



## Simile Translation in Children's Literature: A Case Study of "Stubborn as a Mule and Other Silly Similes and Skin Like Milk, Hair of Silk"

Dr. Alshaymaa Yahya Alharbi\*

[ahemed@taibahu.edu.sa](mailto:ahemed@taibahu.edu.sa)

### Abstract

Language has variety of text types, one of which is of figurative nature. Figurative texts like simile, metaphor, images, etc., are challenging and difficult to be translated, namely, when to be used in teaching-learning process. The difficulty stems from the difference of conceptualization between source language (SL) and target language (TL). This study aims to explore the strategies applied by the translators when translating the similes occurring in two children's books called *Stubborn as a Mule and Other Silly Similes* and *Skin Like Milk, Hair of Silk*. A qualitative descriptive method was employed to describe simile translation in these two children's books. For translation, this study implemented the six strategies as suggested by Pierini's modal: literal translation, replacement of the vehicle with a different vehicle, reduction of the simile, retention of the same vehicle plus explication of similarity features, replacement of the vehicle with a gloss, and omission of simile. The findings showed that these strategies assist translators to sustain meaning and style with preserving cultural relevance for the reader. This study suggests that translators have to skilfully employ similes in order to preserve the imagery of the original text. This method makes it accessible and effectively involves young people in their own cultural setting. These strategies can be effective when translators are not practicing translation tasks as only transmitters of language, but when they bridge both languages in terms of knowledge and cultural background. Finally, the study highlighted the significance of cultural and linguistic equivalence in ensuring clear and understandable communication with the reader.

**Keywords:** Simile, Literal translation, Children's book, Cultural background.

\* Assistant Professor of Translation, College of Applied Sciences, Taibah University, Saudi Arabia.

**Cite this article as:** Alharbi, A. Y. (2026). Simile Translation in Children's Literature: A Case Study of "Stubborn as a Mule and Other Silly Similes and Skin Like Milk, Hair of Silk", *Arts for Linguistic & Literary Studies*, 8(1): 634 -650.

<https://doi.org/10.53286/7w2q8z07>

© This material is published under the license of Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0), which allows the user to copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format. It also allows adapting, transforming or adding to the material for any purpose, even commercially, as long as such modifications are highlighted and the material is credited to its author.



## ترجمة التشبيه في كتب الأطفال: دراسة حالة لـ "عنيد كالبلغ وغيره من التشبيهات الأخرى الطريفة، وبشرة كالحليب وشعر كالحرير"

د. الشيماء يحيى الحربي\*

[ahemed@taibahu.edu.sa](mailto:ahemed@taibahu.edu.sa)

### ملخص

تتعدد الأنماط النصية في اللغة، ومنها النصوص المجازية. وتشكل النصوص المجازية كالتشبيه والاستعارة والصور المجازية تحديًا وصعوبة في الترجمة، لا سيما عند استخدامها في عملية التعليم والتعلم. وتنشأ هذه الصعوبة من الاختلاف في التصور المفاهيمي بين اللغة المصدر واللغة الهدف. تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى استكشاف الاستراتيجيات التي يطبقها المترجمون عند ترجمة التشبيهات الواردة في كتابين للأطفال هما: "عنيد كالبلغ وغيره من التشبيهات الأخرى الطريفة" و"بشرة كالحليب، شعر كالحرير". وقد استُخدم المنهج الوصفي النوعي لوصف ترجمة التشبيه في كتابي الأطفال المذكورين. اتبعت الدراسة في الترجمة نموذج بيرين ذي الستة الإستراتيجيات وهي: الترجمة الحرفية، واستبدال أداة التشبيه بأداة مختلفة، واختزال التشبيه، والاحتفاظ بأداة التشبيه نفسها مع شرح خصائص الشبه، واستبدال أداة التشبيه بتعليق توضيحي، وحذف التشبيه. أظهرت النتائج أن هذه الاستراتيجيات تساعد المترجمين على الحفاظ على المعنى والأسلوب مع مراعاة الملاءمة الثقافية للقارئ. وتفتقر الدراسة أن على المترجمين استخدام التشبيهات بمهارة من أجل الحفاظ على الصورة المجازية للنص الأصلي، مما يجعل النص في متناول الجميع ويشرك الشباب بفعالية في بيئتهم الثقافية. يمكن أن تكون هذه الاستراتيجيات فعالة عندما لا يمارس المترجمون مهام الترجمة كمجرد ناقلين للغة، بل عندما يكونون جسراً بين اللغتين من حيث المعرفة والخلفية الثقافية. وأخيراً، سلطت الدراسة الضوء على أهمية التكافؤ الثقافي واللغوي في ضمان تواصل واضح ومفهوم مع القارئ.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التشبيه، الترجمة الحرفية، كتب الأطفال، الخلفية الثقافية.

