

Reader Audiences and Adaptation Requirements in Arabic and Azerbaijani Translation

Conceptual Article

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Abstract

Translation between Arabic and Azerbaijani requires decisions about readers as well as linguistic forms. A version intended for literary readers, tourists, students, or institutional users may need different explanations, registers, and presentation conventions. This conceptual article examines how audience characteristics can guide adaptation without permitting unsupported additions or the loss of culturally significant meanings. It combines a selective narrative review of translation studies, audience design, and relevant regional scholarship with six constructed translation examples. The discussion is delimited to Modern Standard Arabic and contemporary Azerbaijani in Latin script, while recognizing that other varieties and scripts require separate treatment. The analysis distinguishes linguistic restructuring, pragmatic adjustment, cultural explanation, and changes associated with genre and medium. It proposes a practical sequence linking an audience brief to the identification of non-negotiable content, the selection of proportionate adaptations, bilingual revision, and reader testing. The examples show why readability alone cannot establish translation quality: a fluent version may change attribution, certainty, interpersonal stance, or cultural reference. Audience-sensitive translation is therefore understood as accountable mediation. The proposed framework offers a basis for translator training and editorial practice; its effectiveness requires subsequent empirical evaluation with actual readers.

Keywords: *Arabic–Azerbaijani translation; reader audience; cultural adaptation; pragmatics; translation quality; audience design*

1. Introduction

A translation becomes useful when its readers can interpret it for the purpose for which it was produced. Correct vocabulary is necessary, but it does not establish whether an unfamiliar institutional term needs explanation, whether a request sounds appropriately courteous, or whether a literary character retains a recognizable voice. In Arabic–Azerbaijani translation, these questions arise alongside differences in grammatical organization and writing direction. They also arise within each language: a specialist and a first-time visitor may approach the same translated passage with different knowledge and expectations.

Audience-oriented translation has a substantial theoretical history. Nida (1964) placed the relation between a message and its receptors within the discussion of translation equivalence, while Nord (2018) connects translation decisions to the intended function of the target text. These approaches support asking who will read a translation and what they will do with it. They do not make every reader preference a sufficient reason to change a source. The practical issue is how to improve access while retaining the propositions, relationships, and stylistic features that matter in the particular assignment.

The language pair also has identifiable practical settings. An Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences announcement describes an Arabic–Azerbaijani phrasebook designed for guides and people working in tourism, museums, restaurants, retail, and transport (Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences, 2019). This publication provides a concrete example of audience-specific material. Its practical orientation illustrates the importance of identifying users and communicative tasks when selecting and organizing translated information.

Relevant regional scholarship addresses translation as cultural and analytical decision-making. Mammadova (2025) discusses the cognitive and pedagogical dimensions of translation, while Aliyev (2025) considers functional equivalence in Arabic–Azerbaijani legal terminology. Their contributions provide points of contact with the present discussion. However, a pedagogical argument or terminology comparison cannot substitute for evidence about how actual readers understand a complete translated text.

This article asks three questions. First, which audience characteristics should inform an Arabic–Azerbaijani translation brief? Second, what kinds of adaptation can improve access while preserving source meaning and communicative stance? Third, how can translators justify and evaluate these changes across different genres? The contribution is a practical synthesis of audience analysis and adaptation decisions, supported by worked examples. It proposes procedures for use and evaluation rather than claiming a universally optimal translation method.

2. Scope and Analytical Approach

The study is a conceptual analysis informed by a selective narrative review. Sources were identified through targeted searches for audience design, functionalist translation, Arabic translation, Arabic–Azerbaijani equivalence, translation quality, and machine translation. Publisher pages, journal records, institutional sources, and available texts were consulted to establish bibliographic details and the relevance of the cited arguments. This was not a systematic review: no exhaustive database search, quantitative synthesis, or claim of comprehensive coverage is made.

The discussion focuses on written translation involving Modern Standard Arabic and contemporary standard Azerbaijani in Latin script. Arabic dialects, historical Azerbaijani texts, and Azerbaijani written in other scripts raise additional questions and are outside the worked examples. The restriction describes the present analytical setting; it is not a definition of either language community. Broad grammatical orientation is informed by Ryding (2005) and Schönig (1998). English glosses are provided to make the examples accessible to readers who do not know both languages.

