

## YUSOFF ZAKY YACOB'S TRANSLATION OF *FI ZILAL AL-QUR'AN*: QUALITY, ACCURACY AND TECHNIQUES IN THE CONTEXT OF MALAYSIAN PUBLISHING<sup>(\*)</sup>

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### ABSTRACT

This study employs a qualitative research approach through content analysis and literature review to explore various perspectives on the translation of *Tafsir Fi Zilal al-Qur'an* by Yusoff Zaky Jacob. The research aims to synthesize and evaluate the opinions of scholars and researchers concerning the translation quality, accuracy and techniques employed in the Malay version of this renowned Quranic exegesis. With discussions focusing on content analysis, key themes such as the comparison between Sayyid Qutb and Yusoff Zaky Jacob and the differences between the original and translated editions, are examined. The literature review further contextualizes the historical and cultural significance of this translation within the Malaysian publishing landscape. Findings indicate that views on Yusoff Zaky Jacob's translation vary, with discussions on language precision, readability, and the potential for further improvements. This study concludes by highlighting the importance of

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<sup>(\*)</sup> This article was submitted on: 02/07/2025 and accepted for publication on: 22/05/2026.

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enhancing the translation to make *Tafsir Fi Zilal al-Qur'an* more accessible to modern Malay readers.

**Keywords:** *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an*, *Translation Studies*, *Sayyid Qutb*, *Yusoff Zaky Yacob*, *Content Analysis*, *Malay Translation*.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

*Fi Zilal al-Qur'an (In the Shade of the Qur'an)* by Sayyid Qutb is widely recognized as one of the most influential works of modern Quranic exegesis. Written between 1951 and 1965 during his imprisonment in Egypt, this monumental work encompasses all 114 surahs of the Qur'an and reflects Qutb's ideological vision for the construction of an Islamic society (Lestari & Vera, 2021). Its impact has been far-reaching, extending throughout the Muslim world and translated into various languages, including those of the Malay world (Abdelali, 2015).

In the Malaysian context, an important effort was undertaken by Yusoff Zaky Yacob (1928–1999), a prolific writer, publisher, and translator, who rendered this work into Malay under the title *Di Bawah Naungan al-Qur'an*. This complete translation, spanning seventeen years of work, was published in 2000 in thirty volumes (Yakob & Abdullah, 2011). His effort not only demonstrates the perseverance of a local scholar but also addressed the urgent need of Malaysian Muslims for a tafsir accessible in their own linguistic and cultural register. Prior to this, most available translations were produced by Indonesian scholars, whose language style, though closely related, often differed from Malaysian Malay in terms of lexical choices and stylistic expression, thereby creating difficulties in comprehension among Malaysian readers (Roosfa Hashim, 2011).

Nevertheless, Yusoff Zaky Yacob's translation has elicited varied responses from scholars. While some have praised its linguistic clarity and literary appeal (Ibrahim, 2013), others have raised concerns regarding its precision, occasional literalism, and the retention of Arabic terminology without sufficient explanation (Yakob, 2002; Muhammad & Hassan, 2010). Furthermore, issues of accessibility, the extensive number of volumes, and high publication costs highlight broader challenges surrounding the effectiveness of this translation in the context of Malaysian publishing.

Against this backdrop, a significant research gap emerges in assessing the quality, accuracy, and techniques of Yusoff Zaky Yacob's translation within the framework of Malaysian publishing. This article seeks to address this gap by employing content analysis and a literature review to synthesize scholarly

perspectives. In doing so, it aims to evaluate both the strengths and limitations of the translation and to situate its contribution within the broader development of Quranic exegesis in Malaysia.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Sayyid Qutb was a significant figure among Muslims in Arab countries and other Islamic nations. He was actively involved in movements for justice and social reform and called for Muslims to return to the true tenets and lifestyle of Islam. His thoughts can be understood through his writings, which primarily focus on political thought.

Therefore, his thoughts on issues concerning women, especially his views on women's personalities by observing his interpretations of Quranic stories, are rarely known. Many studies have been conducted to understand various aspects, whether about the methods and quality of translation or about Sayyid Qutb's own thoughts. However, Husain (2017) studied the original book of *Tafsir Fi Zilal al-Qur'an* as her main source to understand Sayed Qutb's views on women's personalities based on the texts contained in the interpretation.

Other aspects of Sayyid Qutb's personality can be highlighted in Hamzah's (2012) writings. According to him, this leader of the Islamic movement was a prominent figure who made significant contributions in various fields. One of his contributions that can be exemplified by Muslims is his vision in his preaching. His efforts in preaching were carried out collectively through involvement in the Muslim Brotherhood and individually through his writings of books and articles. One of his famous works is his interpretation of the Qur'an in *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an*. His approach to preaching aligns with that outlined in the Qur'an, which uses methods of wisdom (*al-hikmah*), good admonition (*al-maw'izah al-hasanah*), and debate (*al-mujadalah*). Throughout his life, Sayyid Qutb was a patient, persistent, humble, calm preacher who always placed his trust in Allah.

Abdelali (2015) study attempts to identify and deal with some Quranic verses on Islamic beliefs in the light of their interpretation in the first thirteen sections of Sayyid Qutb's *Tafsir Fi Zilal al-Qur'an*, covering fourteen chapters from Sūrah al-Fātiḥah until Sūrah Ibrāhīm. The paper is divided into two parts: (1) explanation of Islamic beliefs and their significance in Islamic life, and (2) discussion on the objectives of the Qur'an derived from Sayyid Qutb's interpretation of the verses on the education of Islamic beliefs. His reached conclusion in the study that Islam is a unit that cannot be split; and that Allah is the only one to be followed everywhere in the life, beliefs, rites, devotional matters, legislation of law, and political sovereignty.