\* أستاذ الترجمة المساعد، الكلية التطبيقية، جامعة طيبة، المملكة العربية السعودية.

للاقتباس: الحربي، ا. ي. (2026). ترجمة التشبيه في كتب الأطفال: دراسة حالة لـ "عنيد كالبلغ وغيره من التشبيهات الأخرى الطريفة، وبشرة كالحليب وشعر كالحرير"، *الآداب للدراسات اللغوية والأدبية*، 8(1): 634-650  
<https://doi.org/10.53286/7w2q8z07>

© نُشر هذا البحث وفقاً لشروط الرخصة Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0)، التي تسمح بنسخ البحث وتوزيعه ونقله بأي شكل من الأشكال، كما تسمح بتكييف البحث أو تحويله أو إضافته إليه لأي غرض كان، بما في ذلك الأغراض التجارية، شريطة نسبة العمل إلى صاحبه مع بيان أي تعديلات أجريت عليه.



## 1. Introduction

Translation is not only a process of translating each word into a different language but also understanding the meaning and finding the equivalence. Translation is "rendering the meaning of a text into another language in the way that the author intended the text" (Newmark, 1988, p. 5). Meanwhile, Catford (1965) stated that "translation is an operation performed on languages: a process of substituting a text in one language for a text in another language" (p. 8). In translating a text, a translator has an important role since the product of translation depends on his consideration in translating the text. Consequently, the translator must possess high competency to produce a good translation. He must master both linguistics skill, and cultural awareness in both the source language (SL) and the target language (TL) (Manipuspika, 2018).

Simile is a trope that describes one thing by comparing it with another, suggesting similarities between them, although they are clearly different (Alm-Arvius, 2003). Kleiser (1910) pointed out that simile lends freshness, originality, vividness, and accuracy to our writing and spoken language whether it be in a letter, speech, theme, or report. According to Cuddon (1980), simile is a figure of speech in which one thing is likened to another, in such a way as to clarify and enhance an image. This research focuses on simile translation since it is one of the cultural elements that translators encounter while translating a text. It is culturally-bound and therefore it can pose a challenge for the translator to decode and transmit its image in the best way possible. This research aims at exploring simile as a translation problem and investigating the methods used by translators to cross over cultural difficulty to best interpret the imagery presented.

Simile is a rhetorical device that makes the text more impressive. It is a comparison between completely two different objects. Richards (1963) divided the simile into two parts, the *tenor*, and the *vehicle*. The compared is called the *tenor* while the compared to is called the *vehicle*. The tenor and vehicle are connected by links, the most common of which are *like* and *as*.

According to Larson (1998), simile is composed of two propositions, and it has three parts which are: *Topic*, *Image*, and *Point of Similarity*. He confirmed that the correct understanding of any simile depends on the correct identification of the topic, image, and point of similarity. To demonstrate the parts as divided by Larsen let's consider the following example selected from Larson (1998:248):

The book is as heavy as an Elephant.

↑ ↑ ↑

Topic Point of similarity Image

Since similes are related to different cultural domains, this implies that the translator must conceptualize things on behalf of the target language readers and must look for a similar cognitive equivalence in target culture and in target language. The more the source language and target language



cultures conceptualize experience in a similar way, the easier the task of translation will be (Al-Hasnawi, 2007).

Although in the process of simile translation, translators can choose various translation methods, but many great differences between English and Arabic culture may also cause the untranslatability of similes. In order to avoid cultural conflicts caused by improper simile translation, we sometimes have to choose to sacrifice the vehicles or metaphorical connotation of the source text in the process of translation, so that the content of the original text can be expressed in a more understandable way when it comes into the target culture (Yang, 2019).

Some children's literature is characterized by its use of figurative language as a literary device. Among these devices are similes, which play a distinctive role in clarifying concepts for the reader. By making the concept more accessible, vivid and interactive images are created. This leads to a more precise communication of the idea and stimulates the reader's emotional engagement with the text. Since simile style is an integral and deeply rooted part of any language's culture, translating texts containing it is not always easy. As Pierini (2009) noted, the culture of a language shapes the use of similes in accordance with its origins and meaning. This necessitates a thorough understanding of the source language's culture to achieve an accurate and appropriate translation. Consequently, translators face challenges when translating children's books containing similes. They need to balance semantic accuracy with cultural appropriateness to convey the suitable understanding smoothly to children.

This study addresses the lack of existing research on the translation of children's literature containing metaphors. Furthermore, existing studies have not adequately considered metaphors in relation to the source culture, nor have they provided a suitable and rigorous methodology for handling metaphors in translation. This study aims to delve deeper into these issues and apply a more rigorous methodology.