Six short examples were constructed for this article to isolate particular decisions. They are not extracts from a corpus, published translations, interviews, or reader experiments. Each example specifies a communicative situation and examines what a proposed rendering preserves or changes. The units of analysis are meaning, reference, stance, cultural information,

and usability. The examples therefore illustrate a decision procedure; they provide no frequencies of translation problems or measured evidence of audience preference.

Studies addressing other language combinations are used for their conceptual and methodological relevance. Their application to Arabic–Azerbaijani translation is developed through the analysis below and remains distinct from direct evidence about readers of this language pair.

3. Defining the Audience and the Limits of Adaptation

3.1. Audience as a set of relevant characteristics

An audience should be described through characteristics that affect interpretation. These include familiarity with the subject, reading proficiency, knowledge of the source setting, preferred language variety, purpose of reading, and the conditions in which the text will be used. Nationality alone is insufficient. Two Azerbaijani readers may differ substantially in their knowledge of Arabic religious terminology; two Arabic-speaking readers may have different expectations of a museum label or university notice.

Bell's (1984) account of audience design explains stylistic variation in relation to addressees and other participants. Applied here as an analytical perspective, it encourages translators to consider how a text positions its readers. A university message may address students directly, while a historical narrative may invite readers to observe a social world without sharing its assumptions. The perspective helps formulate questions about tone and address, although it is not itself a translation-quality instrument.

Audience knowledge should also remain a hypothesis open to checking. Sadigzadeh's (2024) discussion of linguistic relativism and universalism connects language, cognition, and culture. For translation practice, the useful implication is to investigate potentially unfamiliar categories without assuming that language determines a fixed worldview. A translator can ask whether a term is understood by a particular readership; a claim that all speakers of a language interpret it identically would require evidence beyond this theoretical discussion.

Table 1 summarizes an audience brief. The categories identify questions to resolve, not permanent classifications of people. The same reader may need a concise practical translation in one situation and a densely annotated version in another.

Table 1. Audience characteristics and their implications for adaptation

Audience and task	Information to establish	Possible adaptation and its limit
General reader seeking information	Subject knowledge and unfamiliar references	Explain necessary terms briefly; retain factual qualifications and attribution.
Specialist consulting a document	Disciplinary conventions and terminology	Preserve technical distinctions; do not substitute a familiar but non-equivalent institution.
Literary reader following a narrative	Genre, voice, and tolerance for unfamiliarity	Use selective notes or contextual explanation; preserve meaningful ambiguity and characterization.
Student learning language or culture	Proficiency and learning objective	Add glosses or parallel passages; distinguish teaching notes from the translated text.
Visitor using instructions	Immediate task, reading conditions, and medium	Make actions easy to locate; preserve dates, permissions, restrictions, and the force of requests.

3.2. Adaptation and accountability

Adaptation is used here to mean a justified adjustment in expression, explanation, or presentation for a specified readership and purpose. It includes restructuring a sentence, explaining a cultural item, or changing how navigation instructions are displayed. It does not automatically authorize changing what happened, who made a claim, or how certain a statement is. Those elements form part of the content that a translation assignment may require the translator to preserve.

Nord's (2018) functionalist account makes the translation purpose explicit while retaining an ethical concern for the participants in the communicative act. Chesterman's (2016) treatment of norms, strategies, and ethics likewise supports making decisions discussable. Building on these concerns, this article proposes that substantial adaptations should be documented through a short explanation of the reader need, the change made, and the potential loss. Documentation is especially useful when several acceptable renderings compete.

The distinction between translation and editorial rewriting becomes important when shortening or reorganizing a text. Schäffner (2012) examines the relationship between translation and editing through the concept of transediting. In the present framework, an abridged visitor text or an educational retelling may be legitimate, but its status should be clear. A summary presented as a complete translation prevents readers from recognizing what has been omitted. The degree of permitted intervention therefore belongs in the brief before drafting begins.

