

Cultural Representation in the Translation of Children's Stories into Arabic: An Analytical Study of Cultural Stereotypes

التمثيل الثقافي في ترجمة قصص الأطفال إلى العربية
دراسة تحليلية للصور النمطية الثقافية

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Abstract:

This study examines the representation of cultural stereotypes in children's stories translated and adapted into Arabic, focusing on how cultural representations are preserved, modified, or reshaped in the target texts. A qualitative comparative textual analysis was conducted on five widely known children's stories and their Arabic versions: *The Little Mermaid*, *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*, *The Little Match Girl*, *The Emperor's New Clothes*, and *Pinocchio*. Forty culturally salient source-target instances were identified and analyzed according to cultural representation, stereotype classification, translation strategy, and resulting transformation. The findings show that cultural representation extends beyond national identity to include family relationships, gender roles, social class, poverty, religion, authority, material culture, and

childhood behavior. Preservation was the most frequent strategy, accounting for 45% of the coded instances, while cultural adaptation and explication were also used. Of the 24 instances classified as stereotypical or potentially stereotypical, 54.2% were preserved, while the remainder were modified, adapted, mitigated, or omitted. The findings suggest that Arabic versions generally retain important cultural features while selectively adapting moral and pedagogical meanings for young readers. The study highlights the role of children's literature translation as a form of cultural mediation and calls for culturally sensitive translation and adaptation practices.

Keywords: children's literature; cultural representation; cultural stereotypes; Arabic translation; cultural adaptation; translation strategies

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دراسة تحليلية للصور النمطية الثقافية

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الملخص

الحفاظ هي الأكثر شيوعاً، إذ مثلت 45% من الحالات المرمزة، في حين استخدمت أيضاً استراتيجيتا التكيف الثقافي والتصريح، ومن بين الحالات الأربع والعشرين التي صنفت على أنها نمطية أو يحتمل أن تكون نمطية، حُوِّظ على 54.2% منها، في حين عدلت الحالات المتبقية أو كُيفت أو خُففت أو حُذفت، كما تشير النتائج إلى أن النسخ العربية تحتفظ عموماً بالعناصر الثقافية المهمة، مع إجراء تعديلات انتقائية على المعاني الأخلاقية والتربوية بما يتناسب مع القراء الصغار، وتبرز الدراسة دور ترجمة أدب الأطفال بوصفها شكلاً من أشكال الوساطة الثقافية، وتدعو إلى تبني ممارسات واعية بالحساسية الثقافية في ترجمة أدب الأطفال وتكييفه.

الكلمات المفتاحية: أدب الأطفال؛ التمثيلات الثقافية؛ الصور النمطية الثقافية؛ الترجمة إلى اللغة العربية؛ التكيف الثقافي؛ استراتيجيات الترجمة

تتناول هذه الدراسة تمثيل الصور النمطية الثقافية في قصص الأطفال المترجمة والمكيفة إلى العربية، مع التركيز على كيفية الحفاظ على التمثيلات الثقافية أو تعديلها أو إعادة تشكيلها في النصوص الهدف، وقد أُجري تحليل نصي مقارنة نوعي لخمسة قصص أطفال معروفة على نطاق واسع ونسخها العربية، وهي: الحورية الصغيرة، وذات الرداء الذهبي والدببة الثلاثة، وبائعة الكبريت الصغيرة، وملابس الإمبراطور الجديدة، وبينوكيو، وقد جرى تحديد وتحليل أربعين حالة ثقافية بارزة من النص المصدر إلى النص الهدف، وفقاً لتمثيل الثقافة، وتصنيف الصورة النمطية، واستراتيجية الترجمة، والتحول الناتج عنها.

وتُظهر النتائج أن التمثيل الثقافي يتجاوز حدود الهوية الوطنية ليشمل العلاقات الأسرية، والأدوار النوعية (ذكوراً وإناثاً)، والطبقة الاجتماعية، والفقر، والدين، والسلطة، والثقافة المادية، وسلوك الأطفال، وكانت استراتيجية

1. Introduction

Children's literature translation constitutes an important form of intercultural communication because translated stories introduce young readers to experiences, values, social practices, and cultural environments beyond their immediate contexts. Children's books can therefore function as cultural bridges, allowing readers to encounter unfamiliar ways of life while also transmitting assumptions about family, gender, authority, morality, and social behavior (Tabbert, 2002; O'Sullivan, 2013). Translation in this field consequently involves more than the transfer of linguistic meaning. It also involves decisions concerning which cultural representations should be retained, modified, explained, adapted, or omitted.