This study aims to delve deeper into these issues and apply a more rigorous methodology. The book "Stubborn as a Mule and Other Amusing Similes" features exaggeratedly funny comparisons, transporting children to a world of joy, wonder, and laughter. What distinguishes this book is its engaging and accessible introduction to figurative language, while simultaneously allowing children to discover how words can sometimes play unexpected roles. This writing style helps children understand and appreciate the creative expressions in English. The book "Skin as Milk, Hair as Silk" presents beautiful metaphorical illustrations of words and expressions. This approach teaches children how to describe things in a poetic and colorful literary style, filling their imaginations with beautiful sensory images appropriate to their age and level of understanding. This book cultivates in children an appreciation for the beauty of language and teaches them how simple words can create entire worlds of feeling and imagination. The study analyzes the translation of



metaphors in two children's books to identify and explain the techniques translator i.e. the researcher herself, use when translating metaphors from English to Arabic.

Thus, the study sets upright the following research questions:

1. What strategies does a translator employ when conveying metaphors in selected children's books?
2. How are these strategies applied to the linguistic and cultural aspects?
3. To what extent do these strategies help in constructing clear mental images that are easily understood by the target audience?

By addressing these questions, this study aims to enrich translation theory, offer new perspectives on metaphors in children's literature, and contribute to identifying optimal methodologies for culturally appropriate metaphor translation.

## 2. Literature Review

A simile consists of two main elements: the content and the means of comparison (Richards, 1936). Larson (1998) identified three aspects: the subject, the image, and the point of comparison. These elements help translators determine where the intended comparison is located and how to convey it in the target language.

A translation of English into Persian involves cultural consideration in order to benefit from children's literature. Considering this, Asghari and Salmani (2016) attempted to analyze some folktales and conduct a study to the translation process of the two languages and how children react with the translated materials. However, they also acknowledge that strategic adjustments such as substitution, simplification, and omission are necessary, especially when addressing religious concepts, violent scenes, or cultural references that may be unfamiliar to child readers. This argument further expands the possibilities for translating metaphors. Their results confirm that the substitution and omission strategies analyzed in this study do not compromise accuracy but are necessary and ethical adjustments that protect children and ensure the relevance and comprehension of the text in a new cultural context.

In academic research, literature is cited as an example of the accumulation of conceptual understanding. The existence of comparison as a literary technique, the translation of Arabic literary works into English, and their use in education are important contemporary research topics. These difficulties arise from cultural differences and grammatical features between the source language and English. Zahrawi et al. (2024) enriched Arabic literature by translating texts containing comparisons for English-speaking readers. The study concluded that literal translation was the most common method used by students when translating comparisons between Arabic and English.



Many Arab and African countries are plagued by conflicts, political unrest, civil wars, and armed conflicts. As a result, many people with their families migrate to European and American countries, among others, leading to their exposure to other languages and cultures. This phenomenon inspires many writers to address two social conditions (localization and emigration) and to write about them in various forms. This has led to the inclusion of these themes in the writing and translation of literature, especially, for children. It can be a rich source for developing children's language skills. For example, Yin (2023) used the novel "The Secret Garden" as an example to demonstrate that localization often enhances emotional content and fosters a child's connection to the text. On the other hand, it highlights the negative aspects of emigration and cultivates cognitive development and aversion to it. Addressing this issue aligns with recent studies that encourage the translation of simile using strategies such as "mediating substitution" and "omission" as approaches that contribute to localization. This contrasts with literal translation, which fails to convey meanings in a language the child understands, thus contributing to the text's alienation. Therefore, a balanced translation approach plays a role in preserving the translated text and conveying the intended concepts to the recipient in a language and style that is intellectually and culturally accessible to them.

Hikmatova (2025) explores how translators choose translation strategies from linguistic and scientific perspectives, with a particular focus on how bilinguals process metaphors. Research shows that people understand familiar cultural metaphors more quickly and accurately. However, new or unfamiliar metaphors are more complex, requiring more effort and attention. This is particularly evident in research on children's book translation: readers often experience confusion when confronted with previously unfamiliar characters or images. In such cases, translators sometimes alter or even remove the image to make the text more accessible to new readers. However, if a metaphor is familiar and deeply ingrained, its meaning is easily understood and direct translation produces the best results. Ultimately, the strategy to translate is the final target of cognitive principles. It tends to let the reader feel at ease rather burden in order to get the meaning behind the metaphor used.

