenced by elements of the doer specifically in terms of gender and the number of person involved such as one male, two males, many, and so on. This is different in the Malay language where imperative words are indicated by markers and the use of particle *-lah* as a dominant marker in the formation of command sentences in the Malay language. The occurrence of modal auxiliary verb *hendaklah* in imperative sentences is one of the command forms in the translation of imperative words in surah al-Nisa', likewise is the addition of prefixes, suffixes and affixes in the translation of imperatives. This helps readers to better understand the meaning in the translation of commands and other forms of imperatives according to *syarak* or the rules of faith of Islam. Other than this, in terms of meaning, the change in the form of imperative verbs is related to the level of intensity degree of a command, such as the level of *wajib* (compulsory or mandatory), *sunnah* (optional or recommended), *makruh* (disliked or offensive act) and so on. This is because most words of command in the Quran are related to rules due to the nature of the sacred text as a guidance. Thus, the study also found various imperative functions in the translation into Malay, such as command, persuasion, advice, warning and prohibition. They are meant to remind the believers about a servant's responsibility towards Allah SWT.

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