The translation of children's literature is particularly complex because the intended audience consists of young readers whose linguistic, cultural, and cognitive resources may differ substantially from those of adult readers. The translator therefore operates within an asymmetrical communicative relationship in which adults select, translate, edit, and mediate texts for children (Queiroga & Fernandes, 2016). Children's literature may also involve dual readership because texts can simultaneously address children and adults. These characteristics give translators considerable influence over how cultural meanings are presented to young readers.

Cultural representation becomes especially important when source and target cultures differ considerably. A translated story may retain unfamiliar cultural practices and institutions, replace them with target-culture equivalents, explain them, or remove them altogether. Such decisions can influence the cultural image constructed in the target text. Previous research has shown that translators may function as cultural mediators or creators whose decisions influence how foreign cultures are represented for target readers (Ettobi, 2006). Translation may therefore contribute to intercultural understanding, but it can also reproduce simplified or stereotypical representations when source-text assumptions are transferred without sufficient consideration of their cultural implications.

These issues are particularly significant in children's literature because young readers may have limited cultural knowledge with which to interpret unfamiliar representations. Epstein (2010) argues that translators of children's literature exercise considerable influence because children may be less aware of textual manipulation than adults. Consequently, decisions involving deletion, retention, replacement, and addition may have implications beyond linguistic accessibility. Similarly, research on children's literature translation has identified cultural sensitivity as a major concern because culturally specific behaviors and values may be interpreted differently across cultural contexts (Alidmat & Ayassrah, 2022).

The Arab context adds another dimension to the problem. Children's literature in the Arab world has historically been influenced by moral, didactic, and ideological considerations, and translation practices may be affected by protective approaches toward material considered unsuitable for young readers (Mdallel, 2003). At the

same time, translated children's literature provides Arabic-speaking readers with opportunities to encounter cultures beyond their own. The translator must therefore negotiate between cultural preservation and target-reader accessibility.

One particularly important but relatively underexplored issue is the treatment of cultural stereotypes. A cultural representation does not necessarily constitute a stereotype. Stories inevitably contain representations of food, clothing, family structures, social institutions, religious beliefs, and everyday practices. A stereotype emerges when a group or social identity is represented through generalized, simplified, fixed, or reductive characteristics. The translation of such representations raises questions about whether stereotypes are preserved, modified, adapted, mitigated, or omitted in the target text.

Although previous research has examined cultural adaptation, culture-specific elements, translation strategies, and cultural representation in children's literature, comparatively limited attention has been devoted to the systematic examination of cultural stereotypes in English-Arabic children's literature. Existing studies have often addressed broader cultural or linguistic problems without systematically comparing source and target texts to determine how stereotypical representations change during translation. This study addresses this gap by examining selected internationally known children's stories and their Arabic translations and by analyzing the relationship between cultural representations, translation strategies, and changes in stereotypical meaning.

The study addresses four research questions:

1. How are cultural stereotypes represented in children's stories translated into Arabic?
2. What translation strategies are used in transferring cultural representations in children's literature?
3. To what extent do translators modify or adapt cultural stereotypes in Arabic translations of children's stories?
4. How do translation choices influence the cultural image presented to young Arabic readers?

The study contributes to translation studies by focusing specifically on the relationship between children's literature, cultural representation, and stereotyping in an English-Arabic context. It also has practical implications for translators, publishers, educators, and researchers interested in culturally sensitive approaches to children's literature translation.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Translation of Children's Literature

The translation of children's literature involves linguistic, cultural, functional, and audience-related considerations that distinguish it from many forms of adult literary translation. Children's texts are produced for a particular readership, and

translators must therefore consider comprehensibility, age appropriateness, literary function, and cultural accessibility. The asymmetrical relationship between adult mediators and child readers means that translators have considerable responsibility for determining what cultural meanings are made available to children (Queiroga & Fernandes, 2016).

The literature also identifies the dual readership of children's literature as an important factor in translation. Adults may participate in selecting, publishing, translating, purchasing, or reading children's books, while children constitute the primary intended audience. This situation can lead translators to employ manipulation techniques such as omission, addition, simplification, and adaptation. Such procedures may be motivated by linguistic difficulties, cultural differences, pedagogical concerns, or ideological considerations.

Tabbert (2002) emphasizes the diversity of approaches that have developed in children's literature translation, reflecting the tension between fidelity to the source text and accommodation of target readers. O'Sullivan (2013) similarly situates children's literature translation within broader translation studies while emphasizing its distinctive communicative and cultural conditions. These perspectives indicate that children's literature translation should not be viewed as a simple transfer between two linguistic systems. It is a process of mediation between a source text, a target culture, and a particular readership.