Lestari and Vera (2021) view Sayyid Qutb as a bold figure in the Egyptian movement, possessing extensive knowledge in both religious studies and general knowledge. To this day, his thoughts remain relevant. His interpretation in *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an* is based on the classical method of *tafsir bil ma'thur*, where he frequently interprets using Quranic verses and the traditions of the Prophet. *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an* can be categorized as a tafsir with literary and social themes (*al-adab al-ijtima'i*). Written by Sayyid Qutb, this tafsir is heavily influenced by his stance as a Muslim Brotherhood (Ikhwan al-Muslimin) member's, along with the strong socio-political influences at the time of its writing. Qutb's method is analytical, characterized by interpreting in the order of the Qur'an's compilation (*tartib al-mushaf*).

Recent scholarship in translation studies has increasingly emphasised that the translation of sacred texts cannot be evaluated merely as a linguistic transfer from a source language into a target language. It must also be understood as an interpretive, cultural, theological and reader-oriented process. This is particularly relevant to the Malay translation of *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an* by Yusoff Zaky Jacob because the work does not simply reproduce Sayyid Qutb's Arabic text into Malay, but also mediates Qutb's religious, literary and socio-political imagination for a Malaysian Muslim readership.

Israel's (2023) edited volume, *The Routledge Handbook of Translation and Religion*, is especially useful in strengthening the theoretical foundation of this study. The volume situates religious translation within broader debates on authority, interpretation, belief, ritual, scriptural meaning and the role of translators as cultural-religious mediators. This perspective allows Yusoff Zaky Jacob's translation to be read not only as a Malay rendering of an Arabic tafsir, but also as a religious-intellectual intervention in the Malaysian publishing landscape. In this sense, the translator functions as an intermediary between the authority of the Arabic source text and the expectations of Malay readers who seek clarity, theological reliability and stylistic accessibility (Israel, 2023). Routledge describes the handbook as a scholarly resource for researchers in both translation studies and religious studies, which makes it highly relevant for framing this article's interdisciplinary approach.

The issue of reader reception is further strengthened by Al Farisi's study on the acceptability of Qur'an translation. Al Farisi (2023) argues that the quality of Qur'anic translation should also be assessed through its acceptability among target readers, not merely through formal equivalence or lexical accuracy. This argument is important because Yusoff Zaky's translation has often been praised for its literary force and readability, yet criticised for retaining Arabic terms that may be difficult for general readers. By using the notion of acceptability, this study can evaluate whether the translation successfully communicates Qur'anic

meaning to contemporary Malay readers, especially those without deep Arabic or religious training. Al Farisi's article, published in *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies*, specifically addresses the acceptability of Qur'an translation and therefore provides a current conceptual basis for assessing reception, readability and communicative effectiveness.

Another important recent contribution is Kamal's study on the usability of Abdullah Basmeih's translation of divine pronoun shift or *iltifāt* in the Qur'an. Although the study focuses on Abdullah Basmeih rather than Yusoff Zaky Yacob, its relevance lies in its methodological emphasis on usability among target readers. Kamal (2024) shows that literal translation of Qur'anic stylistic features may create interpretive difficulty, whereas explicitation can improve reader understanding. This finding is highly applicable to the present study because Yusoff Zaky's translation also faces similar challenges in rendering Arabic rhetorical structures into Malay. The concept of usability allows this article to move beyond general claims of "accuracy" and "quality" toward a more reader-sensitive evaluation of whether the translated text actually assists comprehension.

The discussion on translation quality can also be enriched by the work of Saad and Rouyan (2024) on the translation of Qur'anic euphemism into Malay. Their study is significant because Qur'anic euphemism involves implicit meaning, cultural sensitivity and theological delicacy. This is comparable to the translation of *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an*, where the translator must preserve the rhetorical power of the source text while ensuring that the Malay rendering remains natural, accurate and culturally intelligible. Their study shows that the choice of translation approach has direct impact on translation quality, especially when dealing with meanings that are figurative, implicit or culturally embedded. This supports the argument that Yusoff Zaky's translation should be assessed not only in terms of literal fidelity, but also in terms of semantic, communicative and socio-cultural appropriateness.

A regional perspective may be added through Pink's (2024) edited volume, *Qur'an Translation in Indonesia: Scriptural Politics in a Multilingual State*. This work is relevant because the article already notes that Malaysian readers previously relied significantly on Indonesian tafsir translations, whose language style and lexical choices differed from Malaysian Malay. Pink's volume demonstrates that Qur'an translation in Indonesia is shaped by multilingual realities, religious authority, state and non-state actors, and contestations over scriptural meaning. This regional comparison enables the present article to position Yusoff Zaky's translation as part of a wider Malay-Indonesian history of Qur'anic translation, while also highlighting its specific Malaysian significance. His work may therefore be seen as an attempt to localise tafsir discourse within

Malaysian Malay linguistic norms and the country's Islamic publishing environment.

Finally, recent bibliometric work on Qur'anic exegesis research helps justify the academic relevance of this article. Nirwana et al. (2025) *Mapping Quranic Exegesis Research: Trends, Contributions, and Future Directions* shows that Qur'anic exegesis continues to develop through new themes, methods and interdisciplinary approaches. The article's reference list also records recent studies on Qur'anic translation, hermeneutics, explicitation and linguistic markedness, indicating that the field is no longer limited to classical tafsir commentary but now includes translation studies, reception, discourse analysis and reader-oriented evaluation. This strengthens the rationale for revisiting Yusoff Zaky Jacob's translation through contemporary frameworks of translation quality, usability, reception and publishing studies.

