

Interpreting Anthropomorphic Qur'anic Verses through Artificial Intelligence: A Comparative Study of ChatGPT and Gemini

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Abstract

The rapid adoption of generative artificial intelligence (AI) has expanded its application to Qur'anic translation and interpretation, raising important questions regarding the reliability of AI-generated outputs for theologically sensitive verses. Among the most challenging passages are anthropomorphic (*mutashābihāt*) verses, whose translation requires careful negotiation between literal meaning and established theological traditions. This study compares the translation strategies employed by ChatGPT and Gemini in rendering anthropomorphic Qur'anic expressions and evaluates the consistency of their outputs across repeated interactions. This research employs a qualitative comparative design using library research and content analysis. Four categories of anthropomorphic expressions—*wajh* (face), *a'yun* (eyes), *yad* (hand), and *istawā* (rising over the Throne)—were translated repeatedly by both AI systems using identical prompts administered in different sessions. The resulting outputs were classified into three interpretive approaches: literal translation, *ta'wīl* (figurative interpretation), and *tafwīd* (consigning the ultimate meaning to God). Comparative analysis was then conducted to examine translation preferences and output consistency. The findings demonstrate substantial differences in theological translation strategies between the two AI models. ChatGPT predominantly adopts literal translation (39 of 72 outputs), followed by *ta'wīl* (19) and *tafwīd* (14), whereas Gemini produces more literal renderings (42 of 72 outputs) together with *ta'wīl* (30) but does not employ *tafwīd*. ChatGPT also exhibits strategy shifts across repeated sessions, particularly in translating *istawā*, where responses change from *tafwīd* to literal interpretation. By contrast, Gemini maintains comparatively stable translation patterns despite relying primarily on literal formulations. These findings indicate that generative AI systems differ not only linguistically but also in their implicit theological orientation when processing anthropomorphic Qur'anic expressions. This study contributes to the emerging field of digital Qur'anic studies by providing a systematic framework for evaluating AI translation strategies from a theological perspective. It demonstrates that AI-generated Qur'anic translations should not be regarded as doctrinally neutral, particularly when dealing with verses carrying significant theological implications. The study is limited to two large language models and four categories of anthropomorphic expressions. Future research should expand comparisons to additional AI systems, multilingual translation



settings, and broader corpora of *mutashābihāt* verses to develop more comprehensive evaluation standards for AI-assisted Qur'anic interpretation.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence; Anthropomorphic Qur'anic Verses; Chatgpt; Gemini; Qur'anic Translation.

Abstrak

Pesatnya perkembangan kecerdasan buatan generatif (Artificial Intelligence/AI) telah memperluas pemanfaatannya dalam penerjemahan dan interpretasi Al-Qur'an, sekaligus memunculkan pertanyaan mengenai keandalan hasil terjemahan AI pada ayat-ayat yang memiliki sensitivitas teologis. Salah satu kelompok ayat yang paling kompleks ialah ayat-ayat antropomorfik (*mutashābihāt*), karena penerjemahannya menuntut keseimbangan antara makna literal dan tradisi teologi Islam. Penelitian ini bertujuan membandingkan strategi penerjemahan ChatGPT dan Gemini terhadap ayat-ayat antropomorfik Al-Qur'an serta menguji konsistensi keluaran keduanya melalui pengulangan interaksi. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode studi kepustakaan dan analisis isi komparatif. Empat kelompok lafaz antropomorfik, yaitu *wajh*, *a'yun*, *yad*, dan *istawā*, diterjemahkan berulang menggunakan prompt yang sama pada sesi yang berbeda. Seluruh hasil kemudian diklasifikasikan ke dalam tiga pendekatan interpretatif, yaitu literal, *ta'wīl*, dan *tafwīd*, sebelum dianalisis secara komparatif untuk mengidentifikasi kecenderungan strategi penerjemahan serta tingkat konsistensinya. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan adanya perbedaan yang jelas dalam strategi penerjemahan teologis kedua model AI. ChatGPT lebih dominan menggunakan pendekatan literal (39 dari 72 keluaran), diikuti *ta'wīl* (19) dan *tafwīd* (14), sedangkan Gemini didominasi pendekatan literal (42 dari 72 keluaran) dan *ta'wīl* (30) tanpa menghasilkan *tafwīd*. Pada lafaz *istawā*, ChatGPT memperlihatkan perubahan strategi dari *tafwīd* menuju pendekatan literal pada sesi pengujian yang berbeda, sementara Gemini menunjukkan pola penerjemahan yang relatif lebih konsisten. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa perbedaan antar sistem AI tidak hanya terjadi pada aspek linguistik, tetapi juga mencerminkan kecenderungan pendekatan teologis yang berbeda dalam menerjemahkan ayat-ayat antropomorfik. Penelitian ini berkontribusi terhadap pengembangan kajian Al-Qur'an digital dengan menawarkan kerangka evaluasi sistematis terhadap strategi penerjemahan AI dari perspektif teologi Islam. Hasil penelitian menegaskan bahwa keluaran AI dalam penerjemahan Al-Qur'an tidak dapat dipandang sebagai produk yang sepenuhnya netral secara doktrinal, terutama pada ayat-ayat yang memiliki implikasi akidah. Penelitian ini masih terbatas pada dua model AI dan empat kelompok lafaz antropomorfik. Penelitian selanjutnya perlu memperluas objek kajian ke model AI lainnya, penerjemahan multibahasa, serta cakupan ayat-ayat *mutashābihāt* yang lebih luas untuk mengembangkan standar evaluasi AI dalam studi tafsir digital.

Kata kunci: Artificial Intelligence; Ayat Antropomorfik; Chatgpt; Gemini; Penerjemahan Al-Qur'an.