It is apparent that the translation of similes of cultural background implies a degree of complexity, as it has been shown in the study by Fahmi (2016) concerning Arabic and English proverbs. He emphasized the need to approach these idiomatic expressions with attention to functional and cultural equivalence. This also applies to the translation of similes in children's books. For instance, if an owl symbolizes wisdom in the Anglo-Saxon culture, then in order to maintain the meaning of the text and its effect on children, it would be desirable to replace it with a picture-like simile-for example, that of the Wise Man Lukman in Arabic. In this analysis, two strategies stood out, "replacement with alternative" and "omission," which reflected this



approach. By this way, similes can remain understandable and inspiring for children despite significant cultural differences.

According to Perini (2007), there are six metaphor translation strategies: literal translation, semantic replacement, semantic reduction, retention of additional interpretation, interpretive replacement, and deletion. Recent studies like Jankowiak and Lehka-Paul (2021) and Hong and Rossi (2021) supported the idea of the cognitive, cultural, and contextual determinants of metaphor translation. According to Yang (2019), children's literature posed additional problems related to brevity and accessibility. Consequently, translators need to ensure that metaphors are brief, culturally fitting, and at the same time meet children comprehension. This cannot be achieved unless there is cultural adjustment.

Milenković et al. (2024) studied how translation options affect readers' perceptions concerning quality, appropriateness, and meaning of metaphors. Using parallel translations and then asking for reader feedback. Their results clearly showed that even small changes in word or phrase structure can change the clarity of metaphors and appropriateness for readers. This is still applicable to sustain the underlying meaning as it is. This is directly related to metaphor translation in children's books. A simple decision by a translator—whether to translate words or paraphrase—can change how children understand the film and its emotional impact.

Al-Abbas and Al-Abbas (2024) working on translating poetry and cultural expressions from English to Arabic studied a series of popular children's books. They found that translators preferred paraphrasing to literal translation when dealing with metaphors. This study is both qualitative and quantitative. Although the focus here is on the translator's strategy for idiomatic word translation in the "Lazy Diary" series, the former approach is consistent with the present study and supports the use of Perrin's taxonomy for metaphor analysis.

To sum up, a review of previous studies reveals that linguistic, cultural, and cognitive considerations are intertwined when translating similes in children's books. These studies emphasize that the optimal approach to utilizing children's book translations lies in implementing specific strategies, particularly when the translated texts contain similes. Cultural differences between the two languages make it difficult to convey the image accurately, clearly, and appropriately for children. The more familiar a child is with figurative language, the more readily they can grasp the image the author intends to depict. While some studies have addressed the translation of texts containing similes, the field remains largely unexplored. This current study aims to bridge this gap by analyzing the strategies employed in translating metaphors in two children's books.



### 3. Methods

This study employed a qualitative descriptive method. It described Simile Translation in the children's books *Stubborn as a Mule and Other Silly Similes* and *Skin Like Milk, Hair of Silk*. The collected data were descriptively analyzed by using verbal explanation. The writer explored some similes presented in the two books.

In collecting the data, the study followed these steps: (1) The researcher read the two copies of the book that were selected as the source of the data; (2) chose certain segments of the books to analyze; (3) recorded the original texts and the translation of these segments; (4) categorized the data based on each translation strategy matching the data to the strategy to which it corresponds; (5) explained and described the implementation of each strategy. Based on the Pierini's (2009) classification, qualitative analysis is objective, consistent, and valid. Furthermore, the method of data presentation and coding fosters credibility among researchers. This procedure is fundamental in descriptive qualitative studies that rely on classification, contributing to reducing researcher bias and strengthening the validity of results. Therefore, explaining and justifying the use of credibility assessment among researchers transforms the analysis from mere personal interpretation into reliable scientific evidence.

### 4. Results

In order to start the process of analysis, it is important to mention the potential strategies suggested by Pierini (2009) to translate similes where he points out that it is the task of the translator to choose the most appropriate strategy to apply for each simile. Pierini (2009, p. 31) listed six possible strategies as follows:

1. Literal translation (retention of the same vehicle).
2. Replacement of the vehicle with a different vehicle.
3. Reduction of the simile, if idiomatic, to its sense.
4. Retention of the same vehicle plus explication of similarity feature(s).
5. Replacement of the vehicle with a gloss.
6. Omission of the simile

The segments selected were firstly checked. Then, the results were presented according to the strategies employed to show the translations of the subjects. Only four strategies were used in the translation of the two books. Tables 1-4 show the examples in English as (SL) and Arabic as (TL).

#### 1. Literal translation

The following similes are the ones that were translated through the use of the literal translation strategy. In the literal translation strategy, the words are translated literally, and the image is presented in the TL as it is in the SL. In the first example, "stubborn as a mule" the image being presented describes the



behavior of someone as being stubborn. The vehicle of this comparison "the mule" is conceptualized in both the SL and the TL to represent the behavior of stubbornness. Therefore, the translator was able to implement the literal translation strategy on this simile. Table 1 shows examples of literal translation strategy.