The cultural dimension is particularly relevant when children's stories contain unfamiliar customs, institutions, beliefs, or social practices. Translators may preserve such elements, explain them, replace them with target-culture equivalents, or remove them. These choices can influence not only comprehension but also the cultural image constructed in the target text.

2.2 Culture and Cultural Representation in Translation

Translation is inherently connected to cultural representation because texts carry assumptions about communities, identities, values, and social relationships. The translator acts as an intermediary between cultures and therefore participates in constructing the representation of the source culture for target readers. Ettobi (2006), for example, conceptualizes translators as mediators and creators whose choices can influence the cultural perspectives conveyed through translated texts. Faiq (2008) similarly emphasizes the possibility of cultural misrepresentation when translation reproduces dominant discourses or simplified images.

From this perspective, translation choices are not culturally neutral. A translator who retains a source-cultural practice allows the target reader to encounter an unfamiliar cultural element. A translator who replaces it with a familiar target-culture equivalent reduces cultural distance but may also remove part of the source culture's distinctiveness. Similarly, an explanatory translation may facilitate understanding while simultaneously interpreting the cultural element for the reader.

Culture-specific elements are therefore central to children's literature translation. Hagfors (2003) demonstrates that the translation of culture-bound items such as names and food can affect readers' access to the cultural layers of a text. Such elements may appear small linguistically but can contribute substantially to the construction of cultural identity. Children's literature can also contribute to cultural integration by exposing readers to unfamiliar cultural practices while allowing them to retain awareness of their own cultural identities (Akrofi et al., 2008).

2.3 Translation Strategies for Cultural Representation

Research has identified a wide range of strategies for dealing with cultural differences. These include literal translation, transliteration, explanation, adaptation, cultural substitution, localization, omission, and addition. Chen and Liu (2020), for example, identify combinations of transliteration and explanation as strategies for representing Hakka cultural elements. Le (2024) discusses localization, adaptation, cultural equivalents, annotation, and consultation with cultural informants as approaches for bridging cultural gaps.

A central distinction in translation studies is the relationship between domestication and foreignization. Domestication brings source-cultural elements closer to the expectations of target readers, whereas foreignization retains features of the source culture and makes cultural difference visible. In children's literature, the balance between these orientations is particularly important because translators must simultaneously preserve cultural meaning and ensure accessibility.

Previous research suggests that adaptation is frequently used in children's literature translation. Al-Fouzan (2008) identifies adaptation as a major procedure for dealing with cultural references, involving processes such as deletion, replacement, and addition. Mehassouel and Benlakder (2019) likewise emphasize the difficulties involved in transferring cultural references across linguistic and cultural boundaries.

However, the presence of adaptation does not necessarily mean complete domestication. A translator may preserve the cultural setting of a story while adapting the language or making moral meanings more explicit. Translation strategies should therefore be examined in relation to their effects on cultural representation rather than treated as isolated technical procedures.

2.4 Cultural Stereotypes in Children's Literature

Cultural stereotyping has long been recognized as an important issue in children's literature. Research has documented the underrepresentation and misrepresentation of minority cultures and has shown that stereotypical portrayals can influence how readers understand social groups (Cohen, 1969; Creany, 1993; Taylor, 2000). Such representations can affect both children belonging to represented groups and children who encounter those groups through literature.

Stereotypes in children's literature are not restricted to ethnicity or nationality. They may also involve gender, social class, poverty, family roles, authority, disability, age, or behavioral expectations. Sezer (2026), for example, identifies stereotypical gender representations in translated children's literature, including associations between masculinity and bravery or dominance and femininity and kindness or gentleness. Such representations can contribute to the reproduction of social hierarchies.

The relevance of stereotypes to children's literature translation is therefore twofold. First, the source text may already contain stereotypical representations. Second, the translator may reproduce, alter, weaken, or intensify those representations. The translation process can consequently affect the cultural and social meaning of the source narrative.

2.5 Cultural Stereotypes in the Translation of Children's Literature

Research on children's literature translation emphasizes the need for cultural sensitivity when dealing with culturally specific references. Alidmat and Ayassrah (2022) show how cultural differences can create challenges for translators and potentially influence representations of childhood. Al-Fouzan (2008) and Mehassouel and Benlakder (2019) emphasize the role of adaptation and other procedures in managing cultural differences.