Introduction

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has experienced unprecedented development over the past few years, extending its application into various aspects of religious life, including the translation and interpretation of sacred texts. AI-powered systems are increasingly employed to assist scriptural interpretation, provide spiritual guidance, and enhance public accessibility

to religious knowledge. This development has expanded opportunities for broader engagement with religious texts while simultaneously generating new questions regarding interpretive authority, theological reliability, and epistemological legitimacy (Alkhouri, 2025; Putrawan, 2025). These developments indicate that translating religious texts involves not merely linguistic transfer but also complex theological, hermeneutical, and doctrinal considerations. Consequently, evaluating the extent to which AI can interpret sacred texts in accordance with established Islamic scholarly traditions has become an increasingly important academic concern.

One of the most enduring theological debates in Islamic intellectual history concerns the interpretation of *mutashābihāt* (ambiguous or allegorical verses), particularly those describing the divine attributes. Expressions such as *wajh* (face), *‘ayn* (eyes), *yad* (hand), and *istawā* (established Himself above the Throne) have generated extensive discussions among Muslim theologians and exegetes because they appear to attribute human characteristics to God. Such verses are commonly classified as anthropomorphic (*tashbīh*) verses (Senin et al., 2023). Contemporary Salafi scholars generally favor a literal reading of these expressions, whereas the majority of Ahl al-Sunnah theologians advocate *ta’wīl* (figurative interpretation) to preserve the absolute transcendence (*tanzīh*) of God (Omar N. H. & Ibrahim M., 2019). This longstanding divergence demonstrates that interpreting *mutashābihāt* extends far beyond linguistic analysis and directly affects fundamental theological doctrines.

Within translation studies, one of the most influential theoretical frameworks is Eugene Nida's Dynamic Equivalence Theory. This theory argues that translation should not merely preserve the linguistic form of the source text but should also reproduce an equivalent meaning and communicative effect for readers in the target language (Kim, 2015; Nida & Taber, 1982). Consequently, translators may adopt semantic adjustments whenever literal translation fails to convey the intended message adequately. Dynamic equivalence has been widely applied in religious translation because it accommodates linguistic and cultural adaptation without sacrificing the essential meaning of the sacred text. Complementing this perspective, Vermeer's Skopos Theory emphasizes that translation strategies are determined by the intended purpose (*skopos*) of the target text (Nord, 2006, 2022). From this perspective, translators may legitimately employ either literal or interpretive approaches depending on the communicative objectives of the translation.

These theoretical perspectives provide a valuable conceptual framework for understanding why translations of anthropomorphic Qur'anic verses may adopt literal, *ta’wīl*,

or *tafwīd* approaches. Nevertheless, a fundamental distinction exists between human translation and AI-generated translation. Human translators generally rely on linguistic expertise, contextual awareness, theological reasoning, and explicit methodological principles. In contrast, generative AI systems produce translations by recognizing statistical patterns and semantic relationships learned from extensive training data (Dia, 2025; Sun et al., 2025). As a result, although AI-generated translations often appear linguistically accurate, they do not necessarily reflect coherent exegetical methodologies or consistent theological reasoning comparable to those employed by qualified Muslim scholars. This distinction becomes particularly significant when translating anthropomorphic Qur'anic verses whose interpretations carry sensitive doctrinal implications.

The increasing sophistication of generative AI further intensifies this issue. Through advances in Natural Language Processing (NLP) and Machine Learning (ML), AI systems are capable of sophisticated semantic analysis, rhetorical recognition, grammatical parsing, and contextual prediction (Al-Azani et al., 2026; Issa M. A. J., 2026). Unlike human interpreters, however, AI lacks conscious theological commitment and does not operate within established schools of Qur'anic exegesis. Consequently, important questions arise concerning the interpretive tendencies of AI when translating *mutashābihāt*: Does AI predominantly preserve literal meanings, employ *ta'wīl*, or adopt *tafwīd* by leaving the ultimate meaning to God? These questions are particularly relevant because ChatGPT and Gemini AI have become among the most widely used generative AI platforms for obtaining religious information and scriptural explanations (StatCounter, 2026). Examining their translation strategies therefore offers valuable insights into how contemporary AI models approach the interpretation of theologically sensitive Qur'anic passages.

Previous studies have begun investigating AI-assisted Qur'anic translation, although important gaps remain. Dzulfaidi (2025) reports that ChatGPT tends to produce relatively interpretive renderings of Qur'anic verses. Hussein (2025) finds that AI systems demonstrate high consistency in translation compared with human translators, while Fathan et al. (2025) highlight Gemini AI's capability to understand contextual aspects of religious texts. Despite these contributions, existing studies have not specifically examined anthropomorphic *mutashābihāt* verses, nor have they systematically compared the theological orientations of ChatGPT and Gemini AI in terms of literal interpretation, *ta'wīl*, and *tafwīd*. Furthermore, no previous research has investigated the consistency of AI-generated translations through

repeated prompting across different sessions. These limitations reveal a significant research gap within the emerging field of AI-assisted Qur'anic translation.

This study addresses these gaps by positioning generative AI as the primary object of investigation in the translation of anthropomorphic Qur'anic verses. Its novelty lies in providing a systematic comparative analysis of ChatGPT and Gemini AI regarding four major anthropomorphic expressions—*wajh*, *'ayn*, *yad*, and *istawā*. Beyond comparing translation outputs, this research classifies each translation according to the theological approach it reflects, namely literal interpretation, *ta'wīl*, or *tafwīd*. Additionally, the study evaluates the stability of AI-generated translations by repeating identical prompts across different testing sessions, thereby assessing the consistency of each AI model's interpretive behavior over time.

Based on this background, the present study aims to analyze the translation patterns generated by ChatGPT and Gemini AI when translating anthropomorphic *mutashābihāt* verses in the Qur'an. Specifically, it identifies the prevalence of literal, *ta'wīl*, and *tafwīd* approaches, compares the interpretive characteristics of both AI models, and evaluates the consistency of their translations through repeated prompt testing. By doing so, this study seeks to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the epistemological tendencies of generative AI in interpreting sensitive theological concepts and to advance the interdisciplinary fields of Qur'anic exegesis, Qur'anic translation studies, digital humanities, and Artificial Intelligence in religious studies.