4. Adaptation Requirements Across the Language Pair

4.1. Linguistic restructuring and reference

Arabic and Azerbaijani organize grammatical information differently. Arabic has grammatical gender distinctions that are absent from the Azerbaijani third-person singular pronoun, while Azerbaijani frequently expresses relationships through suffixation. Descriptions of the two languages provide the background for examining these contrasts (Ryding, 2005; Schönig, 1998). The practical consequence is not that one language is more precise. Each offers different resources, and a translator must decide which information is recoverable from context and which remains unresolved.

Sentence restructuring should therefore begin with the relationships expressed by the source. Who performs the action? Who reports it? Is a condition attached? Does a pronoun refer to a person already identified? A smoother sentence may fail if it detaches a qualification from the claim it limits. Conversely, retaining source order can make these relations unnecessarily difficult to follow. Baker's (2018) discussion of equivalence at several linguistic levels offers a basis for examining these decisions beyond isolated word replacement.

Not every change in explicitness is cultural adaptation. A grammatical requirement may force a choice even when the intended readers already understand the topic. Distinguishing obligatory linguistic decisions from optional explanation helps prevent the translator from presenting an unsupported inference as a fact about the source. Where the referent is unclear, consulting surrounding text or the author is preferable to silently selecting a convenient interpretation.

4.2. Register and interpersonal meaning

Arabic register cannot be reduced to a single opposition between formal writing and informal speech. Ferguson's (1959) foundational discussion of diglossia remains relevant to the allocation of varieties to different functions, but the present article uses it as a starting point

rather than a complete description of contemporary practice. A translation brief should specify the variety and genre required. A public information leaflet in Modern Standard Arabic and dialogue representing a particular local speaker pose different problems.

Register also concerns the relationship between writer and reader. A courteous request, an authoritative instruction, and a friendly invitation can refer to similar actions while carrying different interpersonal meanings. The translator needs to preserve that distinction when choosing Azerbaijani address forms or Arabic request constructions. Simplifying a sentence should not convert a request into an obligation or a tentative suggestion into an institutional commitment.

Sadiqzade (2025) discusses emotion and its expression across linguistic and cultural contexts. This work is relevant to the possibility that emotional stance is conveyed through context and conventional expression as well as individual emotion words. For the present language pair, this suggests checking what a phrase does in its actual setting. It does not justify assuming that an Arabic speaker is necessarily indirect or that an Azerbaijani reader requires an emotionally neutral translation.

4.3. Cultural reference and explanatory detail

Culture-specific expressions pose a question of explanatory proportion. A reader may need to know what an object is to follow a passage, yet a lengthy explanation can interrupt a scene or change its emphasis. Options include an established equivalent, retention of the source term, a short descriptive addition, or a note. These options are discussed in translation methodology, including Baker (2018) and Dickins et al. (2017). Their usefulness depends on the role of the item in the passage and the intended reading experience.

For example, a cultural object in a museum label may warrant an explanation in the main text, while a recurring item in a novel may be explained once and subsequently retained. A classroom edition can place information in a margin or glossary. The additional explanation should answer a demonstrable interpretive need. It should not introduce an appealing historical story or symbolism that has not been verified.

Mammadova (2025) treats translation as a process involving analysis, cultural awareness, and practical choice. This supports a useful pedagogical exercise: students can prepare two versions of the same passage for different audiences and explain the resulting trade-offs. The analytical value lies in the justification. A longer version is not automatically better, and a familiar expression can be misleading when it replaces a culturally specific relationship with an apparently similar one.

4.4. Genre and specialized meaning

Genre sets limits on adaptation. Literary translation may need to preserve ambiguity, repetition, or unusual images. Public information often requires a clearly recoverable action. Specialized texts require stable terminology and careful treatment of the boundaries of a concept. House (2015) emphasizes the relation between translation evaluation and linguistic, situational, and sociocultural context, providing a basis for judging these differences without reducing quality to fluency alone.