The issue becomes more complex when the cultural element being translated is itself stereotypical. Preserving a stereotype may maintain the narrative's original meaning, but it may also reproduce a simplified representation for a new readership. Conversely, modifying or removing the stereotype may make the target text more culturally acceptable but can also alter the source author's characterization or narrative purpose.

This tension is particularly important in children's literature because translation decisions are made within a pedagogical context. A translator may choose to make a moral lesson more explicit, soften a problematic representation, or add material that encourages particular forms of behavior. Such choices can reshape the relationship between culture and morality in the target text.

2.6 Arabic Translation of Children's Literature

Research on children's literature translation into Arabic identifies cultural, moral, ideological, and linguistic challenges. Dukmak (2012), in a study of Harry Potter translations, found variation in the treatment of cultural references, names, and wordplay and identified tensions between adequacy and acceptability. Mdallel (2003) argues that children's literature in the Arab world has been strongly influenced by moral and didactic considerations as well as protective cultural measures.

Suleiman (2005) points to the limited empirical research and systematic policies surrounding the translation of children's literature into Arabic. More recent

work has continued to demonstrate the importance of cultural orientation in children's literature translation. Binfahd et al. (2026), for example, examined the translation of Emirati children's literature into English and identified a strongly domesticating approach that reduced cultural difference.

Although these studies demonstrate substantial scholarly interest in cultural adaptation and representation, a more specific gap remains. Relatively limited attention has been given to systematic source-target analysis of cultural stereotypes in Arabic translations of children's stories. In particular, there is a need to identify whether stereotypes are preserved, modified, adapted, mitigated, or omitted and to relate these transformations to specific translation strategies. The present study addresses this gap through a qualitative comparative analysis of five internationally known children's stories and their Arabic translations.

3. Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in a view of translation as cultural mediation, in which translators do not simply transfer linguistic meaning but make choices that can preserve, modify, or reshape cultural representations. The framework draws particularly on the concepts of domestication and foreignization to examine how culturally unfamiliar elements are transferred into Arabic. Domestication involves adapting source-cultural elements to make them more familiar to target readers, whereas foreignization retains features of the source culture. These concepts are particularly relevant to children's literature, where translators may adapt, explain, replace, or omit cultural elements to accommodate young readers and the target cultural context.

The study also draws on the concept of cultural representation, understood as the ways in which cultures, communities, identities, social practices, and ways of life are constructed through language. Within this framework, cultural stereotypes are treated as a particular form of representation involving generalized, simplified, or fixed assumptions about particular groups or social identities. The analysis therefore compares cultural representations in the English source texts and their Arabic translations to identify translation strategies and determine whether stereotypes are preserved, modified, adapted, mitigated, or omitted. The framework establishes a direct analytical relationship between the source representation, the translation strategy, and the resulting target representation.

4. Methods

4.1 Research Design

The study employed a qualitative comparative textual analysis. This design was selected because the purpose was to examine how cultural representations and stereotypes are constructed in internationally known children's stories and how they are rendered in Arabic. The study did not seek to measure children's responses or statistically evaluate translation quality. Instead, it focused on the relationship

between source-text representations, target-text renderings, translation strategies, and changes in cultural meaning.

The comparative approach enabled culturally salient passages to be examined in their source and target forms. Each instance was analyzed in relation to the cultural representation it contained, whether it involved stereotyping, the translation procedure used, and the resulting transformation.

4.2 Corpus

The completed corpus consisted of five internationally circulated children's stories and their Arabic translations:

1. *The Little Mermaid*
2. *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*
3. *The Little Match Girl*
4. *The Emperor's New Clothes*
5. *Pinocchio*

The Arabic versions were drawn from the Hindawi collection *Alwan min Qisas al-Atfal fi al-Adab al-'Alami* (ألوان من قصص الأطفال في الأدب العالمي), translated by Muhammad Najda Raji Shahid and reviewed by Mustafa Muhammad Fuad; Hindawi dates the Arabic edition to 2021. The collection brings together stories from different literary and cultural traditions. The five selected stories do not all originate in English: *The Little Mermaid*, *The Little Match Girl*, and *The Emperor's New Clothes* are stories by Hans Christian Andersen, while *Pinocchio* originates in Italian literature. *Goldilocks and the Three Bears* is a traditional English-language tale with multiple versions. Accordingly, the study treats the Arabic texts as translations/retellings of internationally circulating children's narratives rather than assuming that all five are direct translations from English originals. Standard English versions were used as comparative source texts where available, while substantial divergences were recorded as adaptation rather than as simple translation.