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative library-based research design with a comparative analytical approach. A qualitative design was considered appropriate because the study investigates AI-generated translations of Qur'anic anthropomorphic verses and evaluates them within the theological and hermeneutical frameworks of *'Ulūm al-Qur'ān* and *'Ilm al-Kalām*. The comparative approach served as the primary analytical framework for systematically examining the translation outputs produced by ChatGPT and Gemini AI, enabling the identification of similarities, differences, linguistic characteristics, and theological tendencies exhibited by each model.

The study utilized three categories of data sources. The first consisted of the primary Qur'anic corpus, namely anthropomorphic (*mutashābihāt*) verses containing expressions related to *wajh* (face), *'ayn/a'yun* (eye/eyes), *yad* (hand), and *istawā* (established Himself above the Throne). The second comprised AI-generated translations produced directly by ChatGPT and Gemini AI in response to standardized prompts. The third consisted of

secondary sources, including classical references on *‘Ulūm al-Qur’ān* and Islamic theology, *Mu‘jam Alfāz al-Qur’ān*, and contemporary scholarly literature on Natural Language Processing (NLP), Qur'anic translation, and digital theology.

The Qur'anic corpus included twenty-four verses representing the four anthropomorphic categories most extensively discussed in classical and contemporary Qur'anic exegesis and Islamic theology. These categories—*wajh*, *‘ayn*, *yad*, and *istawā*—were selected because they constitute the principal theological loci in debates concerning divine attributes. Consequently, the selected verses were considered sufficiently representative for examining how generative AI translates anthropomorphic *mutashābihāt* verses.

Data collection was conducted through systematic documentation of the selected Qur'anic verses. Each verse was submitted independently to both ChatGPT and Gemini AI using the identical prompt: "Provide a translation of this verse." To evaluate translation consistency, every verse was tested three times in separate sessions conducted on different days. Trial 1 was performed on Friday, 15 May 2026, Trial 2 on Saturday, 16 May 2026, and Trial 3 on Sunday, 17 May 2026. At the time of data collection, the AI models used were ChatGPT Go (GPT-5.2 Instant) and Gemini AI Pro 3.5 with the Google One AI Plus subscription. Conducting repeated prompt sessions enabled the identification of stable and unstable translation patterns across different interactions while minimizing the influence of stochastic output variation inherent in Large Language Models (LLMs).

The translation outputs were analyzed using qualitative content analysis combined with comparative analysis. Initially, each translation was classified into one of three interpretive categories derived from Islamic theological discourse: literal translation, *ta’wīl* (figurative interpretation), and *tafwīd* (consigning the ultimate meaning to God without specifying its modality). Subsequently, the outputs generated by ChatGPT and Gemini AI were systematically compared to identify similarities, differences, dominant interpretive tendencies, and translation consistency across the three testing sessions. To complement the qualitative interpretation, the frequency of each category was calculated and converted into percentages to provide a descriptive overview of the interpretive preferences exhibited by each AI model.

Several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the findings reflect the behavior of the specific AI versions available during the study—ChatGPT Go (GPT-5.2 Instant) and Gemini AI Pro 3.5—and therefore may not remain applicable to future versions because generative AI models continuously evolve through algorithmic updates and retraining.

Second, the study focuses exclusively on the contextual outputs generated from standardized prompts and does not examine the internal neural architectures, training datasets, or computational mechanisms underlying the two Large Language Models. Consequently, the findings should be interpreted as an evaluation of observable translation behavior rather than the internal decision-making processes of the AI systems.

Rather than testing statistical hypotheses, this study was guided by an analytical expectation derived from previous scholarship on generative AI and Qur'anic translation. It was anticipated that ChatGPT and Gemini AI would exhibit different interpretive tendencies when translating anthropomorphic verses. ChatGPT was expected to demonstrate a greater tendency toward literal and *tafwīd*-oriented renderings, whereas Gemini AI was expected to favor literal and *ta'wīl*-oriented translations. Furthermore, given the probabilistic nature of Large Language Models, both systems were expected to exhibit varying degrees of translation consistency across repeated prompting sessions. This analytical expectation provided the conceptual basis for comparing the epistemological patterns and theological orientations reflected in the translations generated by the two AI systems.

Results and Discussion

A. Comparative Translation Patterns of Anthropomorphic Qur'anic Verses by ChatGPT and Gemini AI

To investigate how generative Artificial Intelligence translates anthropomorphic (*mutashābihāt*) Qur'anic verses, this study analyzed the outputs of ChatGPT Go (GPT-5.2 Instant) and Gemini AI Pro 3.5. Twenty-four Qur'anic verses representing four major anthropomorphic lexical groups (*wajh*, *a'yun*, *yad*, and *istawā*) were translated using identical prompts. Each verse was tested in three independent sessions conducted on different days, resulting in seventy-two translation outputs for each AI model. The outputs were subsequently classified into three interpretive categories: literal translation, *ta'wīl* (figurative interpretation), and *tafwīd* (retaining the Arabic expression while consigning its ultimate meaning to God).

Table 1 summarizes the distribution of translation categories for each anthropomorphic lexeme.

Lexeme	GPT	GPT	GPT	Gemini	Gemini	Gemini
	Literal	Ta'wil	Tafwidh	Literal	Ta'wil	Tafwidh
Wajh (وجه)	20	4	0	9	15	0

Lexeme	GPT	GPT	GPT	Gemini	Gemini	Gemini
	Literal	Ta'wil	Tafwidh	Literal	Ta'wil	Tafwidh
A'yun (أعين/عين)	0	15	0	0	15	0
Yad (يد)	12	0	0	12	0	0
Istawā (استوى)	7	0	14	21	0	0
Total	39	19	14	42	30	0

The results reveal distinct translation tendencies across the four lexical groups. For *wajh*, both AI models employed literal and interpretive translations, although ChatGPT relied predominantly on literal renderings whereas Gemini more frequently adopted *ta'wil*. Both models showed complete agreement in translating *a'yun*, consistently applying *ta'wil*, while all occurrences of *yad* were rendered literally. The greatest divergence appeared in the translation of *istawā*, where ChatGPT produced both literal and *tafwīd*-oriented renderings, whereas Gemini consistently translated the term literally.