Taken together, these recent studies provide a stronger scholarly foundation for the present article. They show that the assessment of Yusoff Zaky Jacob's *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an* should not be confined to whether the translation is faithful to the Arabic source text. Rather, it should also consider how the translation functions for Malay readers, how it negotiates Arabic religious terminology, how it preserves rhetorical and theological meaning, and how it contributes to the development of Islamic publishing in Malaysia. By incorporating these recent works, the article becomes more current, theoretically grounded and internationally connected.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative approach by combining two main methods content analysis and literature review. These methods were selected to provide a detailed exploration of the perspectives on the translation of *Tafsir Fi Zilal al-Qur'an* by Yusoff Zaky Jacob. Below is a detailed explanation of each method and its implementation in this study:

#### a. Content Analysis

Content analysis was the primary method used to examine various publications and scholarly works that commented on the translation. This method allowed for a systematic and objective identification of patterns and themes within the texts (Weber, 1990). The following steps were taken during the content analysis:

- i. Data Collection: Articles, academic papers, book reviews, and scholarly commentaries on *Tafsir Fi Zilal al-Qur'an* were gathered from online databases, academic journals, and books focusing on translation studies and Islamic studies. For example, the study by Pinto, Macleod and Jones

- (2024) employed a similar approach in their analysis of truth regimes concerning sexual justice, by collecting and analysing data from academic corpuses.
- ii. Coding and Categorization: Once data was collected, a coding process was initiated to categorize the various comments and perspectives under key themes such as language quality, translation accuracy, the translator's approach, and the overall reception of the work in the Malay Muslim community.
  - iii. Thematic Analysis: After the coding process, the data was analysed to identify recurring themes and patterns. Nirwana and Masuwd's (2024) study also used content analysis to examine the complexities of translating the Qur'an into the Banjar language.

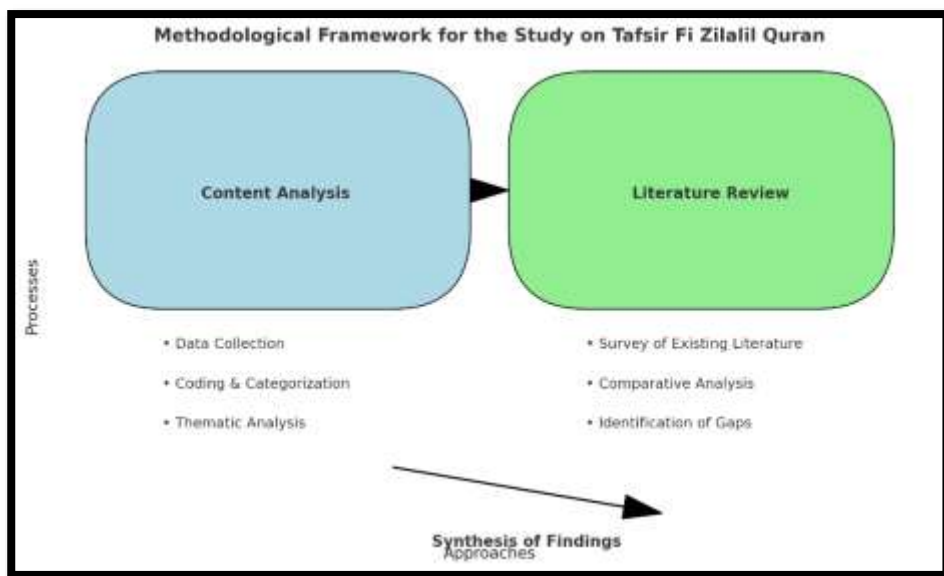
#### b. Literature Review

The literature review was conducted to contextualize the translation within broader academic discourse and to highlight key scholarly contributions that have influenced the understanding of Quranic exegesis in the Malay language. The following steps were taken:

- i. Survey of Existing Literature: This study conducted a comprehensive literature review on *Tafsir Fi Zilal al-Qur'an*, including the original Arabic version by Sayyid Qutb and translations into other languages. For instance, Li's (2024) research on translator and interpreter education used a literature review to assess the latest developments in the field.
- ii. Identification of Gaps: One of the objectives of the literature review was to identify gaps in the existing scholarship, particularly concerning translation accuracy and the effectiveness of communication to modern Malay readers.
- iii. Comparative Analysis: This study compared Yusoff Zaky Yacob's Malay translation of *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an* with Sayyid Qutb's original text and other Malay exegeses, such as *Tafsir Pimpinan ar-Rahman*. The focus was on linguistic quality, accuracy, and translation techniques, highlighting key similarities and differences. The analysis identified both strengths and weaknesses of the translation and proposed improvements to enhance its accessibility for contemporary readers.

By employing this methodology, the study synthesized diverse viewpoints and offered recommendations on how the translation could be improved, particularly in making it more accessible to contemporary readers.

Figure 1  
*Methodological Framework for This Study*



Source: Writers with AI assist (2024)

The figure above illustrates the Methodological Framework for the study on *Tafsir Fi Zilal al-Qur'an* translated by Yusoff Zaky Yacob. It highlights two primary approaches: Content Analysis and Literature Review, along with the processes involved in each approach. The Content Analysis approach involves; Data Collection, Coding and Categorization and Thematic Analysis. Meanwhile, the Literature Review approach includes; Survey of Existing Literature, Comparative Analysis and Identification of Gaps in Research. Both approaches lead to the Synthesis of Findings, which forms the conclusion of the study.

#### 4. HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF QURANIC EXEGESIS IN MALAYSIA

The arrival of Islam in the Malay region played a crucial role in the intellectual development, writing, and education among the Malay people. Various disciplines of Islamic knowledge were disseminated by Malay scholars and ulama through interpretations of various books in Arabic. One of the most important disciplines is the exegesis of the Qur'an, pioneered by Sheikh Abdul Rauf al-Sinkili (d. 1693) from Aceh. Since then, the production of Quranic exegesis has

continued to spread to Malaysia, Indonesia and Pattani by local scholars and ulama.

According to Ibrahim (2013), there were 24 renowned Malaysian ulama who had written exegesis scripts from the 17th century until the study in 2013. Well-known scholars like Tok Pulau Manis, Tok Kenali and Idris al-Marbawi, who were prolific, demonstrate that Malay ulama have played a very important role in the dissemination of Quranic interpretations, especially in Malay Archipelago and importantly in the Malay-Islamic world.