The analysis was limited to narrative text. Illustrations, publishing practices, translator interviews, and reader responses were outside the scope of the study.

4.3 Data Collection

The selected Arabic texts were compared with established English versions of the corresponding narratives where an English version was available. Because the Arabic collection contains retellings and adaptations, comparison focused on corresponding narrative episodes rather than assuming word-for-word equivalence or a single identifiable English source edition. Culturally salient elements were identified in both texts, including representations of social practices, family relationships, gender roles, social class, religion, authority, material culture, childhood behavior, and other features contributing to cultural meaning.

Particular attention was given to instances in which a group, social identity, behavior, or cultural characteristic was represented in a generalized, simplified, idealized, or fixed manner. Each relevant source-text instance was recorded together with its corresponding Arabic rendering and contextual information.

A total of 40 culturally salient source-target instances were identified and coded in the study's analytic dataset. The aggregate frequencies reported below should be read as the researcher's coding record; the manuscript's representative-case table provides independently traceable examples, while the complete 40-item coding sheet should be retained as the study's underlying audit trail.

4.4 Coding and Analysis

The coding framework consisted of four principal dimensions: (1) cultural representation, (2) stereotype classification, (3) translation strategy, and (4) resulting transformation.

Cultural representations were categorized according to their function and type. A stereotype was coded only when a representation constructed a generalized, fixed, simplified, or reductive image of a social or cultural group or identity. An isolated depiction of an individual, event, or socioeconomic condition was not automatically treated as a stereotype. This distinction was applied to prevent cultural difference or narrative hardship from being equated with stereotyping. The coding therefore distinguished between (a) culturally salient representation, (b) stereotypical or potentially stereotypical representation, (c) the strategy used in the Arabic version, and (d) the resulting textual transformation.

Translation strategies included preservation/transference, cultural adaptation, explication, domestication, and reduction/omission. Where several procedures appeared in the same passage, the strategy producing the most significant effect on cultural representation was assigned as the primary strategy.

The transformation of stereotypical representations was classified as preserved, modified, adapted, mitigated, or omitted/reduced. The researcher conducted the initial coding manually and subsequently reviewed the complete coded dataset to check category consistency. Ambiguous cases were reconsidered in their wider narrative context before a final classification was assigned. Representative source-target cases were then checked against the published Arabic texts and corresponding public-domain or openly available English versions before being included in Table 5.

4.5 Scope and Ethical Considerations

The study is limited to textual analysis of published children's stories and their Arabic translations. It does not examine illustrations, publishing contexts, translator interviews, or actual reader responses. Consequently, claims concerning the potential cultural significance of the translations are based on the representations made

available in the texts and do not constitute direct claims about children's psychological or behavioral responses.

Only the textual material necessary to demonstrate the analytical findings is reported. The study uses published literary texts for academic analysis and does not reproduce substantial portions of copyrighted material.

5. Results

The analysis identified 40 culturally salient source-target instances across the five selected stories. The findings demonstrate that cultural representation is embedded not only in explicit references to countries or traditions but also in family relationships, gender roles, socioeconomic conditions, authority structures, religion, material culture, and expectations concerning childhood behavior. The aggregate coding results are presented in Tables 1–4, followed by representative source-target evidence in Table 5.

Table 1. Distribution of Culturally Salient Representations

Cultural representation	Frequency	Percentage
Family and social relationships	7	17.5%
Gender and social roles	6	15.0%
Social class and socioeconomic status	6	15.0%
Material culture and everyday practices	6	15.0%
Social hierarchy and authority	5	12.5%
Religion and spirituality	4	10.0%
Childhood, behavior, and education	4	10.0%
Cultural/national difference	2	5.0%
Total	40	100%

Family and social relationships constituted the largest category, followed by gender and social roles, social class, and material culture. These results indicate that culture in children's literature is communicated not only through explicit references to countries or traditions but also through assumptions about family organization, social status, authority, acceptable behavior, and interpersonal relationships.

The Arabic version of *The Little Match Girl* closely retains the source narrative's representation of poverty, cold, hunger, inadequate clothing, and social isolation. The official Hindawi text also retains the New Year's setting, Christmas imagery, and explicit religious reference. By contrast, the Arabic *Little Mermaid* is not simply preservative: it substantially changes the ending of Andersen's story by allowing the mermaid to defeat the sea witch, recover her voice, and marry the prince. This difference is important because it demonstrates that cultural preservation and narrative adaptation can coexist within the same corpus.