The cumulative distribution of translation strategies for both models is presented in Table 2.

Model	Literal	Ta'wil	Tafwidh
ChatGPT Go (GPT-5.2 Instant)	39/72	19/72	14/72
Gemini AI Pro 3.5	42/72	30/72	0/72

Overall, ChatGPT generated thirty-nine literal translations, nineteen *ta'wil*-based translations, and fourteen *tafwīd* translations from seventy-two outputs. By comparison, Gemini produced forty-two literal translations and thirty *ta'wil* translations, while no *tafwīd* translations were identified throughout the experiment.

To facilitate proportional comparison, the distribution of each translation strategy is converted into percentages in Table 3.

Model	Literal	Ta'wil	Tafwidh
ChatGPT Go (GPT-5.2 Instant)	54.17%	26.39%	19.44%
Gemini AI Pro 3.5	58.33%	41.67%	0.00%

Both AI models predominantly favored literal translation when rendering anthropomorphic verses. Literal translations accounted for 54.17% of ChatGPT's outputs and 58.33% of Gemini's outputs. Nevertheless, Gemini adopted *ta'wil* more frequently than

ChatGPT, whereas *tafwīd* appeared exclusively in ChatGPT, representing approximately one-fifth of its total translations.

Beyond differences in overall distribution, several patterns of convergence and divergence emerged between the two AI systems, as summarized in **Table 4**.

Lexeme	Pattern	Description
Yad (all four verses)	Complete convergence	Both models consistently produced identical literal translations (24/24 outputs).
A'yun (all five verses)	Category convergence	Both models consistently adopted <i>ta'wīl</i> , although wording varied slightly.
Wajh (Q. 2:115; 2:272; 55:27)	Convergence	Both retained the literal expression "the Face of Allah."
Wajh (Q. 92:20; 13:22)	Contextual divergence	ChatGPT remained literal, whereas Gemini employed <i>ta'wīl</i> .
Wajh (Q. 30:38–39; 76:9)	Systematic divergence	ChatGPT translated literally, while Gemini preferred contextual interpretation.
Istawā (seven verses)	Systematic divergence	ChatGPT shifted between <i>tafwīd</i> and literal translation, whereas Gemini remained consistently literal.

These findings indicate that both AI systems converged in translating lexical items whose meanings are relatively standardized, such as *yad* and *a'yun*. In contrast, systematic divergence occurred in verses requiring greater interpretive judgment, particularly those containing *wajh* and *istawā*.

The stability of each model across repeated testing sessions is presented in **Table 5**.

Lexeme	AI Model	Consistency	Percentage	Description
Wajh	ChatGPT	8/8	100%	Fully consistent (literal dominant)
Wajh	Gemini	3/8	37.5%	Lexical variation across trials
A'yun	ChatGPT	5/5	100%	Fully consistent (<i>ta'wīl</i>)
A'yun	Gemini	5/5	100%	Fully consistent (<i>ta'wīl</i>)
Yad	ChatGPT	4/4	100%	Fully consistent (literal)
Yad	Gemini	4/4	100%	Fully consistent (literal)

Lexeme	AI Model	Consistency	Percentage	Description
Istawā	ChatGPT	7/7	100% within each trial	Shifted from <i>tafwīd</i> to literal in Trial 3
Istawā	Gemini	7/7	100%	Fully consistent (literal)

Across repeated testing sessions, ChatGPT maintained consistent translations for *wajh*, *a'yun*, and *yad*. However, a notable shift was observed in the translation of *istawā*, where all seven verses changed from *tafwīd* in the first two trials to literal translation in the third trial. By contrast, Gemini maintained complete consistency across all lexical groups, with only minor lexical variations that did not alter the interpretive category.

The translation outputs for *istawā* further illustrate the contrasting consistency profiles of the two AI models.

Table 6. ChatGPT Translation of *Istawā* Across Three Trials

Verse	Trial 1	Trial 2	Trial 3	Remark
Al-A'rāf:54	ber-istawā (Tafwidh)	ber-istawā (Tafwidh)	bersemayam (Literal)	Changed
Yūnus:3	ber-istawā	ber-istawā	bersemayam	Changed
Ar-Ra'd:2	ber-istawā	ber-istawā	bersemayam	Changed
Tāhā:5	ber-istawā	ber-istawā	bersemayam	Changed
Al-Furqān:59	ber-istawā	ber-istawā	bersemayam	Changed
As-Sajdah:4	ber-istawā	ber-istawā	bersemayam	Changed
Al-Ḥadīd:4	ber-istawā	ber-istawā	bersemayam	Changed

A synchronized shift occurred across all seven *istawā* verses. During the first two trials, ChatGPT consistently retained the Arabic expression, reflecting a *tafwīd*-oriented approach. In the third trial, however, every occurrence changed to the literal rendering *bersemayam*. No comparable shift was identified in any other lexical group.

Table 7. Gemini Translation of *Istawā* Across Three Trials

Verse	Trial 1	Trial 2	Trial 3	Remark
Al-A'rāf:54	bersemayam	bersemayam	bersemayam	Stable

Verse	Trial 1	Trial 2	Trial 3	Remark
Yūnus:3	bersemayam	bersemayam	bersemayam	Stable
Ar-Ra'd:2	bersemayam	bersemayam	bersemayam	Stable
Tāhā:5	bersemayam	bersemayam	bersemayam	Stable
Al-Furqān:59	bersemayam	bersemayam	bersemayam	Stable
As-Sajdah:4	bersemayam	bersemayam	bersemayam	Stable
Al-Ḥadīd:4	bersemayam	bersemayam	bersemayam	Stable

Unlike ChatGPT, Gemini produced identical literal translations for every occurrence of *istawā* across all three testing sessions, indicating complete translation stability under repeated prompting.

