



Equivalence Theory in Translation Pedagogy: A Conceptual Synthesis from an Islamic Educational Perspective

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Abstract

This study examines the conceptual integration of Equivalence Theory into language education from an Islamic educational perspective. The study addresses the limited conceptual articulation of how translation equivalence can be connected with Islamic educational values and pedagogical objectives. A qualitative document analysis combined with conceptual synthesis was employed to examine 15 peer-reviewed, open-access studies published between 2016 and 2026, complemented by seminal theoretical works on translation equivalence and Islamic educational thought. The analysis focused on four dimensions of equivalence lexical and grammatical, textual, and pragmatic and examined their pedagogical implications and conceptual alignment with *amanah*, *itqan*, *ta'dib*, and *li-ta'arafu*. The findings indicate that the progression across equivalence levels provides a conceptual basis for developing learners' linguistic awareness, textual competence, pragmatic sensitivity, and intercultural understanding. The synthesis further suggests that translation can be positioned within an Islamic educational framework in which accuracy and responsible meaning transfer are associated with *amanah*, quality and carefulness with *itqan*, moral and intellectual discipline with *ta'dib*, and intercultural mediation with *li-ta'arafu*. The study proposes a conceptual pedagogical framework that connects translation competence with linguistic, intercultural, and ethical dimensions of learning. As a conceptual framework, its pedagogical applicability requires further empirical validation through classroom-based research.

INTRODUCTION

Translation has historically occupied a contested position in foreign language education. Its association with the Grammar-Translation Method contributed to its marginalization as communicative approaches increasingly emphasized target-language use and classroom interaction (Onishchuk et al., 2020; Rafi & Pourdana, 2023). The subsequent development of the multilingual turn in applied linguistics, however, has encouraged renewed attention to learners' existing linguistic resources and cross-linguistic practices. Within this development, translation has increasingly been reconsidered as a cognitive and intercultural activity through which learners can compare linguistic systems, negotiate meaning, and develop metalinguistic and intercultural awareness (Li, 2024).

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The renewed role of translation in language education requires a theoretical framework capable of explaining how meaning can be transferred across linguistic and cultural boundaries (Ekawati et al., 2024; Kamelia, 2019; Putri et al., 2018). Equivalence theory provides one such framework by directing attention to the different dimensions involved in translation, including lexical, grammatical, textual, and pragmatic equivalence. These dimensions move translation beyond direct lexical substitution by requiring learners to consider grammatical structures, textual relationships, communicative intentions, and contextual meanings. Consequently, equivalence can provide a systematic basis for designing translation activities that develop increasingly complex forms of linguistic and intercultural competence (Erlina et al., 2019; Rafi & Pourdana, 2023).

This issue becomes particularly significant in Islamic education, where language learning may also involve the transmission of religious knowledge and values across linguistic and cultural contexts. Translation in this setting is not solely a linguistic operation because inaccurate lexical choices, inappropriate contextualization, or altered communicative intentions may affect how religious meanings are understood (Muhyidin et al., 2020). The historical development of Islamic intellectual traditions also demonstrates the importance of translation in facilitating encounters with knowledge from different linguistic and cultural traditions. The translation activities associated with the intellectual tradition of *Bayt al-Hikmah*, for example, illustrate the broader role of translation in the transmission, interpretation, and development of knowledge (Rambe et al., 2025).

Despite these developments, contemporary scholarship has given limited attention to the conceptual relationship between translation equivalence and Islamic educational philosophy. Existing discussions tend to examine translation pedagogy from linguistic or communicative perspectives, while Islamic educational scholarship more frequently focuses on moral formation, knowledge transmission, and character development. The conceptual intersection between these two domains therefore remains insufficiently articulated, particularly regarding how different levels of equivalence can be interpreted through Islamic educational values such as *amanah* (intellectual responsibility), *itqan* (excellence and quality), and *ta'dib* (moral and intellectual discipline) (Abidin & Khairudin, 2017; Hermawan et al., 2020).

This study addresses this gap through a qualitative document analysis and conceptual synthesis of scholarship on translation pedagogy, equivalence, and Islamic educational thought. It examines how lexical and grammatical, textual, and pragmatic dimensions of equivalence can be interpreted pedagogically and subsequently aligned with selected principles of Islamic education (Ahmed & Hassan, 2020; Memon, 2021). Rather than empirically testing a classroom intervention, the study develops a conceptual pedagogical framework that connects translation competence with linguistic awareness, intercultural sensitivity, and ethical responsibility. In doing so, the study contributes a theoretically grounded perspective for integrating translation into language education while maintaining the ethical and educational orientations of Islamic pedagogy (Engkizar et al., 2026; Othman & Yusof, 2023).

METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative document analysis design combined with conceptual synthesis to examine the pedagogical relationship between translation equivalence theory and Islamic educational philosophy. The approach was selected because the study sought to interpret and synthesize concepts from existing scholarly literature rather than collect empirical data from classroom participants (Engkizar et al., 2026; Gergen, 2020; ÖZDEN, 2024; Renz et al., 2018). The analysis focused on identifying the linguistic dimensions of equivalence, interpreting their pedagogical

implications, and examining their conceptual alignment with selected principles of Islamic education.

Data Sources and Selection

The data consisted of 15 peer-reviewed, open-access scholarly studies published between 2016 and 2026 that addressed translation pedagogy, equivalence, language learning, and Islamic educational thought. In addition to these studies, seminal theoretical works on translation equivalence and Islamic educational concepts were used as conceptual references. The literature was selected purposively based on its relevance to the research questions and its direct contribution to understanding translation practices, pedagogical processes, or Islamic educational principles.

Studies were included when they (1) were published in peer-reviewed scholarly outlets, (2) were available in full text, (3) addressed translation, translation pedagogy, or language learning, and/or (4) discussed concepts relevant to Islamic educational philosophy and ethical learning. Publications that were unrelated to the pedagogical or conceptual focus of the study were excluded.

Data Analysis

The analysis was conducted in three interconnected stages. First, theoretical categorization was undertaken to identify the principal dimensions of translation equivalence. The literature was organized into four analytical levels: lexical and grammatical equivalence, textual equivalence, and pragmatic equivalence. This categorization was informed primarily by Baker's framework and was used as an analytical lens rather than as an empirical coding instrument.

Second, pedagogical interpretation was conducted by examining the implications of each equivalence level for language learning. The analysis considered how lexical problem-solving, grammatical comparison, textual organization, and pragmatic interpretation could contribute to learners' linguistic, textual, and intercultural competence. Rather than assuming particular classroom effects, the study interpreted the potential pedagogical functions of these translation processes based on the reviewed literature.

Third, conceptual synthesis was used to examine the relationship between the pedagogical demands of translation and selected Islamic educational principles. The analysis focused on *amanah* as intellectual responsibility and semantic integrity, *itqan* as commitment to quality and excellence, *ta'dib* as moral and intellectual discipline, and *li-ta'arafu* as a principle of intercultural understanding. These concepts were compared with the ethical and communicative requirements identified at the different levels of translation equivalence (Gergen, 2020; Heeringa et al., 2017).

Analytical Procedure

The findings from the three stages were subsequently synthesized into a conceptual pedagogical framework. The framework connects levels of translation equivalence with corresponding learning activities and Islamic educational values. The synthesis was conducted interpretively by examining conceptual similarities, complementarities, and pedagogical implications across the selected sources. The resulting framework is therefore proposed as a conceptual model for translation-oriented language education rather than as an empirically validated instructional model (Renz et al., 2018; Terry et al., 2017).

Trustworthiness and Scope

To strengthen analytical consistency, the concepts identified across the literature were compared across multiple sources before being incorporated into the framework. The analysis maintained a distinction between findings directly supported by the reviewed literature and the researchers' conceptual interpretation (Kara, 2023; Welsh, 2002). Because the study relies on secondary literature and does not involve classroom participants, the proposed pedagogical relationships should be understood

as conceptual propositions that require further empirical validation through classroom-based research.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings indicate that a structured equivalence framework provides a progressive basis for developing students' linguistic awareness, textual competence, and pragmatic sensitivity in translation. Rather than treating translation as a word-for-word transfer between languages, the framework positions translation as a process of identifying linguistic differences, negotiating meaning, and adapting messages to the communicative expectations of the target context. The findings are discussed across three interconnected dimensions: lexical and grammatical awareness, textual and pragmatic competence, and the alignment of translation practices with Islamic educational values.

Lexical and Grammatical Awareness

At the lexical level, the findings show that students encounter particular challenges when an equivalent expression is not directly available in the target language. In such situations, strategies such as the use of superordinate terms and paraphrasing provide alternative ways of maintaining the intended meaning without relying on literal translation. These strategies encourage students to recognize that lexical equivalence does not always involve a one-to-one correspondence between languages. Instead, they are required to consider semantic relations and select expressions that most appropriately represent the meaning of the source text (Aflahah, 2017; Rizzi & Cinque, 2016).