Goldilocks and the Three Bears illustrates another form of adaptation. The Arabic version retains the family structure, household organization, and private-property motif, but it adds an explicit moral resolution in which Goldilocks recognizes her wrongdoing, returns to apologize, and becomes friends with the bears. *The Emperor's New Clothes* retains the hierarchical structure of emperor, officials, and courtiers and the fear of admitting that the clothes cannot be seen. In *Pinocchio*, the Arabic version combines school, parental sacrifice, temptation, moral guidance, and the Talking Cricket in a retelling that is substantially closer to modern children's adaptations than to Collodi's full original narrative.

Table 2. Stereotype Classification

Classification	Frequency	Percentage
No clear stereotype	16	40.0%
Potential/implicit stereotype	14	35.0%
Explicit stereotype	10	25.0%
Total	40	100%

Of the 40 culturally salient instances, 24 (60%) contained a clear or potential stereotypical dimension. The remaining 16 represented culturally specific material without sufficient evidence to classify them as stereotypes. Most stereotypical instances were implicit or context-dependent rather than openly derogatory.

The coded instances illustrate several forms of social stereotyping. In *The Little Match Girl*, poverty-related representations were treated as stereotypical only where deprivation was linked to a generalized social position rather than simply to the individual protagonist's circumstances. In *The Emperor's New Clothes*, court officials are represented as conformist figures who fear challenging authority because doing so could threaten their social position. This constitutes a social representation of bureaucratic conformity rather than an ethnic or national stereotype.

Gender stereotyping is visible in *The Little Mermaid*, where female identity is associated with beauty, voice, romantic love, and marriage. The Arabic translation preserves these associations while also maintaining the heroine's agency. In *Pinocchio*, the disobedient or idle child is constructed as morally problematic, with rejection of schooling and preference for pleasure leading to negative consequences.

Table 3. Translation Strategies

Translation strategy	Frequency	Percentage
Preservation/transference	18	45.0%
Cultural adaptation	9	22.5%
Explicitation	6	15.0%
Domestication	4	10.0%
Reduction/omission	3	7.5%
Total	40	100%

Preservation/transference was the dominant strategy, accounting for 18 of the 40 instances. This indicates that the Arabic translations generally maintained culturally marked narrative elements rather than systematically replacing them with target-culture equivalents.

The tendency is particularly visible in *The Little Match Girl*, where the New Year's setting, Christmas imagery, food, falling star, and religious reference are retained. Similarly, *The Little Mermaid* retains the royal structure, Sea King, princesses, palace, prince, royal celebrations, marriage, and sea witch. The source-cultural identity of these elements therefore remains visible in the Arabic text.

Cultural adaptation was the second most frequent strategy. One of the clearest examples is *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*, in which the Arabic version adds a reconciliation sequence. Goldilocks returns to the bears, apologizes, recognizes that her behavior was wrong, and becomes their friend. This addition shifts the narrative emphasis toward apology, politeness, recognition of wrongdoing, and reconciliation.

Explicitation accounted for six instances. In *Pinocchio*, for example, the relationship between idleness, avoidance of school, and negative consequences is made accessible through a relatively explicit moral presentation. The strategy therefore affects not only linguistic accessibility but also the pedagogical salience of the representation.

Table 4. Transformation of Stereotypical Representations

Transformation	Frequency	Percentage
Preserved	13	54.2%
Modified	4	16.7%
Adapted	4	16.7%
Mitigated	2	8.3%
Omitted/reduced	1	4.2%
Total	24	100%

Table 5. Verified Representative Source-Target Cases

Story	Source-text evidence	Arabic target evidence	Strategy	Transformation
The Little Mermaid	The Andersen version states that if the prince marries another, the mermaid will die and become sea foam. (World Stories Bank, n.d.; Andersen, 1999)	The Hindawi version has the mermaid defeat the sea witch, regain her voice, and receive the prince's marriage proposal.	Cultural/narrative adaptation	Majorly adapted
Goldilocks and the Three Bears	A common English version ends with Goldilocks running out of the house and not returning. (Village of English, 2009)	The Hindawi version adds: «قَرَرْتُ أَنْ تَعُودَ لِلْإِعْتِزَارِ لَهُمْ» and ends with the bears and Goldilocks becoming friends.	Cultural adaptation / addition	Adapted
The Little Match Girl	The English Andersen text presents a poor, barefoot girl on the last evening of the year, shivering with cold and	The Hindawi version retains «فتاةٌ صغيرةٌ فقيرةٌ، حافية القدمين وحاسرة الرأس» and the cold,	Preservation	Preserved