Overall, four principal findings emerge from the empirical analysis. First, ChatGPT and Gemini exhibit different distributions of literal, *ta'wīl*, and *tafwīd* translation strategies. Second, Gemini applies contextual interpretation more frequently in several *wajh* verses, whereas ChatGPT generally preserves literal renderings. Third, both models converge completely in translating *yad* and consistently employ *ta'wīl* for *a'yun*. Finally, the most significant difference concerns *istawā*, where ChatGPT shifts from *tafwīd* to literal translation across repeated trials, while Gemini remains fully consistent throughout the experiment. These findings provide the empirical basis for the subsequent discussion regarding the epistemological tendencies, theological implications, and interpretive stability of generative AI in translating anthropomorphic Qur'anic verses.

B. Translation Strategies and Epistemological Instability of AI

The findings demonstrate that ChatGPT and Gemini AI employ different translation strategies when rendering anthropomorphic (*mutashābihāt*) Qur'anic verses. As summarized in Tables X and Y, ChatGPT predominantly adopts a literal strategy for the lexemes *wajh* and *yad*, consistently employs *ta'wīl* for *a'yun*, and uniquely applies *tafwīd* to *istawā* during the first two testing sessions before shifting to a literal rendering in the third session. In contrast, Gemini AI displays a more stable distribution of strategies. It combines literal translation and *ta'wīl* for *wajh* depending on contextual usage, consistently translates *a'yun* through interpretative expressions such as "under Our watch," renders *yad* literally across all trials, and translates *istawā* literally throughout every testing session. These findings indicate that translation variability is not distributed evenly across all anthropomorphic expressions but is

concentrated primarily on *istawā*, suggesting that AI models exhibit selective rather than universal instability.

The divergence between ChatGPT and Gemini is unlikely to originate from theological commitments, since neither model possesses doctrinal reasoning nor adherence to a particular school of Islamic theology. Rather, the observed differences reflect the distinct architectures, alignment strategies, optimization objectives, and inference mechanisms underlying each Large Language Model (LLM). Although both systems rely on transformer-based neural architectures, they are trained using different corpora, reinforcement-learning procedures, safety policies, and decoding configurations, all of which influence lexical selection and semantic generation (Brown et al., 2020; Bommasani et al., 2021; Messina & Scotta, 2026). Consequently, identical prompts may produce different interpretative outputs because each model estimates the most probable continuation according to its own statistical representations rather than by applying a fixed hermeneutical methodology.

This probabilistic nature of LLMs also explains the epistemological instability observed in ChatGPT's translation of *istawā*. During Trials 1 and 2, the model consistently retained the Arabic expression (*ber-istawā*), representing a *tafwīḍ* strategy by refraining from assigning an explicit semantic equivalent. However, in Trial 3, every occurrence shifted uniformly to the literal rendering "bersemayam" ("established Himself upon"), while all other anthropomorphic expressions remained unchanged. Such a systematic transition suggests that the variability is not random linguistic noise but a manifestation of session variability or inference variability that has increasingly been recognized in recent LLM research (Poyatos et al., 2025; Messina & Scotta, 2026). Because generative AI predicts outputs probabilistically rather than deterministically, slight differences in inference conditions, model calibration, or system updates may alter translation choices even when the input prompt remains identical.

Interestingly, this instability was absent in Gemini AI. Across all three testing sessions, Gemini consistently rendered every occurrence of *istawā* literally as "bersemayam," while its contextual variation appeared only in several *wajh* verses related to acts of worship, where expressions such as "seeking the pleasure of Allah" replaced the literal phrase "the Face of Allah." This pattern suggests that Gemini maintains greater temporal consistency while simultaneously exhibiting higher contextual sensitivity in specific semantic environments. Such contextual adaptation aligns with contemporary findings that advanced language models increasingly optimize semantic coherence within discourse rather than relying exclusively on lexical correspondence (Sun et al., 2025; Dia, 2025).

From the perspective of Qur'anic translation theory, these findings reveal that AI-generated translations do not consistently follow a single interpretative paradigm. Instead, translation strategies fluctuate between literal rendering, *ta'wīl*, and *tafwīd* according to lexical context and model-specific inference processes. This differs fundamentally from human translators, whose interpretative decisions are normally guided by explicit theological commitments, established exegetical methodologies, and coherent epistemological principles. Consequently, while AI may produce linguistically fluent translations, its interpretative consistency remains conditional upon computational probabilities rather than stable hermeneutical reasoning.

The concentration of instability on *istawā* is particularly significant because this lexeme has historically occupied a central position in classical debates concerning divine attributes (*ṣifāt Allāh*). Unlike *yad* or *a'yun*, whose interpretative conventions have become relatively standardized within many modern translations, *istawā* continues to represent one of the most contested anthropomorphic expressions in Islamic theology. Consequently, the divergent behavior observed in ChatGPT and Gemini indicates that contemporary AI models are more susceptible to variability when processing theological concepts that themselves possess long-standing interpretative plurality within the Islamic intellectual tradition. Rather than demonstrating theological reasoning, therefore, AI appears to reproduce probabilistic patterns embedded within its multilingual training data, producing outputs that reflect statistical associations rather than conscious adherence to any established school of tafsīr or *kalām*.

C. Theological Implications of Translating Anthropomorphic Verses

The findings of this study demonstrate that differences in AI translation strategies are not merely linguistic variations but also carry important theological implications. Anthropomorphic (*mutashābihāt*) verses have historically occupied a central position in Islamic theological debates because their interpretation directly affects the understanding of divine attributes (*ṣifāt Allāh*). Consequently, the choice between literal translation, *ta'wīl*, and *tafwīd* is not simply a matter of translation technique but reflects distinct theological orientations that have long been discussed within the traditions of *'ilm al-kalām* and Qur'anic exegesis (Omar N.H. & Ibrahim M., 2019; Calis, 2022).