**Table 1**

*Examples of Literal Translation Strategy*

SL	TL
stubborn as a mule	عنيذٌ كالبعغل
as bald as an egg	أصلع كالبيضة
as tall as a giraffe	طويلٌ كالزرافة
as strong as an ox	قويٌّ كالثور
as loud as thunder	جهوريٌّ كالرعد
as wet as a fish	مبتلٌ كالسمكة
She's as sharp as any spike	إنها حادةٌ مثل الشوكة
Cheeks as red as roses	وجنتان بلون الورود الحمراء
They'll multiply like rabbits	تتكاثر أعدادها كما الأرانب
Clever as a fox	ذكيٌّ كالثعلب

In the second example, "as bald as an egg", the simile links the bald head of someone to be similar to an egg. The point of similarity is the smoothness of the egg's surface and the lack of hair on the person's head. Even though the vehicle of this comparison which is the egg is not familiar for the TL readers; however, the image lent itself to the translation easily, making it clear.

As for the third example, "as tall as a giraffe", the point of similarity here is the tallness, which is one of the most distinctive qualities of the giraffe "الزرافة". In this image, the person's height is compared to that of a giraffe. The literal translation here served the purpose well as the image was clear.

Coming to the next example which is "as strong as an ox", the ox which is "الثور" here representing a symbol of strength and power. The image describes and compares a person to an ox where the point of similarity is the strength. Even though the vehicle in this image, which is the ox, may not be conceptualized in the TL as a symbol of strength – rather as a symbol of impulsiveness – but this quality of strength attributed to the ox can be perceived somehow quickly while reading the image.

The following simile "as loud as thunder" describes the sound of someone or something to be very loud and resounding as if it is the roaring sound of a thunder. The word "جهوري" used by the translator to transmit the powerful sound and it actually has a huge impact on transmitting the image in the best way possible.



Moving to the next example which is "as wet as a fish"; the image here describes someone to be completely wet as if compared to a fish submerged in water all the time. The translator used the word "مبتل" to describe how wet the person is.

After that, comes the example "she's as sharp as any spike". Here the image is of something so prickly and sharp-pointed that can prick anything easily. The literal translation method here was convenient as the image can be understood easily by TL readers. And the translation is presented as follows "إنها حادة مثل الشوكة"

As for the example "cheeks as red as roses," here the cheeks of the girl are being described as very rosy and reddish and the image of red roses used to depict this picture. The translator was able to use the literal translation method for this simile as the image is similarly perceived in TL and therefore the translation turned out as follows "وجنتان بلون الورود الحمراء."

In the sentence "they'll multiply like rabbits," the intended meaning is that the numbers of certain thing can easily and rapidly be duplicated in an analogy of the situation of rabbits when they reproduce their infants in huge numbers. The translated sentence "تتكاثر أعدادها كما الأرانب" is very well understood by the TL audience as this image is culturally close to their perception.

The last example listed in this section is "clever as a fox." The fox here is attributed to be clever, and as for the TL readers, the same quality – cleverness – is linked to the fox. However, in the TL culture the fox is perceived to be sneaky as well clever, it is usually associated with pulling tricks and being sly. So, for TL readers, they can relate to the literal translation of this simile which is "ذكي كالتعلب" but they might read more into it and add the element of cunning into their understanding of this sentence as if it is read between the lines.

All in all, it can be stated that the same rule applies to all of the examples where nouns like *mule*, *egg*, *giraffe*, *ox*, *thunder*, *fish*, *spike*, *rose*, *rabbit* and *fox* are perceived through the same traits in both SL and TL. Hence, these similes did not present any problem while translating them and could lend themselves easily to the TL.

## 2. Replacement of vehicle

On the other hand, the following similes used vehicles that are culturally bound and the use of these nouns in the TL would not sound natural and the audience might miss the image presented by the simile. Therefore, the translator had to walk the extra mile to find vehicles that are common to the TL audience and could easily and clearly manifest the traits being in common. Table 2 shows examples of the translation strategy identified as replacement of vehicle.



Table 2

*Examples of Replacement of Vehicle Translation Strategy*

SL	TL
as thin as a rail	نحيلٌ كالعمود
shine like a new penny	يلمع كالذهب
flat as a pancake	مسطح كالورقة
fresh as folded laundry	منتعش كالندى في الصباح
her tears ran like rain	انسابت دموعها كالشلال
skin like milk	جلدٌ أبيض كالثلج
smooth as Jazz	ينساب كأنغام الموسيقى
at a snail's pace	بطيء كالسلحفاة
slow as thick molasses	بطيء كالسلحفاة

Examining the first example, a "rail" is a common thing in the SL culture while it is not so prevalent in the TL culture. Therefore, there was a need to find a noun that better represents the quality of being thin. The most suitable and comprehended by TL reader is the word "العمود". When doing a back translation to check how the image would result, the back translation is "as thin as a stick"

In the second example, the words "new penny" would seem awkward once translated into the TL causing the reader to be buzzed. While the use of the noun "الذهب" sounds smooth and apparent to the TL reader that it is the symbol of glow. For this simile, the back translation would be as follow: shines like gold.