Story	Source-text evidence	Arabic target evidence	Strategy	Transformation
	hunger. (Andersen, 2004)	hunger, and New Year's setting.		
The Emperor's New Clothes	The English version describes cloth invisible to anyone unfit for office or too stupid to use. (Andersen, 1999)	The Arabic version retains «غير صالح» لمنصبه، أو غبي بشكل لا يُصدَّق» and preserves the officials' fear of admitting they see nothing.	Preservation	Preserved
Pinocchio	A modern English retelling presents Geppetto as a clockmaker, the Blue Fairy as the source of life, and the Cricket as Pinocchio's moral guide before school. (World Stories Bank, n.d.)	The Hindawi version opens with «صانعُ ساعاتٍ عجوزٍ اسمه جيبيتو» and introduces the Blue Fairy and a talking Cricket who helps Pinocchio make right decisions.	Adaptation / explicitation	Adapted

Table 5 presents representative cases from the 40-item coded dataset; it summarizes the analytical observations reported in the study rather than reproducing

extended copyrighted source passages. The complete coding sheet can be supplied as supplementary material if required by the journal.

The most significant finding is that preservation was more common than transformation. More than half of the stereotypical or potentially stereotypical representations were transferred without substantial change in their underlying social or cultural meaning.

The representation of poverty in *The Little Match Girl* illustrates this pattern. The Arabic translation retains the girl's poverty, hunger, cold, isolation, and vulnerability. Similarly, the representation of authority in *The Emperor's New Clothes* remains centered on the emperor's status and the courtiers' fear of admitting that they cannot see the nonexistent clothing.

Taken together, the results answer the four research questions as follows: cultural stereotypes were represented mainly through social domains such as gender, poverty/class, authority, and childhood behavior; preservation was the most frequent strategy, followed by cultural adaptation and explicitation; stereotypical representations were more often preserved (54.2%) than modified, adapted, mitigated, or omitted; and translation reshaped cultural representation primarily through selective moral and pedagogical adaptation rather than wholesale replacement of source-cultural settings.

Modification and adaptation were particularly evident when the Arabic version altered the moral or social implications of a representation. In *Goldilocks*, the addition of an apology changes the trajectory of the child's characterization by emphasizing recognition of wrongdoing and the possibility of repairing social relationships. In *The Little Mermaid*, the heroine's agency is retained alongside the source narrative's associations between female identity, beauty, love, and marriage.

Overall, the cross-corpus findings demonstrate four major patterns. First, cultural representation is pervasive but is not synonymous with stereotyping. Second, preservation is the dominant strategy. Third, adaptation and explicitation are especially relevant to moral and pedagogical meanings. Fourth, stereotypes are more often preserved than neutralized.

6. Discussion

The findings must nevertheless be interpreted within the limits of the design. The corpus consists of five stories and 40 coded instances, and the analysis is restricted to narrative text. It does not establish how children actually interpret the representations identified, nor does it measure the psychological or behavioral effects of translated stories. The results should therefore be understood as evidence about the cultural and social meanings constructed in the translated texts and made available to readers. Larger corpora, multiple coders, translator interviews, and reader-response research could provide additional evidence in future studies.

The findings contribute to the existing literature by connecting four analytical dimensions that are often examined separately: cultural representation, stereotype classification, translation strategy, and transformation. They also extend research on English-Arabic children's literature by focusing specifically on how stereotypical representations change, or remain unchanged, in translation. The study therefore supports a view of translation in which cultural continuity and cultural transformation can occur simultaneously.

The treatment of stereotypes also demonstrates that preservation does not automatically mean endorsement. In *The Emperor's New Clothes*, for example, the conformity of court officials contributes to the story's critique of authority and social pressure. Similarly, the gender representation in *The Little Mermaid* combines stereotypical associations with female agency. The Arabic translation retains both dimensions rather than simply eliminating the stereotypical associations. These cases show why stereotype analysis must consider narrative function and context, not merely the presence of a potentially stereotypical characteristic.

The *Goldilocks* and the *Three Bears* case illustrates how adaptation can reshape a representation without replacing the source narrative. The added apology and reconciliation sequence gives the child's behavior a clearer moral trajectory and emphasizes recognition of wrongdoing and social repair. This finding is consistent with research identifying adaptation as an important procedure in children's literature translation and with scholarship emphasizing the moral and pedagogical dimensions of children's texts (Al-Fouzan, 2008; Mdallel, 2003).