The work of interpreting the Qur'an among Muslims began concurrently with the arrival of Islam in the Malay region. The method of interpretation used was oral rather than written. According to Riddell (2001), among the earliest exegesis works is about Surah Al-Kahfi, written in the 16th century by an unknown author. This manuscript was discovered by Riddell in the collection of the Cambridge University Library, cataloged under MS 116.4.5. It was a private collection owned by a Dutch Arabist named Erpentus. The manuscript was transferred from Aceh by Dutch colonizers in the early 17th century.

In the early days, Malay language interpretation was initiated by an Indonesian Acehnese writer named Sheikh Abdul Ra'uf al-Sinkili al-Fansuri who wrote the book *Tarjuman al-Mustafid* in 1675. Meanwhile, one of the earliest interpretations found in Malaysia is *Tafsir al Hasyimi*, written by Kerani Muhammad Hasyim bin al Ghani from Penang in 1686.

An Islamic scholar from Terengganu known as Tok Pulau Manis (d. 1736) wrote a Malay interpretation of the *Al-Baydawi* book in 1730. During his time in Aceh, he produced a Malay interpretation of *Tarjuman al-Mustafid*, written by his teacher Sheikh Abdul Ra'uf al Sinkili al-Fansuri. The interpretation of *Tarjuman al-Mustafid* was later brought back to Terengganu to serve as a reference for the local population. Tok Pulau Manis was a pioneer in the writing of Islamic exegesis in Malaysia in the 17th century.

No activity of writing exegesis was detected between the 18th and 19th centuries. In the 20th century, the activity of writing exegesis was resumed by Islamic scholars in Kelantan, starting with Tok Kenali (d. 1933). He translated parts of *Tafsir al-Khazin* into Malay, but this book has not been found to this day. He also worked on a translation of *Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, but it also remains unpublished to this day. Since then, many exegesis writers, especially of the Qur'an, have emerged, including Yusoff Zaky Yacob who produced *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an* nearly twenty-five years ago in 2000.

There is extensive documentation about Yusoff Zaky Yacob's background. Roosfa Hashim (2011) have written a chapter about him in a book about prominent figures in Malaysian publishing. Additionally, there is a

comprehensive biography of him written by Yacob and Abdullah (2011). Yusoff Zaky Yacob (1928-1999) was a renowned author, translator, and publisher in Malaysia during the latter half of the 20th century. His works spanned religious topics as well as politics, psychology, social critique, and literary genres such as poetry and novels. Born on June 13, 1928, in Jalan Gajah Mati, Kota Bharu, Yusoff Zaky Yacob was the son of a prominent Kelantanese scholar, Tuan Guru Haji Yaacob Lorong Gajah Mati. After receiving early education from his father, he studied at Jami' Merbau al-Ismaili and was also a disciple of several notable scholars including Tuan Guru Haji Saad Kangkong and Haji Ali Pulau Pisang. In 1949, he went to Egypt to study sociology and psychology at the American University.

Upon returning from Egypt, in March 1957, he established his own publishing company, Pustaka Dian Press, with the aim of printing and publishing his writings. In July 1961, he published the magazine *Dian*, and in 1965, the magazine *Santajiwa*. His writings were sharp and engaging, known for their robust and energetic style, freshness, and beauty in language and arrangement. Among his most popular works was the series under the title 'Mikroskop Dian' and his translations of world short stories that were popular with readers in the 1960s and early 1970s. His career peaked when he successfully translated Sayyid Qutb's *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an* into Malay titled *Di Bawah Naungan al-Qur'an*, a comprehensive 17-volume work that he diligently completed over 11 years. This translation is considered his significant contribution to Islamic literature. In literature, he translated numerous short stories from Eastern and Western authors for his magazines *Dian* and *Santajiwa*, and he was also recognized as a talented poet under the pseudonym 'Saujana'.

The translation of *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an* by Yusoff Zaky Yacob was published at a time when the Muslim community in Malaysia needed a Quranic exegesis in Malay. Although by the year 2000, the people in this country already had access to and read various translations of Quranic exegesis, most of these translations were done by translators from Indonesia. Although these translators and exegetes belong to the same ethnic group, the Indonesian language style is somewhat different from the Malay language style used in Malaysia. There are different linguistic nuances in Indonesian language usage. Sometimes the words used are not the same as those in Malaysian Malay. This situation causes confusion among readers and makes it difficult to understand books published in Indonesia, and it's potentially more problematic if readers misunderstand the content. Therefore, a translation of the exegesis into Malay is crucial for the Muslim community in Malaysia.

There are several positive views praising the quality of the translation of *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an* by Yusoff Zaky Yacob. The Review Panel, Dato' Haji Daud

Muhammad, who is also the Chief Kadi of Kelantan, and Dato' Haji Muhammad Shukri Muhammad, the Deputy Mufti of Kelantan, stated that Yusoff Zaky Yacob has successfully grasped the content of *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an* and conveyed its meanings into Malay with great precision and persuasiveness without compromising the original intent and structure, while also presenting the text in an easier-to-understand format.

Ustaz al-Adib Muhamad Labib Ahmad, in the foreword to the exegesis book *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an*, mentioned that the translation done by Yusoff Zaky Yacob is nearly indistinguishable from the original. However, several researchers have studied his translation and provided various reactions.

After presenting views and comments by several figures regarding the publication of *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an*, this article will also present the reactions of several researchers and scholars who have studied this *tafsir* book. They have examined the contribution of this exegesis to the field of Quranic interpretation in this country. Others have critically looked at the quality and accuracy of the translation, the methods and techniques used, and finally, this paper will present their criticisms and suggestions. The research for this article was conducted using library studies, namely content analysis of various studies and publications about the exegesis of *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an* that have been published.

To understand the reactions of researchers to Yusoff Zaky Yacob's translation work, this study requires a discussion based on Reception Theory and Hermeneutics. Reception Theory, focused on the readers' experiences and the interpretation of texts that evolve according to different contexts, provides a framework for exploring how a translation is received in various academic and cultural landscapes. Researchers are not merely passive recipients of the translated text; they bring their own contexts, considerations and perspectives, including biases that favor their own, which significantly shape their interpretations.