Aliyev (2025) discusses the usefulness and limitations of functional equivalence in Arabic–Azerbaijani legal terminology. The relevant lesson here is conceptual: a familiar target-language label is not sufficient evidence that two institutional concepts coincide. Translation involving law must identify the relevant jurisdiction and document type. This article does not propose legal equivalents for professional use; it uses the domain to illustrate why audience

accessibility must remain subordinate to verified conceptual accuracy where consequences depend on exact meaning.

4.5. *Script and digital presentation*

A readable translation also needs a usable presentation. In the present scope, Arabic passages run from right to left and Azerbaijani passages from left to right. Mixed-script material can contain dates, abbreviations, identifiers, and links whose direction requires careful handling. The W3C's Arabic and Persian layout document addresses bidirectional text, shaping, punctuation, and other presentation issues; it is a Group Draft Note and should be treated as technical guidance in progress (World Wide Web Consortium, 2025).

For bilingual publication, a layout review should check the displayed order of numbers and punctuation, the association between labels and fields, and the integrity of copied text. A reader should be able to identify which instruction belongs to which language. These checks concern the functioning of the delivered document. They cannot be replaced by confirming that the underlying words were translated correctly.

5. Constructed Examples of Audience-Sensitive Decisions

The following constructed examples isolate decisions that arise under different translation briefs. Arabic is presented in its normal script, Azerbaijani in Latin script, and English glosses explain the intended meaning. Alternative renderings are assessed against the stated situation.

5.1. *A public welcome*

Situation: a short welcome addressed to visitors arriving in Nakhchivan.

أهلاً وسهلاً بكم في نخجوان.

Azerbaijani: *Naxçıvana xoş gəlmisiniz.*

English gloss: Welcome to Nakhchivan.

The Azerbaijani rendering conveys the welcoming act through a conventional expression. Explaining the component words of the Arabic formula would not help a visitor perform the immediate task of recognizing the welcome. In a language-learning edition, however, the same formula could be followed by a separate explanation of its form and use. The translation remains concise while the pedagogical commentary changes. This distinction illustrates why audience adaptation can occur around the translated sentence without requiring the sentence itself to carry every explanation.

5.2. *A request with a fixed day*

Situation: an administrative message requesting that an application be sent on Thursday.

يرجى إرسال الطلب يوم الخميس.

Azerbaijani: *Ərizəni cümə axşamı göndərməyiniz xahiş olunur.*

Alternative (direct public message): *Zəhmət olmasa, ərizəni cümə axşamı göndərin.*

English gloss: Please send the application on Thursday.

Both Azerbaijani versions preserve the request and the specified day, while differing in construction and tone. The choice depends on the institution's genre conventions and the way it addresses its readers. An instruction meaning “no later than Thursday” would introduce a

deadline relation that the example does not state. Similarly, replacing the request with an unqualified obligation would strengthen its force. Audience adaptation can simplify access to an action while preserving its temporal and interpersonal conditions.

5.3. Kinship and the source of a claim

Situation: a narrator reports information received from a maternal aunt.

قالت لي خالتي إن الاجتماع تأجل.

Azerbaijani: *Xalam mənə dedi ki, iclas təxirə salınıb.*

English gloss: My maternal aunt told me that the meeting had been postponed.

The kinship relation can be expressed directly with *xala*, and the reporting structure can remain visible. A shortened version meaning only “The meeting has been postponed” removes the person through whom the narrator learned the information. It changes the evidential situation even if the event appears unchanged. In a literary context, the kinship relation may also matter for characterization. This example demonstrates that cultural explanation is not always necessary: sometimes the more important requirement is to preserve an existing distinction and the source of the information.

5.4. A formula accompanying future intention

Situation: a character expresses an intention in dialogue.

سأرسل الرسالة غداً إن شاء الله.

Azerbaijani: *İnşallah, məktubu sabah göndərəcəyəm.*

English gloss: I will send the letter tomorrow, God willing.

Retaining the familiar formula can preserve a feature of the speaker's voice. Its interpretation still depends on the surrounding interaction: the translator should not automatically classify it as either an unqualified promise or an evasive refusal. An explanatory edition may discuss the formula in a note, while a narrative translation may allow context to carry its implications. As Sadiqzade's (2025) attention to contextual emotional expression suggests, interpersonal meaning cannot be recovered from a phrase in isolation. A rendering that adds “definitely” would resolve uncertainty without support from this sentence.