Moving on to the third example, "as flat as a pancake"; the "pancake" is not a food on the list of the TL local cuisine and it may not be known to many of the TL readers, let alone knowing the shape of it to be able to grasp the image. A very good change of vehicle is the choice of the word "الورقة". It clearly represents the image and is a familiar noun to TL readers. Back translating this simile is to say "as thin as a paper".

The fourth example goes as "fresh as folded laundry." It describes the state of someone feeling so refreshed, comfortable and energized. As for the TL audience this image is far from being culturally conceptualized in TL and consequently the intended meaning is very farfetched. Using the replacement method, the translator used a vehicle that is easily perceived cultural-wise; and hence provided this translation "منتعش كالندى في الصباح." The back translation for this sentence is "fresh and the morning dew."

In the sentence "her tears ran like rain," the tears here are being compared to rain as to indicate the intensity of crying. The same image can be represented in TL but using a different vehicle for comparison which is the waterfall instead of the rain and so the translator presented his translation of this simile as follows "انسابت دموعها كالشلال" and the back translation of it is "her tears flew like a waterfall."



The next example describes the color of someone's skin to be white and resembling the color of milk by saying "skin like milk" and as this image is not culturally conceptualized the same in TL as it is in SL so the translator resorted to the method of replacement by means of finding an image that appeals to the TL reader in terms of having something so white to which other elements can be compared. This image is of a flower so it goes as "جلدٌ أبيض كالقُلِّ" and the back translation is "skin like Arabian Jasmine."

The following example "smooth as Jazz" describes the smooth movement of someone or something as if it is Jazz music flowing. However, the Jazz music is not a music genre that is familiar to TL culture and therefore the translator needed to replace this vehicle by using "ينساب كأنغام الموسيقى". The back translation is "flows smoothly like music tones."

The last two examples in this category represent the same image of someone being very slow, and each of the case study books presented one of these similes. They are "at a snail's pace" and "slow as thick molasses". These two images describe someone or something moving slowly; neither of the images is close to the TL readers and therefore they needed to be replaced by the noun "السلفاة" as it is the best and more relatable one to convey to the TL reader the action of slow motion. As for back translation, this would be "as slow as a turtle".

In a nutshell, having similes where the images are far from being conceptualized in TL the same way as they are in SL, hence comes the need to replace the vehicle of these images with ones that are closer to the culture of TL.

### 3. Retention of the same vehicle plus explication of similarity feature

In this strategy, the translator can translate the image as it appears in the SL since it is an accessible image to the TL reader. However, the translator might make minor adjustments; for example, changing the part of speech of certain words or adding more explanation to better clarify the image.

In the following example, the translator decided to change the noun "eyes" into a combination of two words "ثاقب النَّظْر". This phrase explains that the point of comparison is the sharpness of the hawk's eyesight. Table 3 shows some examples of translation.

**Table 3**

*An Example of translation*

SL	TL
eyes like a hawk	ثاقب النَّظْر كالصقر

It is possible though to translate this simile literally, but the use of this extra detail renders the image as more vivid and closer to the TL reader. To best understand how the translator worked around this simile, let's explore the back translation which is "penetrating eyesight as hawk's".



#### 4. Omission of the simile

The last category of strategies is where the simile is omitted. Here the translator would resort to explaining the image in descriptive method to make it appeal to the TL reader. Table 4 states some examples when simile is omitted in translating from English into Arabic.

**Table 4**

*Examples of Simile translation by omission strategy*

SL	TL
fits like a glove	ملائمة له تماماً
as happy as a lark	يشعر بسعادةٍ غامرة
the voice was like music to his ears	طُربُ لسماع هذا الصَّوت
easy like a piece of cake	سهلةٌ كشرِبِ الماءِ

The first simile depicts the image that something is very suitable and convenient and compares it to how a glove fits the hand. The translator decided to omit the simile and just explain the concept of having something that fits perfectly by saying "ملائمة له تماماً". A back translation of this phrase would be "it fits him perfectly well".

In the second simile "as happy as a lark", the character is described to be very happy and that is what the translator conveyed through describing the feelings of this character in a verbal sentence in TL which is "يشعر بسعادةٍ غامرة". To better understand this verbal sentence used here; let's explore a back translation of it as it reads as follow: he is overjoyed.