The dominance of preservation is particularly significant. Although previous research has identified adaptation, domestication, omission, and replacement as common procedures in children's literature translation, the present corpus shows that substantial portions of the source-cultural setting were retained. This suggests that accessibility for young readers does not necessarily require the removal of cultural difference. At the same time, preservation did not mean that the target texts were completely foreignizing: adaptation and explicitation were used selectively to make particular moral or social meanings more accessible. The overall pattern is therefore best characterized as substantial cultural preservation accompanied by selective adaptation and explicitation.

A central finding is the distinction between cultural representation and stereotyping. The corpus contained many culturally marked elements that did not qualify as stereotypes. A representation was classified as stereotypical only when it constructed a generalized, fixed, simplified, or reductive image of a social group or identity. This distinction is important because otherwise cultural difference itself could be incorrectly interpreted as stereotyping. The findings also show that the stereotypes identified were predominantly social rather than national or ethnic, particularly in relation to gender, poverty/class, authority, and childhood behavior.

The findings confirm that translating children's literature from English into Arabic is a process of cultural mediation rather than simple linguistic transfer. Cultural meaning in the corpus was constructed not only through explicit cultural references but also through family relations, gender roles, social class, authority, material culture, and expectations concerning childhood behavior. This supports previous work that treats children's literature translation as a culturally and ideologically mediated activity (Tabbert, 2002; O'Sullivan, 2013).

7. Implications and Recommendations

The findings have practical implications for translators, publishers, educators, and translator-training programs. Because cultural representations and stereotypes are frequently preserved in translation, translators should approach children's literature as a culturally sensitive form of mediation rather than as a purely linguistic task.

For translators, a systematic cultural-sensitivity review should form part of the translation process. Translators should distinguish between culturally significant elements that contribute to the identity of the source narrative and representations that construct social groups through unnecessarily simplified characteristics. The aim should not be to remove every stereotype, particularly when a stereotype serves a critical or narrative function. Instead, translators should consider whether the representation is endorsed, criticized, challenged, or historically situated and whether their translation choices unintentionally strengthen its implications.

For publishers and editors, cultural and ideological review can be incorporated into the editorial process for translated children's books. Particular attention may be given to representations of gender, poverty, social class, religion, authority, and unfamiliar cultural practices. Such review should not seek to eliminate cultural difference but should ensure that cultural representations are transferred responsibly and remain appropriate for the intended age group.

For educators, translated children's literature can provide opportunities for developing intercultural awareness. Teachers can encourage children to notice differences in family structures, traditions, social practices, and character representations. Where a story contains a stereotype, educators can help readers distinguish between a particular literary representation and a general statement about an entire culture or social group.

The findings also suggest that translator-training programs should give greater attention to cultural representation, stereotyping, adaptation, and the ethical dimensions of translating for children. Training should move beyond the treatment of individual culture-specific terms and consider how larger narrative structures construct cultural and social meanings.

Future research should extend the analysis to larger corpora of Arabic translations and adaptations of children's literature and should distinguish direct translations from retellings, abridgements, and culturally adapted versions. Studies could compare different Arabic publishers or historical periods and, where possible, incorporate translator interviews and reader-response research to examine how cultural representations are selected, transformed, and interpreted.

8. Conclusion

This study examined how cultural representations and stereotypes are transferred, adapted, and reshaped in five internationally known children's stories and their Arabic versions. The analysis shows that the corpus should not be treated as a set of straightforward English-to-Arabic translations: the Arabic texts include clear retelling and adaptation, particularly in *The Little Mermaid*, *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*, and *Pinocchio*.

Cultural representation in the corpus extended beyond national identity to include gender, social class, poverty, family relationships, religion, authority, material culture, and childhood behavior. Preservation remained the dominant strategy in the aggregate coding, but the verified representative cases demonstrate that adaptation can produce substantial changes in narrative and moral meaning. The Arabic *Little Mermaid*, for instance, transforms Andersen's tragic/spiritual resolution into a successful marriage, while *Goldilocks* adds apology and reconciliation. These findings support an understanding of translation as cultural mediation in which preservation and adaptation operate together.

The study highlights the important role of translators and adapters in constructing the cultural representations available to young readers. Culturally sensitive practice should therefore involve not only decisions about individual culture-specific items but also attention to larger narrative transformations, especially changes to gender roles, moral agency, social hierarchy, poverty, religion, and childhood behavior. Future research should use larger corpora and, where possible, document the precise source edition and translation pathway for each target text.

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