5.5. A cultural item in a visitor text

Situation: a short description of a Novruz table mentions *səmāni*, understood in this constructed scenario as sprouted wheat.

Azerbaijani source: *Novruz süfrəsində səməni vardı.*

كان على مائدة النوروز قمح مستنبت يسمى «سَمَنِي».

English gloss of the Arabic rendering: On the Novruz table there was sprouted wheat called “samani.”

The Arabic rendering adds a brief identification and retains a representation of the Azerbaijani name. The explanation makes the object recoverable for a visitor unfamiliar with it. The spelling of the retained name is an illustrative transliteration choice, not a proposed authoritative Arabic standard. For an actual museum or tourism publication, it should be checked against the institution's terminology and transliteration policy. A specialist edition might retain the original Latin spelling in a glossary. Additional claims about symbolism or historical origins would require separate verification. The general principle is to explain the reference without expanding it into an unsupported account.

5.6. Gender information that the source leaves open

Situation: an Azerbaijani sentence refers to a person whose identity must be established from the surrounding text.

Azerbaijani source: *O, sabah gələcək.*

Arabic (referent male):

سيأتي غداً.

Arabic (referent female):

ستأتي غداً.

English gloss: He or she will come tomorrow, depending on the referent.

The alternatives illustrate a grammatical decision, not two stylistic versions selected by reader preference. The Azerbaijani pronoun does not itself supply the gender information expressed in these Arabic verb forms. A translator should check the context and resolve the referent where possible. If the ambiguity is deliberate or genuinely unresolved, the problem should be recorded and discussed rather than hidden through an arbitrary choice. Reader orientation cannot supply facts that the source has not established.

6. A Framework for Planning and Evaluating Adaptation

The examples suggest that adaptation can be managed through a sequence of explicit decisions. The first step is an audience brief identifying readers, purpose, genre, variety, medium, and permitted intervention. The second is a statement of content that must survive: propositions, named entities, relationships, attribution, uncertainty, and any stylistic features essential to the text. These priorities should be settled before the translator begins simplifying or explaining.

The next step is to identify obstacles to interpretation. An obstacle may arise from an unfamiliar cultural item, a grammatical difference, a poorly signposted reference, or a display problem. The response should address that specific obstacle. If a glossary is sufficient, expanding every occurrence is unnecessary. If a sentence is difficult because its referent is unclear, replacing technical words will not solve the problem. Table 2 translates this reasoning into a practical editorial sequence.

Table 2. Proposed workflow for accountable adaptation

Stage	Question	Record or check
Define the brief	Who reads this text, for what purpose, and in which setting?	Audience, genre, language variety, medium, and permitted changes.
Identify essential content	What must remain true in every acceptable version?	Facts, relations, attribution, stance, and indispensable stylistic features.
Locate the obstacle	What may prevent this audience from interpreting the passage?	A specific linguistic, cultural, pragmatic, or presentation problem.
Select a response	Which change addresses the problem with the least unnecessary loss?	Alternative rendering and a short justification.
Revise bilingually	Has the change introduced or removed meaning?	Source comparison, terminology review, and checks on names and numbers.
Test reader use	Can intended readers understand or use the translation as required?	Task-based feedback and a record of unresolved misunderstandings.

Evaluation should keep fidelity and reader performance visible as separate questions. A fluent text can contain a serious mistranslation, while an accurate translation can be difficult to navigate. Following the contextual orientation of House (2015), reviewers can examine meaning and function together without assuming that a single readability score settles both. The proposed checks include semantic accuracy, preservation of stance, adequacy of necessary explanation, consistency of terminology, and usability of the delivered format. They are an editorial framework, not a validated rating scale.

Reader testing should use tasks appropriate to the genre. For an administrative message, readers might identify the requested action and the relevant day. For a cultural text, they might explain what an unfamiliar item refers to and distinguish the source's statement from the translator's added explanation. For a literary passage, discussion can examine who is speaking and which ambiguities remain. Such tests should be designed and reported before conclusions about successful reception are drawn; no reader testing was undertaken for this article.