This process also contributes to students' awareness of grammatical differences between languages. Differences in tense, gender, number, and sentence structure require learners to examine how meaning is encoded differently across linguistic systems. Consequently, translation becomes a form of analytical activity through which students identify structural differences rather than simply replacing words from one language with words from another. Such activities can strengthen grammatical awareness because learners must justify why a particular grammatical form is appropriate in the target language (Ritonga et al., 2025).

The findings therefore suggest that translation can function as a metalinguistic learning activity. Students are encouraged to reflect on how meaning is constructed at the lexical and grammatical levels and to recognize that linguistic accuracy depends on contextual and structural considerations. This perspective challenges the assumption that translation necessarily interferes with communicative language learning. Instead, when appropriately structured, translation can complement language development by making linguistic differences more explicit.

Textual and Pragmatic Competence

At the textual level, the findings demonstrate that translation requires learners to consider relationships between sentences and the overall organization of information. Attention to cohesion, coherence, and information flow encourages students to move beyond isolated sentences and examine how meaning is developed throughout a text. The progression of information, including theme–rheme relationships, becomes particularly relevant because an expression that is grammatically acceptable at the sentence level may not necessarily produce an effective or coherent target text (Fauzi & Darajat, 2022).

The findings become more complex at the pragmatic level, where learners must interpret meanings that are not explicitly expressed. Pragmatic equivalence requires students to identify implicatures, contextual references, communicative intentions, and culturally appropriate expressions. In this process, translation involves both decoding the source message and recoding it in a form that is meaningful and appropriate for the target audience.

This finding indicates that effective translation competence extends beyond linguistic accuracy (Alfonso et al., 2022; Halil, 2017a). Learners need to develop cultural and pragmatic awareness so that the translated text communicates the intended message without introducing unintended interpretations. Translation therefore becomes a form of intercultural mediation in which students negotiate meaning between linguistic and cultural contexts.

The progression from lexical and grammatical equivalence to textual and pragmatic equivalence also indicates an increasing level of cognitive engagement. At the initial level, students primarily identify linguistic differences and possible equivalents. At more advanced levels, they must evaluate textual relationships, communicative intentions, and cultural expectations. The framework consequently provides a progressive pathway from linguistic problem-solving toward more complex forms of interpretive and communicative competence.

Alignment with Islamic Educational Values

The findings also provide a basis for interpreting translation pedagogy through an Islamic educational perspective. The relationship between equivalence and Islamic values is not presented as an empirical causal relationship, but as a pedagogical alignment in which particular translation practices can be understood through established concepts in Islamic education. Three values are particularly relevant: *amanah*, *itqan*, and *ta'dib*.

Table 1. Alignment with Islamic Educational Values

Equivalence Level	Pedagogical Exercise	Islamic Educational Value	Pedagogical Interpretation
Lexical and grammatical	Avoiding inappropriate literalism, resolving lexical gaps, and maintaining semantic accuracy	<i>Amanah</i>	Translation requires intellectual honesty and responsibility in representing the meaning of the source text.
Textual	Maintaining cohesion, coherence, and appropriate information flow	<i>Itqan</i>	Students are encouraged to pursue accuracy, quality, and carefulness in producing the target text.
Pragmatic	Interpreting implicatures and adapting expressions to cultural and communicative contexts	<i>Ta'dib</i> and <i>Da'wah</i>	Translation requires moral discipline, contextual sensitivity, and responsible mediation of meaning across cultures.

At the lexical and grammatical levels, the principle of *amanah* provides an ethical perspective on semantic accuracy. A translator is expected to represent the source meaning responsibly rather than modify it arbitrarily or rely on literal expressions that distort the intended message. In this sense, lexical decision-making is not merely a technical linguistic activity but also involves responsibility for the integrity of the information being transferred (Al-Zoubi, 2024; Halil, 2017b).

At the textual level, the concept of *itqan* provides a relevant pedagogical orientation. Producing an effective translation requires attention to textual organization, cohesion, coherence, and readability. Students therefore learn that a translation should not merely contain individually accurate words but should also demonstrate overall quality and communicative effectiveness. The pursuit of textual

quality reflects the broader educational objective of developing careful and competent learners.