Hermeneutics, on the other hand, emphasizes the importance of understanding texts within their historical and cultural contexts. In translating *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an*, Yusoff Zaky Yacob did more than just translate words from one language to another; he interpreted and contextualized Sayyid Qutb's thoughts for a new audience. This hermeneutic process is critical in assessing how well the translation conveys the original meanings and intentions of the text, and how these meanings are understood by different readers, especially among researchers who have examined Yusoff Zaky Yacob's translation work in *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an*. There are two books that offer relatively accessible explanations on Hermeneutics, one by Palmer (1969) and another by Malpas (2014). By combining Reception Theory and Hermeneutics, this article will explore the interactions between the translator, the text, and its readers, highlighting the dynamic nature of text interpretation in cross-cultural contexts.

## 5. DISCUSSION

As a translation work of Quranic exegesis, *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an* by Yusoff Zaky Yacob is unique as it is the only translation of a tafsir book from Arabic that has been completely translated into 30 juzuk. Such a challenging translation work requires a translator who is knowledgeable, experienced, patient, and willing to dedicate significant time and effort.

### *5.1 Contributions Yusuff Zaky Yacob to the Field of Quranic Exegesis*

According to Muhammad and Hassan (2010), Yusoff Zaky Yacob's translation of *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an* opened a new pathway for seekers of Islamic knowledge to study and understand the Qur'an in their native language during a period when accessible tafsir materials in Malay were still limited. His use of clear, simple, yet stylistically engaging language rendered the text highly approachable to a wide readership, including lay audiences with limited formal religious education. From the perspective of knowledge dissemination, this translation fulfilled a significant need among Malay-speaking Muslims who sought reliable and comprehensive reference materials for understanding the Qur'an.

Based on triangulated data, Muhammad and Hassan (2010) observed that the work was widely received by diverse audiences not only as a scholarly reference in Quranic studies but also as instructional material in religious education. The translation effectively bridged the gap between academic scholarship and public understanding by presenting Quranic interpretation in a manner that was linguistically accessible and socially relevant to contemporary readers.

Yacob (2004) further emphasises that Yusoff Zaky Yacob was not merely a translator but also an influential intellectual and publisher who played a transformative role in the development of Quranic exegesis in Malaysia. Through his translation of *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an*, he introduced a dynamic and contextual approach to tafsir that aligned Sayyid Qutb's theological and sociopolitical ideas with the lived realities of the Malay-Muslim community. His translation was not a mere linguistic conversion but an interpretive effort to rearticulate Quranic meanings in a form that resonated with local cultural and intellectual sensibilities.

In addition, Yusoff Zaky Yacob significantly elevated the status of the Malay language as a legitimate scholarly medium for theological and philosophical discourse. His translation maintained the rhetorical elegance and literary richness of the original Arabic while simultaneously demonstrating that Malay could serve as a precise and expressive vehicle for Islamic scholarship. This

linguistic achievement contributed to strengthening the intellectual identity of Malay as a language of religious knowledge and modern Islamic thought.

From the standpoint of Islamic publishing history, Yusoff Zaky Yacob was among the pioneering figures who transformed Malaysia's Islamic publishing landscape through his company, Pustaka Dian. His ambitious publication of *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an* in seventeen volumes marked a major intellectual and cultural milestone. The work signified not only a triumph in religious translation but also the maturity of Malaysia's Islamic publishing industry at the close of the twentieth century. This initiative represented a shift from dependence on Indonesian tafsir publications to the development of an indigenous tradition of Quranic exegesis that reflected local linguistic, cultural, and educational contexts.

Scholastically, Yusoff Zaky Yacob's translation has become a cornerstone text in the study of Quranic hermeneutics, translation theory, and Malay-Islamic intellectual history. His work has inspired subsequent generations of scholars to explore interdisciplinary connections between linguistics, theology, and socio-cultural interpretation. Within Islamic education, *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an* continues to serve as a key text in universities and religious institutions, particularly in courses on tafsir methodology and translation studies.

Yusoff Zaky Yacob's contributions to Quranic exegesis in Malaysia can be understood through three primary dimensions:

- i. Intellectual dimension – through the production of a scholarly yet contextually relevant Quranic translation;
- ii. Linguistic dimension – by enriching the Malay language as a medium of advanced Islamic scholarship; and
- iii. Publishing and dissemination dimension – by positioning Malaysia as a regional centre for Malay-language Quranic studies and Islamic publishing.

His work thus represents a vital link between classical Islamic thought and the intellectual tradition of the Malay world. *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an* should therefore be recognised not merely as a translation, but as a *modern interpretive tafsir* that embodies renewal (*tajdid*) in Islamic understanding—integrating faith, language, and contemporary relevance in the service of a more informed and reflective Malay-Muslim readership.

### ***5.2 Quality and Translation Accuracy***

Before analysing the aspects of translation quality and accuracy, it is essential to define these concepts based on established theoretical foundations within translation studies.

According to House (1997), *translation quality* refers to the degree to which a translated text maintains the communicative and pragmatic functions of

the source text through functional equivalence. This involves readability, stylistic consistency, contextual appropriateness, and the intended impact on the target audience. Munday (2016) further argues that translation quality is not merely a linguistic measure but also an aesthetic, cultural, and ideological consideration. Similarly, Williams (2004) proposes that translation quality should be assessed through three dimensions: semantic accuracy, stylistic clarity, and reader reception.

In contrast, translation accuracy as outlined by Nida and Taber (1969) emphasises *dynamic equivalence*, which seeks to reproduce in the target language the same meaning and response as perceived by the source-language audience. Baker (1992) highlights that accuracy involves fidelity to the original meaning through precise lexical choice and syntactic structure. Chesterman (1997) adds that accuracy is not limited to literal correspondence but also includes adherence to professional norms and the translator's awareness of cultural and contextual nuances.