Among the lexical items examined, *istawā* presents the greatest theological sensitivity. A literal rendering such as "*established Himself*" or "*sat upon*" (or in Indonesian *bersemayam*) may easily lead readers without adequate theological background to understand the verse in

anthropomorphic terms, thereby attributing spatial location or physical attributes to God. Within the Ash'arī theological tradition, which constitutes the principal theological foundation of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), such an interpretation is generally avoided because it may imply *tashbīh* (likening God to His creation). Instead, classical Ash'arī scholars either adopted *tafwīd*—affirming the revealed wording while consigning its ultimate meaning to God—or applied *ta'wīl*, interpreting *istawā* as *qahara* (to dominate, subdue) or *istawlā* (to exercise sovereign authority), thereby preserving the doctrine of divine transcendence (*tanzīh*) (Al-Bayan, 2020; Calis, 2022). Similar theological concerns also arise in translating *wajh* literally as "face of Allah," particularly in verses whose broader context clearly refers to seeking God's pleasure rather than describing a divine physical attribute. As demonstrated in this study, Gemini AI occasionally translated *wajh* contextually as "the pleasure of Allah," whereas ChatGPT more frequently retained the literal expression. These differences illustrate how translation choices may implicitly guide readers toward different theological understandings despite being generated from the same Qur'anic text.

From the perspective of Qur'anic hermeneutics, these findings reinforce the long-standing distinction between lexical meaning and intended theological meaning. Classical exegetes have consistently emphasized that anthropomorphic expressions should not be interpreted independently from their textual context (*siyāq*), broader Qur'anic discourse, and established theological principles (Ahmad, 2017; Saeed, 2013). Dynamic Equivalence theory likewise argues that translators may legitimately depart from literal lexical correspondence in order to preserve the intended communicative meaning of the source text (Nida & Taber, 1982; Kim, 2015). Likewise, Skopos Theory explains that translation strategies should be determined by the communicative purpose of the target text rather than by formal lexical equivalence alone (Nord, 2006; Nord, 2022). Consequently, Gemini's contextual rendering of several *wajh* verses can be understood as an interpretative strategy aimed at conveying the intended meaning rather than reproducing the surface lexical form. Nevertheless, neither ChatGPT nor Gemini appears to apply a consistent theological methodology across all anthropomorphic verses, indicating that their outputs are generated through contextual linguistic prediction rather than adherence to a coherent school of Qur'anic interpretation.

The theological implications become even more significant when AI-generated translations are consumed by non-specialist audiences. Contemporary studies indicate that an increasing number of Muslims rely on generative AI as an immediate source of religious information because of its accessibility and conversational interaction (Putrawan, 2025;

Alkhouri, 2025). However, unlike trained exegetes, AI systems possess neither theological commitment nor methodological accountability. As argued by Bender et al. (2021), large language models generate text through statistical pattern prediction rather than semantic or doctrinal understanding, while Brown et al. (2020) demonstrate that GPT models predict the most probable linguistic continuation instead of performing genuine theological reasoning. Consequently, literal translations of anthropomorphic expressions should not automatically be interpreted as reflecting a deliberate theological position but rather as outputs emerging from probabilistic language modeling. This distinction is crucial because users may mistakenly perceive AI-generated translations as authoritative theological interpretations.

The findings therefore suggest that AI-generated translations should be approached with theological caution, particularly when dealing with verses concerning divine attributes. While AI can provide linguistically fluent renderings, it lacks the epistemological foundations of Islamic scholarship, including mastery of *'aqidah*, principles of *tafsir*, *uṣūl al-dīn*, and centuries of scholarly consensus regarding *mutashābihāt* verses. For this reason, AI outputs are better understood as preliminary linguistic representations rather than definitive theological explanations. Their use in Qur'anic studies should therefore remain accompanied by verification through authoritative exegetical traditions and officially recognized translations, such as those issued by the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs (Kementerian Agama), which intentionally combine *tafwīd* and *ta'wīl* methodologies to safeguard readers from anthropomorphic misconceptions (Purnomo, 2020). Accordingly, the contribution of AI lies in facilitating access to Qur'anic information rather than replacing the interpretive authority of established Islamic scholarship.

D. AI, Religious Authority, and the Limits of Automated Qur'anic Interpretation

The findings of this study demonstrate that the differences between ChatGPT and Gemini AI are not merely linguistic but also epistemological, raising important questions regarding the status of Artificial Intelligence as a source of religious knowledge. Systematic divergences were identified in the translation of anthropomorphic (*mutashābihāt*) verses. ChatGPT predominantly preserved literal renderings and, in several instances, adopted *tafwīd*, whereas Gemini more frequently employed contextual *ta'wīl* for verses related to worship and divine pleasure. Furthermore, ChatGPT exhibited a notable shift from *tafwīd* to literal translation in all *istawā* verses during the third testing session, while Gemini maintained stable literal renderings across all trials. These findings indicate that AI systems do not consistently apply a single theological framework when translating Qur'anic verses. Rather, their outputs

vary according to the internal probabilistic mechanisms of each model and may also fluctuate across different inference sessions. Such variability reinforces the argument that AI-generated religious responses should not be regarded as stable theological judgments but as statistically generated linguistic outputs (Messina & Scotta, 2026; Poyatos et al., 2025; Bommasani et al., 2021; Brown et al., 2020).

The phenomenon identified in this study must also be understood within the broader transformation of religious authority in the digital age. Recent scholarship has shown that Artificial Intelligence is increasingly being employed for religious consultation, scriptural translation, educational assistance, and spiritual guidance, thereby reshaping how contemporary believers access religious knowledge (Putrawan, 2025; Alkhouri, 2025). This development represents a new phase of *digital religion*, in which religious learning gradually shifts from traditional institutions toward algorithmically mediated platforms (Campbell, 2020, 2022). Unlike conventional search engines, generative AI presents synthesized and coherent responses that often resemble authoritative interpretations, encouraging users to perceive AI as a knowledgeable religious interlocutor rather than merely an information retrieval tool. Consequently, AI increasingly functions as an intermediary in religious communication, even though it possesses neither theological competence nor institutional legitimacy.