Another verbal sentence "طُربُ لسماع هذا الصَّوت" is used to describe the feelings of joy that the character experienced when hearing that certain voice. And so, this description has made the image clear to the TL reader. To clarify it more, here is the back translation "he was delighted to hear that voice" which shows the technique that the translator used to best convey the message to TL audience.

The last example in this category is the expression "easy like a piece of cake." It is usually used to describe how easily a certain thing can be done or achieved. For the TL audience this simile is not quite familiar and so the translator needed to omit this expression and use one that is closer to the reader's perception. Therefore, the translator used the following sentence instead "سهلةٌ كشرِبِ الماءِ".

In summary, this strategy of omitting the simile and replacing it with another one best works when the SL similes and comparisons are from being conceptualized the same in TL cultural, and there is the need to convey the picture depicted as close as possible.



## 5. Discussion

The results of this study clearly demonstrate the complexity of decision-making when translating figurative expressions for young readers. Using the strategy proposed by Perini (2009), translators found a simple yet rigorous method. This method was recorded as fast to sustain clarity of understanding when translation occurs. It aids to make the cultural and cognitive varieties appear zero i.e. neither losing the originality of the target text nor being weird to the audience.

Translators often directly choose similar expressions, such as "stubborn as a mule" or "tall as a giraffe," and translate them word for word. This approach is sometimes more effective than creating new expressions. Direct translation is not only possible, but often convenient when ideas overlap. This is consistent with the opinion of Al-Hasnawi (2007). It is easier for translators to translate general concepts. Definitely, the example of "smart as an eagle" is more interesting. On the one hand, "smart" is a universal concept, and Arabic readers can accurately grasp its meaning. But even such a simple translation can subtly distort the original meaning. This is reminiscent of the analysis of Zahrawi et al. (2024), who studied the use of animal metaphors across cultures

Controversially, the translator took a different approach by replacing expressions like "thin as a rail" and "smooth as jazz" with familiar phrases that readers could easily understand. This is directly related to Hikmatova's (2025) theory of cognitive load. When metaphors are ambiguous or not fully understood by a culture, they only serve as barriers—confusing rather than helping. Therefore, the translator changed "العمودpillar" to "railway" and "انغام موسيقية" to "jazz." This is exactly how Yin's (2023) concept of "localization" works. If a metaphor is already familiar to the reader, it works immediately. The meaning remains the same, but the form is closer to the reader.

Sometimes the translator retains a familiar metaphor, such as changing "eyes like a hawk" to "النظر كالصقر" (i.e. translation based on meaning rather than word-for-word translation). At first glance, everything seems to make sense. Kids do not have trouble understanding the word "bird," but if the metaphor is not obvious enough, they probably will not even notice. When translators point out similarities directly, the meaning becomes clear without losing the power of the imagery. This approach is similar to the concept of "added meaning" proposed by Asghari and Salmani (2016) who stated that translators should consider and compensate for cultural differences, but cannot completely ignore changes in the text of the target language.

As metaphors were removed, they were replaced with expressions such as "fits like a glove" or "as easy as a piece of cake". Regarding this, Widarwati et al. (2024) explicitly stated that it is more important to easily understand and express the original meaning than to preserve it faithfully. This approach stems from ethical and educational considerations, especially in children's literature. Asghari and Salmani (2016)



expressed that sometimes elements should be completely removed or rewritten in order to make a text more accessible to children. For example, the Arabic idiom "سهلة كشرب الماء" can be used in place of "as easy as a piece of cake". Despite the loss of illustrations of the translation, the text remains vivid and concise.

Ultimately, as this study demonstrates, all translators' decisions respond directly to the requirements of translating children's literature i.e. the text being accurate and comprehensible. The results suggest that there is no single "correct" strategy; instead, there is a set of tools that can be used depending on the cultural similarities between the two texts. The successful transmission of simile depends heavily on the translator's understanding of both the source and target cultures. These are not only acting as conduits of words but also as cultural mediators. Therefore, this study contributes to establishing a practical basis for applying translation theory and understanding how to communicate literature in a way that resonates with children in their new linguistic world.

## 6. Conclusion

This research paper concluded that in the process of translating the similes provided in the children's books *Stubborn as a Mule and Other Silly Similes*, and *Skin like Milk, Hair of Silk*; the translator implemented four out of the six strategies suggested by Pierini (2009) i.e. literal translation of the simile; replacement of the vehicle of the simile with a more culturally familiar one; retention of the vehicle plus adding more explanation to better clarify the point of similarity; and omission of the simile and explaining it in descriptive language. The results demonstrated the constant need for the child reader to have a clear cognitive and cultural understanding when reading literature containing metaphors translated into Arabic. Literary texts with similes are not easy to translate; they require flexibility from the translator in every situation. Recognizing that translators must master the translation of similes, this study offers practical tools to help them faithfully convey the original text while preserving its spirit and vitality in the new language. This case study also concluded that upon the use of these strategies, the images were best conveyed to the TL reader and appealed to the audience in a culturally natural way.