In this part, *translation quality* encompasses stylistic refinement, fluency, literary value, and readability, whereas *translation accuracy* focuses on faithfulness to the source meaning, lexical precision, and semantic as well as theological consistency. Within the context of Quranic exegesis, both aspects are interdependent quality ensures effective communication with Malay readers, while accuracy safeguards the integrity of the divine message.

Ibrahim (2013) praised the translation approach used by Yusoff Zaky Jacob. According to studies, Yusoff Zaky Jacob has written in a style that is concise and simple, making his interpretations easy to understand. The writer further noted that in this exegesis, Yusoff Zaky Jacob explained the beauty of *uslub* (style), the miracle of the Qur'an, with refined writing. In his translations, Yusoff Zaky Jacob also emphasized social aspects, contemporary thought, and modernization.

A comparison of translation quality between *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an* and the *Pimpinan Ar-Rahman* translation, particularly in Surah Al-Baqarah, was conducted by Nokman (2013). His study aimed to identify similarities and differences in the meaning of 'commands,' specifically in Surah Al-Baqarah, in the translations of *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an* and *Pimpinan Ar-Rahman*. This study also aimed to determine the accuracy level of the translation of Arabic command meanings into Malay by both translators. The researcher used analytical and comparative methods. He conducted library research and field studies involving ten language experts who examined the accuracy of these translations. The study found 80 similarities in the translation of command meanings between the two exegesis books studied. The differences amounted to 103 words. Nokman (2013) concluded that the

differences in the translation of command meanings between the two exegesis books were more numerous than the similarities. From the survey conducted, it was found that most of the command meaning translations by *Tafsir Fi Zilal al-Qur'an* achieved the highest level compared to *Tafsir Pimpinan Ar-Rahman*.

Another comparative study between the translations of *Tafsir Fi Zilal al-Qur'an* and *Tafsir Pimpinan ar-Rahman* was conducted by Muhammad et al. (2016). This research group compared the lexical translation of *qāla* and its derivatives in Surah Yusuf as found in both exegesis books they studied. According to this research group, when there are many exegesis books in the market, the question arises whether the translations performed on the source language texts are truly uniform across all these books. That is, have the translators used the same techniques and theories in their translation work? Also, are the translations done based solely on the translators' understanding of the context of the verses or are dictionaries used as the main reference?

These researchers examined the aspect of Quranic exegesis translation to unravel these questions by focusing on the translation of one lexical item, namely *qāla* and its derivatives, which frequently recur in the Qur'an. They investigated whether *qāla* and its derivatives have been translated based on contextual understanding or merely on literal meanings. In this study, they also compared the two translation works, *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an* and *Pimpinan ar-Rahman*, to see if there are similarities or differences in translating the lexical *qāla* and its derivatives from the perspective of translation forms and theories used by the translators.

Their study demonstrated that the translators' capabilities for both exegesis books studied alternated methods for translating the lexical *qāla*. Both semantic (literal) and communicative (contextual) translations, as presented in the translations, are closely aligned with Quranic translators as found in this study. Indeed, the nature and characteristics of a sacred text like the Qur'an make it difficult to be free from literal translations. This is perhaps closely related to the value of fidelity and precision in preserving the meaning and message intended by the translated text.

Nokman (2013) identified similarities and differences in the meaning of 'command' between two translation books, namely *Tafsir Fi Zilal al-Qur'an* and *Pimpinan Ar-Rahman*, particularly in Surah Al-Baqarah. He also determined the accuracy level of the translation of command meanings from Arabic into Malay by the owners of these exegesis books. His approach involved analysis and comparison. His research included library studies and field studies involving ten language experts who examined the accuracy of these translations. From his findings, he identified 80 similarities in the translation of command meanings between the two exegesis books. Meanwhile, the differences amounted to 103

words, indicating that there are more differences in the translation of command meanings between the two books than there are similarities. The survey results found that the translation of the meaning of 'command' by *Tafsir Fi Zilal al-Qur'an* was rated higher compared to that in *Tafsir Pimpinan Ar-Rahman*.

Muhammad and Hassan (2010) concluded that Yusoff Zaky Yacob has successfully fulfilled his role as an excellent translator by producing a translation work as remarkable as the Arabic version of *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an*. He managed to maintain the literary value of the original text and enhance his translation to facilitate the local community, making it seem as though his translation work was the original and not a translated effort. Regarding language quality, they stated, 'Yusoff Zaky Yacob successfully created his own style by presenting the use of Arabic terms in Roman script that aligns with Arabic pronunciation'.

### 5.3 Translation and Exegetical Methodologies

While Sayyid Qutb took fourteen years to complete his exegesis *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an*, Yusoff Zaky Yacob spent seventeen years, starting in 1983, before his entire translation was published in 2000. He began publishing his translation serially in the magazine *Pengasuh*. In 1983, he published four volumes of *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an* translation with the Kelantan Department of Islamic Affairs and Pustaka Dian.

In 1985, he published another four volumes titled Juzuk Qad Sami'a Allah. In the same year, he published the translation of the exegesis for Juzuk Tabarak with Pustaka Dian, also in 1985. The following year, 1986, he published Surah al-Dhariyat and al-Hadid with Pustaka Dian. And in 1987, he published Surah al-Baqarah with Pustaka Dian in 1988. Finally, his efforts to publish the exegesis *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an* in stages reached its culmination when in 2000 the entire 30 volumes were published in cooperation with Pustaka Aman Press and the Malaysian Islamic Economic Development Foundation (YaPIEM).

A study by Kamal and Hussin (2023) focuses on Yusoff Zaky's translation of the divine pronoun *Itifāt* in the Qur'an. Literature reviews reveal that the divine pronoun *Itifāt* in the Qur'an is often translated literally, making it difficult for target readers to understand the actual entity of the Divine Pronoun. This literal translation is identified in the translation of *Tafsir Fi Zilal al-Qur'an*. The issue of translating the *Itifāt* Pronoun becomes more complex when involving the replacement of the plural form of the Divine Pronoun with the entity of Allah.