From the perspective of Islamic epistemology, however, religious authority cannot be reduced to the ability to generate coherent textual responses. Classical Islamic scholarship establishes authority through mastery of the Qur'an and Sunnah, methodological competence in *uṣūl al-fiqh* and *'ulūm al-Qur'ān*, scholarly transmission (*sanad*), communal recognition, and ethical accountability (Lohlker & Wahid, 2026; Atallah, 2026). The authority of a *mufasssir* is therefore inseparable from an established interpretive tradition and rigorous methodological discipline. AI systems fundamentally differ from this paradigm because they generate responses through statistical pattern recognition and probabilistic language modeling rather than through *ijtihād*, theological reasoning, or adherence to a recognized exegetical methodology (Lala, 2025; Carbajal, 2025). As Bender et al. (2021) argue, large language models function as "stochastic parrots," producing plausible linguistic sequences without genuine semantic understanding or intentional comprehension. Likewise, Brown et al. (2020) explain that GPT-based systems predict the next token probabilistically rather than reasoning from doctrinal principles. Therefore, although AI may produce linguistically convincing

translations, it cannot claim epistemic authority comparable to that of qualified Islamic scholars.

The empirical findings of this research reinforce this theoretical distinction. If AI possessed a stable theological methodology, identical prompts would be expected to produce relatively consistent interpretive strategies. Instead, ChatGPT shifted its treatment of *istawā* from *tafwīd* to literal translation across testing sessions, while Gemini consistently maintained literal translation but differed from ChatGPT in interpreting several occurrences of *wajh*. These systematic divergences illustrate that AI models do not represent coherent theological schools analogous to the Ash'arī, Māturīdī, or Salafī traditions. Rather, their outputs emerge from model architecture, training corpora, reinforcement alignment, decoding strategies, and probabilistic inference (Bommasani et al., 2021; Wei et al., 2022). Consequently, differences between ChatGPT and Gemini should not be interpreted as representing competing theological positions but as manifestations of computational variability inherent in contemporary foundation models.

This distinction is particularly significant because anthropomorphic verses constitute one of the most sensitive domains of Qur'anic interpretation. As demonstrated in this study, different AI systems may recommend literal translation, *ta'wīl*, or *tafwīd* for the same verse without explicitly explaining the theological assumptions underlying those choices. For users lacking sufficient background in *'aqīdah* or *tafsīr*, these differences may create the impression that all interpretive approaches possess equal theological validity. Such an assumption overlooks the fact that classical Islamic scholarship evaluates interpretations through established methodological principles rather than algorithmic plausibility. Therefore, AI-generated translations should be approached as preliminary linguistic assistance rather than definitive theological interpretations, particularly when dealing with verses that have historically generated extensive doctrinal debate.

These findings support the growing consensus that Artificial Intelligence should be positioned as an assistive technology rather than an autonomous religious authority. AI offers considerable benefits for accessing Islamic literature, accelerating information retrieval, comparing exegetical sources, and facilitating educational engagement with the Qur'an (Fitryansyah & Fauziah, 2024; Ali et al., 2025; Arif et al., 2026). Nevertheless, theological evaluation, doctrinal verification, and normative interpretation remain responsibilities that require qualified scholars operating within recognized Islamic epistemological traditions. Accordingly, AI should function as an academic and educational instrument whose outputs

require critical verification through authoritative tafsīr literature and scholarly expertise. The present findings therefore suggest that the future integration of AI into Qur'anic studies should prioritize transparency, methodological explainability, and human scholarly oversight, ensuring that advances in artificial intelligence enhance rather than replace the epistemic foundations of Islamic religious authority.

E. Epistemological Limits and Future Directions for AI-Assisted Qur'anic Studies

The findings of this study demonstrate that AI-assisted Qur'anic translation possesses significant practical value while simultaneously revealing clear epistemological limitations. Both ChatGPT and Gemini AI successfully generated linguistically coherent translations for all anthropomorphic verses examined, indicating that contemporary large language models (LLMs) are capable of recognizing lexical patterns, syntactic structures, and semantic relationships within Qur'anic Arabic. This capability supports previous studies highlighting the growing role of Artificial Intelligence in Islamic education, digital religious services, and Qur'anic language processing (Fitryansyah & Fauziah, 2024; Ali et al., 2025; Arif et al., 2026). Nevertheless, the present findings demonstrate that linguistic competence alone does not guarantee theological consistency. The variation between literal, *ta'wīl*, and *tafwīd* strategies—together with the session-dependent instability observed in ChatGPT—indicates that AI translation remains fundamentally probabilistic rather than grounded in a stable interpretive methodology.

From the perspective of Islamic epistemology, this distinction is crucial. Knowledge (*'ilm*) in the Islamic intellectual tradition is not merely the product of statistical pattern recognition but is established through authoritative sources, including the Qur'an, Sunnah, *ijmā'*, *qiyās*, and centuries of scholarly transmission, verification, and methodological refinement. As emphasized by Azhar et al. (2025) and Lala (2025), AI generates responses through computational inference rather than through participation in the epistemic tradition of Islamic scholarship. Likewise, Abubakari (2025) argues that the encounter between revelation and algorithm illustrates the fundamental difference between computational knowledge and divinely grounded religious knowledge. Consequently, AI outputs should not be regarded as possessing epistemic authority equivalent to classical or contemporary tafsīr traditions.