The pragmatic dimension can further be interpreted through *ta'dib*, which emphasizes the cultivation of appropriate conduct, discipline, and responsible judgment. Translating culturally embedded expressions requires students to consider the consequences of their linguistic choices and to avoid interpretations that may generate misunderstanding. This dimension is particularly relevant when translating Islamic texts, in which inappropriate contextualization may affect how religious concepts are understood by audiences from different cultural backgrounds.

The concept of *da'wah* also provides a relevant interpretive dimension. Islamic teachings emphasize human diversity and mutual understanding, as reflected in Qur'an 49:13, which describes human diversity as a basis for *li-ta'arafu* knowing and understanding one another. Within this perspective, translation can function as a medium for intercultural communication and the responsible dissemination of Islamic knowledge. Pragmatic competence becomes particularly important because conveying Islamic concepts to audiences from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds requires both semantic accuracy and contextual sensitivity (Aini & Don, 2022; Thalgi, 2024).

Translation as Cognitive and Ethical Learning

Taken together, the findings indicate that translation can serve a broader educational function than linguistic substitution. The progressive movement from lexical and grammatical equivalence toward textual and pragmatic equivalence requires students to engage in increasingly complex forms of analysis, interpretation, evaluation, and decision-making. Students are consequently positioned not simply as users of dictionaries but as active interpreters and mediators of meaning (Onishchuk et al., 2020).

This finding is particularly relevant to Islamic language education, where linguistic competence is closely connected with the responsible transmission of knowledge. Translation activities can provide opportunities for students to develop intellectual responsibility while simultaneously strengthening linguistic and intercultural competence. The ethical dimension is especially important when the texts being translated contain religious concepts, because inaccuracies may affect not only linguistic interpretation but also the understanding of religious meanings (Azizah et al., 2024).

Accordingly, the proposed pedagogical framework places translation within a broader conception of Islamic education in which *ta'lim* (knowledge transmission) is complemented by the cultivation of *ta'dib* and responsible intellectual conduct (Mufidah, 2023; Yasin, 2024). Translation is therefore understood not merely as a language exercise but as an educational practice that can integrate linguistic accuracy, critical awareness, cultural sensitivity, and ethical responsibility.

Pedagogical Implications

The findings suggest that translation activities should be incorporated progressively into language education rather than introduced as isolated exercises. Instruction may begin with lexical and grammatical problems before moving toward textual organization and, ultimately, pragmatic and intercultural interpretation. Such progression allows students to develop increasingly sophisticated translation competence while learning to justify their linguistic choices (Bers et al., 2014; Engkizar et al., 2026; Stoiko et al., 2023).

For language teachers, the framework implies that translation tasks should emphasize problem-solving and reflection rather than mechanical substitution. Students can be asked to identify instances of non-equivalence, compare alternative translations, explain their lexical and grammatical choices, and evaluate how particular expressions may be interpreted in different cultural contexts. In Islamic

education, these activities can additionally be connected with *amanah*, *itqan*, and *ta'dib* so that linguistic competence is developed alongside intellectual and ethical responsibility.

The pedagogical contribution of this framework therefore lies in connecting translation competence with broader educational objectives. By integrating linguistic, textual, pragmatic, and ethical dimensions, translation instruction can contribute to the development of learners who are not only more linguistically competent but also more attentive to cultural context, communicative consequences, and the responsibility involved in representing knowledge across languages (Engkizar et al., 2024, 2025).

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that Equivalence Theory provides a useful conceptual foundation for integrating translation into language education through a progression from lexical and grammatical awareness to textual and pragmatic competence. The conceptual synthesis indicates that translation can be positioned not merely as a mechanism for transferring words between languages, but as an analytical and intercultural learning activity that requires learners to interpret meaning, evaluate linguistic choices, and consider contextual differences.

The synthesis with Islamic educational philosophy further suggests that translation pedagogy can be understood within a broader ethical framework. The principles of *amanah*, *itqan*, and *ta'dib* provide complementary perspectives on accuracy, quality, responsibility, and disciplined interpretation, while *li-ta'arafa* highlights the role of translation in facilitating intercultural understanding. The resulting conceptual framework therefore connects translation competence with linguistic awareness, intercultural sensitivity, and ethical responsibility within Islamic education.

The contribution of this study lies in articulating a conceptual relationship between translation equivalence and Islamic educational values that has received limited systematic attention in previous scholarship. However, the proposed framework remains conceptual and has not yet been empirically validated in classroom settings. Future research should therefore examine its applicability through classroom-based studies, particularly in Islamic higher education, to determine how the framework can be implemented and whether it contributes to students' translation competence, intercultural awareness, and ethical literacy.

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