Therefore, the study by Kamal and Hussin (2023) examines the quality of Yusoff Zaky's translation of the *Itifāt* Pronoun from the aspect of usability among target readers. Their analysis finds that the usability level of Yusoff Zaky Yacob's translation of the *Itifāt* Pronoun among target readers is high if

explicitation techniques are applied. However, the sole use of literal techniques in translating this stylistic language results in a low level of translation usability. Findings also suggest that applying the concept of usability with the opinions of target readers becomes central in assessing the quality of Quranic stylistic language translation. According to Yakob (2002), Yusoff Zaky Yacob uses a dynamic translation method, not translating word for word but interpreting the meaning intended by Sayyid Qutb. Muhammad and Hassan (2010) share a similar view in this regard. They say, 'The translation method used by Yusoff Zaky Yacob in his translation can be classified as dynamic, where he tries to find forms that are the same and not just similar in terms of stylistic, rhetorical, and literary elements of the original text. In other words, he successfully transfers and rewrites information from the original text without necessarily copying the way or form of its expression.

Rosman and Samngani (2010) in their study concluded that there are similarities in the methodology of interpretation between *Tafsir al-Azhar* and *Tafsir Fi Zilal al-Qur'an*, namely using *bi al-ma'thur* and *bi al-ra'yi* interpretations in explaining Surah al-Ra'd. However, both exegeses differ in the use of *bi ma'thur* interpretation because the interpretation of Quranic verses with hadiths from Prophet Muhammad SAW and opinions from the companions RA are not found in *Tafsir Fi Zilal al-Qur'an* for this surah. Differences and similarities in interpretation of both texts have also been identified in the themes and styles of interpretation presented by the exegetes in various verses to provide understanding and delivery individually.

Sayyid Qutb, known as a literate enriched with various artistic works and knowledgeable in linguistics, has made *Tafsir Fi Zilal al-Qur'an* interpreted in a neat and artistic manner. Meanwhile, HAMKA is recognized as a famous literate in the Malay world. He is also known as a modern scholar who consistently incorporates art in interpreting religion, and this artistry becomes the style of interpretation in interpreting the Qur'an in *Tafsir al Azhar*. The backgrounds of these interpreters are factors to the similarities and differences in style and methods of interpretation in both of these exegesis books.

The surrounding environment factors into their differences in interpretation. Sayyid Qutb produced *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an* while he was in prison. Meanwhile, HAMKA (1968) produced *Tafsir Al-Azhar* through a series of morning lectures at the Grand Mosque of al-Azhar in Kebayoran Bharu. This setting allowed him to interpret the Qur'an according to the realities of the community and the analogies given are almost tailored to the atmosphere and needs of the community in Indonesia. For this reason, both of these interpretations are termed as *adab al-ijtima'i tafsir*, an interpretation that

discusses the realities of community life towards religion and promotes devotion to Allah SWT.

#### 5.4 *Criticism and Suggestions*

There are several views, criticisms, and comments on the translation version of *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an* by Yusoff Zaky Yacob by scholars of this exegesis book. First, they mention that Yusoff Zaky Yacob still retains and uses Arabic terms and phrases in his translation. This certainly makes it difficult for lay readers without a deep religious educational background to understand the text they are reading. For example, Yakob (2002) provides several examples of such words including *masyi'ah*, *rububiyyah*, *al-Mala'ul A'la*, and *arjah*. Muhammad and Hassan (2010) share a similar view on this issue. They say, “. . . However, sometimes his translation appears quite literal due to his concern to maintain everything written by the original text's author . . .”

Yakob (2002) also identifies some errors made by Yusoff Zaky Yacob in quoting Quranic verses compared to the original text. He gives several examples, the first being verse 13 of Surah al-Jasiah, the second verse 29 of Surah al-Baqarah, and verse 52 of Surah al-Muminun.

Another criticism by him concerns the thickness of the exegesis book *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an* by Yusoff Zaky Yacob. He compares it with the original *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an* by Sayyid Qutb, which only has four volumes, whereas Yusoff Zaky Yacob's translation version has 17 volumes. This certainly makes it quite thick, increasing the printing costs and pushing the sales price to be expensive for lay readers at RM3000. In normal translation practice and experience, an increase in thickness of the translated version from a foreign language to Malay is only about 25 percent.

The criticisms are clearly grounded in academic sources (Yakob, 2002; Muhammad & Hassan, 2010). They touch on translation quality (errors in quoting verses), accuracy (literal rendering vs. contextual meaning), and techniques (retention of Arabic terms, stylistic choices). The discussion also highlights practical implications (book thickness, cost, accessibility for readers), which links to the broader theme of usability and accessibility mentioned in the abstract.

The section mostly emphasizes negative criticism without balancing it with strengths or contributions of Yusoff Zaky Yacob's translation (readability, contextual interpretation, literary style). The “Suggestions” part is not fully developed. While problems are identified (Arabic terms, errors, thickness), the author does not clearly propose concrete solutions or recommendations for improvement (glossary of Arabic terms, careful proofreading of Quranic citations, abridged editions for accessibility). The criticisms could be better

connected to the article's stated objectives, explicitly showing how these issues affect translation quality, accuracy, and technique.

There are several principles in studying the meanings of the Qur'an that reflect the complexity and depth required to interpret the Qur'an accurately. Engaging with the Qur'an through exegesis is a lifelong journey that combines knowledge, reflection, and spiritual insight. This is what Yusoff Zaky Yacob experienced in completing his work translating the *Tafsir Fi Zilal al-Qur'an*.

The first principle is contextual understanding or *Asbab al-Nuzul*. Every verse in the Qur'an has a context in which it was revealed. Understanding the historical background and circumstances of a verse is crucial in interpreting its meaning. Without this context, one might miss the intended message.