The translation patterns identified in this study reinforce this argument. ChatGPT shifted its strategy for translating *istawā* from *tafwīd* in the first two trials to literal translation in the third trial, while Gemini consistently adopted literal translation. Similarly, the two

models differed in their treatment of *wajh*, particularly in verses associated with worship and divine pleasure. These variations suggest that AI models do not operate within a coherent theological framework comparable to established schools of Islamic interpretation. Instead, translation strategies emerge dynamically from statistical inference, contextual prediction, alignment mechanisms, and model-specific optimization rather than from adherence to any recognized theological methodology. This observation is consistent with Bommasani et al. (2021), who explain that foundation models exhibit emergent behaviors shaped by training corpora and alignment processes, and with Brown et al. (2020), who describe GPT models as probabilistic next-token predictors rather than systems possessing doctrinal reasoning. Furthermore, Bender et al. (2021) argue that large language models do not possess genuine semantic understanding or theological cognition, while Wei et al. (2022) demonstrate that emergent model behaviors can produce outputs that vary across tasks despite identical prompts. Accordingly, the variability observed in this study should be understood as an inherent characteristic of LLM architecture rather than evidence of theological reasoning.

These findings also contribute methodologically to the emerging field of Digital Qur'anic Studies by proposing that AI evaluation should extend beyond conventional measures of linguistic accuracy. Previous research has largely assessed AI translation in terms of lexical correctness, fluency, or contextual adequacy (Dzulfaidi, 2025; Hussein, 2025; Fathan et al., 2025). The present study demonstrates that theological orientation, interpretive consistency, and temporal stability are equally important evaluation criteria when AI is applied to sacred texts. The introduction of repeated multi-session testing provides an additional methodological contribution by revealing that translation outputs may change over time despite identical prompts. Consequently, future evaluations of AI-assisted Qur'anic translation should incorporate temporal reliability alongside semantic accuracy, since conclusions based on a single interaction may not adequately represent a model's interpretive behavior.

The study also contributes to Digital Theology by demonstrating that anthropomorphic verses constitute an effective benchmark for assessing AI interpretive behavior. Unlike ordinary linguistic expressions, *mutashābihāt* require translators to navigate complex theological debates concerning literal interpretation, *ta'wīl*, and *tafwīd*. Because these verses have historically generated substantial theological disagreement among Muslim scholars, they provide a rigorous test for examining whether AI systems exhibit consistent interpretive tendencies or merely probabilistic linguistic behavior. The observed divergence between ChatGPT and Gemini therefore extends beyond translation quality, offering

empirical evidence that AI-generated religious knowledge remains dependent upon computational inference rather than established theological methodology.

These findings further suggest several directions for future research. First, future studies should expand the corpus beyond the four anthropomorphic expressions (*wajh*, *a'yun*, *yad*, and *istawā*) to include other categories of *mutashābihāt*, such as verses concerning divine attributes, eschatology, and metaphysical realities. Second, comparative analyses should involve additional LLMs—including Claude, Grok, DeepSeek, Qwen, and future GPT and Gemini versions—to determine whether translation variability reflects model-specific alignment or broader characteristics of foundation models. Third, longitudinal research should examine the same AI systems across multiple software updates in order to evaluate how model evolution influences theological consistency over time. Finally, interdisciplinary collaboration between Qur'anic scholars, theologians, computational linguists, and AI researchers is essential for developing evaluation frameworks that integrate linguistic performance with theological reliability and interpretive accountability.

Overall, this study demonstrates that AI should be understood as an advanced computational assistant rather than an autonomous authority in Qur'anic interpretation. Its strengths lie in facilitating access to information, accelerating textual analysis, and supporting comparative research, but the determination of theological meaning, doctrinal evaluation, and normative interpretation must remain within the domain of qualified Islamic scholarship. Rather than replacing the classical tradition of *tafsīr*, AI is most appropriately positioned as an auxiliary research instrument whose outputs require continuous critical verification through established methodologies of Qur'anic interpretation. This balanced perspective enables AI to contribute constructively to Digital Qur'anic Studies while preserving the epistemological foundations that have historically governed the interpretation of the Qur'an.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that ChatGPT and Gemini AI exhibit distinct translation strategies when interpreting anthropomorphic (*mutashābihāt*) verses of the Qur'an. ChatGPT predominantly employed a literal approach while also producing *ta'wīl* and *tafwīd*, whereas Gemini AI relied primarily on literal translation and *ta'wīl* without generating *tafwīd*. The most significant finding concerns the translation of *istawā*, where ChatGPT shifted from *tafwīd* to literal translation across different testing sessions, while Gemini maintained a stable literal rendering throughout all trials. These findings indicate that differences among AI-generated translations extend beyond linguistic variation to reflect different interpretive

tendencies and varying degrees of epistemological stability. The study further demonstrates that identical prompts can produce divergent theological outputs across AI models and, in some cases, across repeated interactions with the same model, highlighting the probabilistic nature of Large Language Models in translating religious texts.

This research contributes to the growing field of Digital Qur'anic Studies by providing one of the first systematic comparative analyses of ChatGPT and Gemini AI in translating anthropomorphic Qur'anic verses through the theological categories of literal interpretation, *ta'wīl*, and *tafwīd*. Beyond comparing translation outputs, the study introduces repeated multi-session testing as a methodological framework for evaluating the temporal consistency of AI-generated religious interpretations. The findings also enrich discussions on AI-assisted Qur'anic translation, digital religion, and Islamic epistemology by demonstrating that AI-generated translations should be understood as probabilistic computational outputs rather than authoritative theological interpretations. Accordingly, AI is best positioned as a supportive academic tool that facilitates access to Qur'anic knowledge while remaining subject to verification through established methodologies of *tafsīr* and Islamic theology.

This study is limited to two generative AI models—ChatGPT Go (GPT-5.2 Instant) and Gemini AI Pro 3.5—and to twenty-four anthropomorphic verses representing four lexical categories (*wajh*, *a'yun*, *yad*, and *istawā*). Because AI systems are continuously updated through changes in model architecture, alignment strategies, and training data, their translation behavior may evolve over time. Furthermore, this study focuses exclusively on translation outputs and does not examine the internal computational mechanisms responsible for model decision-making. Future research should therefore expand the analysis to additional Large Language Models, include broader categories of *mutashābihāt* verses, investigate longitudinal changes across successive model updates, and develop interdisciplinary evaluation frameworks that integrate linguistic accuracy, theological consistency, interpretive reliability, and epistemological accountability in AI-assisted Qur'anic studies.

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