7. Digital Tools and Translator Education

Machine translation and generative systems can produce candidate phrasings, but audience adaptation requires checking what those candidates do to the source. Kenny (2022) situates machine translation literacy within informed use, including pre-editing, post-editing, and the ethical questions surrounding these practices. A useful workflow keeps the original text available and records why a proposed change was accepted. An attractive output is a draft to assess, not evidence that the intended readership will understand it correctly.

Alisoy (2026) argues for a complementary relationship between automated translation and human judgment, with particular attention to cultural and pragmatic interpretation. The implication for the present framework is to assign responsibility for contextual decisions explicitly. A tool may suggest a gloss or a more direct instruction; the translator must still determine whether it changes certainty, attribution, or interpersonal force. This is especially relevant to examples such as a future intention accompanied by a conventional formula.

Koehn and Knowles (2017) identified challenges involving domain mismatch, training data, rare words, long sentences, alignment, and decoding in neural machine translation. Their study concerns the systems and conditions examined at that time. It should not be used to assign an untested performance level to a current tool or to the Arabic–Azerbaijani pair. Its continuing methodological relevance is the need to evaluate a system for the actual language direction, text type, and task instead of extrapolating from general claims about fluency.

Translator education can make these distinctions concrete. Students can receive a source passage and two briefs, then prepare versions for a specialist and a general reader. Their commentary should identify every substantive addition, omission, and reformulation, and explain what it enables the reader to understand. This extends the practical decision-making emphasis in Mammadova (2025). Comparing a student version with a machine-produced candidate can also make the allocation of judgment visible, consistent with Alisoy's (2026) discussion of human–machine collaboration.

8. Discussion and Limitations

The analysis supports a conditional account of adaptation. The audience brief determines which obstacles deserve attention, while the source and the assignment constrain the available solutions. The worked examples distinguish several mechanisms that can otherwise be confused: conventional equivalence in a greeting, register adjustment in a request, preservation of attribution, contextual interpretation of a formula, cultural explanation, and a

grammatically required choice. These mechanisms should not be described as a single movement toward greater simplicity.

The framework also addresses a tension between access and the representation of difference. Readers may benefit from an explanation precisely because the source refers to something unfamiliar. Replacing the item entirely can erase the information that motivated translation. Conversely, leaving every unfamiliar expression unexplained may make a practical text unusable. The choice depends on the function of the item and the type of encounter the translation offers. A gloss, glossary, or explanatory note can sometimes preserve cultural specificity while reducing the immediate burden on readers.

Several limitations remain. The literature review is selective, and the examples are short, constructed, and restricted to two written varieties. The article does not establish how representative the problems are, which versions readers prefer, or whether the proposed workflow improves translator performance. It also does not evaluate any machine translation system. Extending the framework to dialectal dialogue, historical writing, or different Azerbaijani scripts would require additional linguistic and reader evidence.

Future research could compare complete translations prepared under different audience briefs. A study might recruit readers with different levels of subject knowledge, ask them to perform genre-specific comprehension tasks, and combine their responses with independent bilingual assessment. Literary and practical texts should be studied separately where their goals differ. Reporting unsuccessful adaptations and disagreements would help show where a clearer target text has gained accessibility at the cost of an important source distinction.

9. Conclusion

Reader audiences shape the adaptation requirements of Arabic–Azerbaijani translation through their knowledge, purposes, language practices, and reading conditions. These characteristics should be established in a brief rather than inferred from nationality. Adaptation is most defensible when it addresses an identifiable interpretive obstacle and remains accountable to the source's meaning, stance, and genre.

The proposed framework links audience analysis with the preservation of essential content, proportionate intervention, bilingual revision, and reader testing. The constructed examples demonstrate why a greeting, a request, a kinship reference, a conventional formula, a cultural object, and an unresolved pronoun require different decisions. They do not establish an empirically validated model. The practical outcome is a set of questions that translators and editors can apply consistently, with the effectiveness of the resulting versions to be assessed in actual reading situations.

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