The next principle is the need for a holistic approach, meaning the Qur'an should be interpreted as a whole, considering the entire text and not isolating specific verses. Often, verses about a particular topic are spread across various surahs, and understanding one verse may require consideration of others.

Regarding the linguistic mastery required for a translator, it must be recognized that the Qur'an was revealed in classical Arabic, which is rich in nuances and layers of meaning. A deep understanding of grammar, vocabulary, and Arabic style is essential to capture the subtleties of meaning in the text of each verse across all surahs. Therefore, we find that most translators cannot find exactly the right phrase or word, so they are forced to maintain the original phrasing or use loanwords.

The use of hadith in understanding a verse plays a crucial role in interpreting the Qur'an. Hadith provides practical examples of how the verses were applied in the life of the Prophet. This also needs to be supported by the consensus of scholars, or what is known as *Ijma ulama*. For centuries, Islamic scholars have reached a consensus on the interpretation of many Quranic verses. This collective wisdom, known as *Ijma*, serves as a valuable guide, although it is not the sole source of interpretation.

When a direct answer is not found in the Qur'an or Hadith, scholars use *qiyas*, or analogy, to derive legal rulings. This method is extremely useful in applying Quranic principles to new situations that arise. Additionally, the use of spiritual reflection is also essential. The Qur'an is not merely a book of laws and stories. Rather, it is a source of spiritual guidance. Contemplating the verses with a sincere heart can open up deeper and more personal insights that go beyond their literal meaning. The use of Hadith, *qiyas*, and the consensus of scholars (*ijma*) ultimately makes the exegesis more comprehensive, which can result in higher sales prices.

As interpreters like Yusoff Zaky Yacob, they must avoid extreme or literal interpretations or exaggerations that overlook the principles of justice, mercy, and

wisdom that underpin the message of the Qur'an. Likewise, interpretations that rely too heavily on metaphors without guidance from traditional knowledge can lead to misdirection.

Verses and surahs of the Qur'an are open to various interpretations by different scholars. There are multiple valid interpretations for many Quranic verses, reflecting diverse schools of thought, cultures, and eras. This diversity is not a weakness; instead, it can be a strength that showcases the Qur'an's ability to provide guidance to people in various situations.

Understanding the contents of the Qur'an is also a continuous learning process. Interpretation is not static; it evolves as scholars engage with new knowledge and contexts. Continuous learning and engagement with both classical and contemporary knowledge are crucial for anyone serious about interpreting the Qur'an.

These are the various principles practiced by Yusoff Zaky Yacob in his translation work of the Quranic exegesis. This reflects the complexity and depth required to interpret the Qur'an accurately. Engaging with the Qur'an through exegesis is a lifelong journey that combines knowledge, reflection, and spiritual insight.

## 6. CONCLUSION

This study has presented a comprehensive review of scholarly opinions and evaluations concerning Yusoff Zaky Yacob's Malay translation of *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an*. By employing a qualitative approach grounded in Reception Theory and Hermeneutics, the paper examined the key dimensions of translation quality, translation accuracy and techniques, within the broader context of Malaysian Islamic publishing.

In terms of translation quality, the findings indicate that Yusoff Zaky Yacob successfully preserved the literary and rhetorical essence of Sayyid Qutb's original Arabic text while adapting its language to suit the needs of modern Malay readers. His concise and stylistically refined prose enhanced both readability and accessibility, demonstrating that the translator's literary sensibility contributed significantly to the work's sustained relevance.

Regarding translation accuracy, comparative analyses conducted by scholars such as Nokman (2013) and Muhammad et al. (2016) revealed that Yusoff Zaky Yacob maintained a high degree of fidelity to the semantic structure of the Arabic source text. His application of *dynamic equivalence* enabled readers to grasp the intended meanings and theological nuances of the Quranic message without distorting its doctrinal precision. This balance between literal

faithfulness and interpretive clarity reflects a deep understanding of both linguistic and spiritual dimensions of translation.

In terms of translation techniques, Yusoff Zaky Yacob's method demonstrates an integration of literal and communicative strategies. His retention of Arabic terms in Romanised form preserved linguistic authenticity and theological specificity; however, this also presented challenges for general readers unfamiliar with Arabic terminologies. The translator's approach, though sophisticated, sometimes limited accessibility for audiences without formal religious training.

From the perspective of Malaysian publishing, Yusoff Zaky Yacob's *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an* represents a landmark achievement in Islamic literary production at the turn of the twentieth century. Published through Pustaka Dian and later Pustaka Aman Press, this monumental 17-volume work reflects Malaysia's growing intellectual capacity to produce major religious texts locally, tailored to Malay linguistic and cultural sensibilities. The translation not only bridged linguistic divides but also positioned Malaysia as a regional hub for Islamic scholarship and publishing, especially when contrasted with Indonesian tafsir traditions that differ stylistically and linguistically.

Nonetheless, several limitations were identified. These include the frequent retention of untranslated Arabic terms without explanatory notes, minor inaccuracies in Quranic verse citations, and the physical bulk and cost of the 17-volume set, which limited accessibility for the general public. Despite these shortcomings, the translation's strengths, its literary elegance, interpretive consistency, and fidelity to the source far outweigh its limitations, solidifying its status as one of the most influential Malay translations of a Quranic exegesis in Malaysian publishing history.

It is therefore recommended that publishers consider issuing a revised edition of *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an*, incorporating the corrections and enhancements discussed in this study such as standardised terminology, verified verse citations, and the inclusion of a glossary of Arabic terms to facilitate reader comprehension.

In conclusion, Yusoff Zaky Yacob's translation transcends the boundaries of linguistic transference. It represents a hermeneutic endeavour to reinterpret and contextualise Sayyid Qutb's intellectual vision for a Malay-Muslim audience. Through the combined lens of Reception Theory and the Malaysian publishing context, *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an* stands as a monumental contribution to the intellectual, linguistic, and spiritual development of Islamic scholarship in Malaysia in bridging faith, language, and culture in a manner that continues to inspire scholarly engagement to this day.

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