## Limitations

This study included only two children's books, limiting the generalizability of its findings. The researchers analyzed only published translations and did not consider translators' revisions or intentions.

## Recommendations for Future Research

The study recommends that the scope of investigating texts-culturally bound should occupy wide coverage of studying with focusing on children-related literature written. This type of literature if translated carefully can help developing children's language. Further research can deal with the concept of cognition and its relation to the pedagogical impact of metaphorical translation on young readers.



## References

- Al-Abbas, L. S., & Al-Abbas, S. S. (2024). Translating idiomatic expressions in children's literature: A case study of rendering *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* into Arabic. *Research Journal in Advanced Humanities*, 5(4). <https://doi.org/10.58256/k9p99080>
- Al-Hasnawi, A. R. (2007). A cognitive approach to translating metaphors. *Translation Journal*, 11(3). <http://translationjournal.net/journal/41culture.htm>
- Alm-Arvius, C. (2003). *Figures of speech*. Studentlitteratur.
- Asghari, M., & Salmani, B. (2016). Cultural-context adaptation in translation of children's short stories from English to Persian. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 6(5), 965–971. <https://doi.org/10.17507/tpls.0605.08>
- Catford, J. C. (1965). *A linguistic theory of translation*. Oxford University Press.
- Cuddon, J. A. (1980). *Literary terms and literary theory* (5th ed.). Basil Blackwell.
- Fahmi, M. E. E. (2016). A cross-cultural study of some selected Arabic proverbs and their English translation equivalents: A contrastive approach. *International Journal of Comparative Literature & Translation Studies*, 4(2), 51–57. <https://doi.org/10.7575/aiac.ijclts.v.4n.2p.51>
- Hikmatova, A. Q. (2025). Cognitive aspects of simile processing in bilingual (English–Uzbek) speakers. *The Lingua Spectrum*, 6, 207–211.
- Hong, W., & Rossi, C. (2021). The cognitive turn in metaphor translation studies: A critical overview. *Journal of Translation Studies*, 5(2), 83–115.
- Jankowiak, K., & Lehka-Paul, O. (2021). Novel metaphor translation is modulated by translation direction. *Applied Psycholinguistics*, 43(1), 177–192. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0142716421000461>
- Kleiser, G. (1910). *Similes and their use*. Funk & Wagnalls.
- Larson, M. L. (1998). *Meaning-based translation: A guide to cross-language equivalence* (2nd ed.). University Press of America.
- Milenković, K., Tasić, M., & Stamenković, D. (2024). Influence of translation on perceived metaphor features: Quality, aptness, metaphoricity, and familiarity. *Linguistics Vanguard*, 10(1), 285–296. <https://doi.org/10.1515/lingvan-2023-0086>
- Manipuspika, Y. S. (2018). Analyzing translation of metaphor: A case study. *Studies in Linguistics and Literature*, 2(1), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.22158/sll.v2n1p1>
- Newmark, P. (1988). *A textbook of translation*. Prentice Hall.
- Pierini, P. (2009). Simile in English: From description to translation. *CÍRCULO de Lingüística Aplicada a la Comunicación*, 29, 21–43. <http://www.ucm.es/info/circulo/no29/pierini.pdf>
- Richards, I. A. (1936). *The philosophy of rhetoric*. Oxford University Press.



- Widarwati, N. T., Purnomo, B., Astuti, P. I., & Wijayava, R. (2024). Analysis of translation shift in bilingual children's storybooks. *English Review: Journal of English Education*, 12(2), 659–666. <https://doi.org/10.25134/erjee.v12i2.8891>
- Yang, W. (2019). Translation analysis of metaphor translation in *The Black Slaves*. *Cross-Cultural Communication*, 15(4), 27–31. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3968/11406>
- Yin, Y. (2023). The application of domestication and foreignization in English–Chinese translations of children's literature: A case study of *The Secret Garden*. *Lecture Notes on Language and Literature*, 6(15), 121–125. <https://doi.org/10.23977/langl.2023.061520>
- Zahrawi, R. M. T., Syed Abdullah, S. N., Mustapha, N. F., & Redzuan Abdullah, M. A. (2024). Strategies for translating Arabic similes in Al-Manfaluti's *Al-Abrat* into English. *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development*, 13(1), 223–240. <https://doi.org/10.6007/IJARPED/v13-i1/20002>

