

Balancing fidelity, acceptability, and readability in children's story translation

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Abstract

Children's literature is crucial for the cognitive, emotional, and social development of young readers. In line with the Agency for Language Development and Cultivation's initiatives to translate children's books, this study aims to identify which aspects of translation quality are most effectively maintained and how they impact target readers, particularly regarding engagement across various reading levels. This descriptive qualitative study employed a product-oriented approach with a multiple-case study design to evaluate different reading levels on the Penjaring website. A purposive sampling technique was utilized to select data sources relevant to the study's objectives. Primary data, the original texts and their translations, were obtained from the StoryWeaver website and the Penjaring website respectively. Informants, including raters and children of various ages, assessed translation quality. The study followed four analytical stages, namely domain analysis, taxonomy analysis, componential analysis, and cultural-theme analysis. The results indicate that the translation attempts to maintain the three aspects. However, while translations emphasize accuracy and acceptability, readability is often compromised due to complex sentence structures and unfamiliar vocabulary. Although readability scores are generally high, young readers frequently struggle with comprehension. This underscores the need to achieve a better balance between fidelity to the source text and accessibility for young audiences.

Abstrak

Menyeimbangkan keakuratan, keberterimaan, dan keterbacaan pada terjemahan cerita untuk anak

Sastra anak penting bagi perkembangan kognitif, emosional, dan sosial para pembaca usia dini. Sejalan dengan program penerjemahan cerita anak oleh Badan Pengembangan dan Pembinaan Bahasa, kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi aspek kualitas terjemahan yang paling dipertahankan dan dampaknya terhadap pembaca sasaran terkhusus pada adanya perbedaan level bacaan. Kajian yang didesain secara deskriptif kualitatif ini menerapkan pendekatan berorientasi produk dengan studi kasus jamak. Hal tersebut dilakukan karena kajian ini juga bertujuan untuk mengevaluasi level bacaan pada situs web Penjaring. Teknik pengampilan sampel yang diterapkan adalah pengambilan sampel purposif. Teknik tersebut digunakan untuk menyeleksi sumber data yang relevan dengan tujuan penelitian. Data primer diperoleh dari buku sumber dari StoryWeaver dan terjemahannya dari Penjaring. Informan yang terlibat meliputi *rater* untuk menilai kualitas dan anak-anak dari berbagai usia untuk uji keterbacaan. Selain itu, terdapat empat tahap analisis yaitu analisis domain, taksonomi, komponensial, dan tema budaya. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa terjemahan cerita anak tersebut cenderung mempertahankan tiga aspek tersebut, meskipun keterbacaan mendapatkan nilai yang rendah dibandingkan dua aspek lainnya. Hal ini terjadi karena penggunaan struktur kompleks dan kosakata yang tidak umum bagi anak-anak. Oleh karena itu, penerjemah perlu mencapai keseimbangan yang lebih baik antara kesetiaan terhadap teks sumber dan kemudahan anak-anak untuk mengakses bacaan.

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1 Introduction

Children's literature refers to a broad category of written works specifically created for the entertainment, education, and development of children. This genre encompasses various forms, including picture books, fairy tales, and young adult fiction, each tailored to different age groups and developmental stages (Nikolajeva, 2014). These works play a significant role in shaping a child's cognitive, emotional, and social growth. As noted by Bettelheim (1976) and Nikolajeva (2014), children's literature is instrumental in improving cognitive development by building comprehension skills, such as following storylines, understanding cause and effect, and predicting outcomes. Moreover, the influence of children's literature extends beyond cognitive growth; it also fosters emotional and social development. According to Hunt (1994), Nodelman (1990), and Zipes (2009), these stories allow children to explore different cultures, values, and social interactions as depicted through the characters and narratives. This dual function of children's literature—educational and cultural—highlights its unique capacity to shape young minds in multiple dimensions.

Given the diverse developmental stages of children, it is essential that writers and educators consider the reading difficulty and developmental appropriateness of children's books. This is where the concept of leveling books becomes critical. Chall (1996) emphasizes that books should be leveled to match the cognitive abilities of children at different stages, ensuring that the text complexity aligns with the reader's developmental stage. The importance of this approach is underscored by Allington (2006), who argues that children who struggle with overly difficult texts often become discouraged and may lose interest in reading. Providing books that are appropriately leveled causes children more likely to experience success in reading, which in turn sustains their motivation and engagement with literature.

To create these leveled books, significant contributions have been made by experts (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996; Stenner et al., 1983). These scholars have developed comprehensive guidelines for determining reading levels, grounded in both theoretical research and empirical studies. As per these guidelines, the difficulty of a book increases across levels, involving more complex structures, vocabulary, and content. Additionally, images are often incorporated in children's literature to provide visual representation, which is particularly beneficial for young readers who are not yet strong readers (Bader, 1976; Nikolajeva & Scott, 2001; Nodelman, 1990; Paivio, 1986). These images not only aid in comprehension but also stimulate imagination, making the reading experience more engaging and accessible for children.

As children's literature plays such a pivotal role in the cognitive, emotional, and social development of young readers, its translation becomes crucial in a globalized world. When children's literature is translated, it opens a window to the cultures, traditions, and values of other countries, offering young readers a broader perspective of the world. This cultural exchange is particularly important in fostering cross-cultural understanding from an early age. Oittinen (2002) highlights that translating children's literature is not just about linguistic accuracy but also about capturing the cultural essence of the original text in a way that resonates with young readers in the target language. Thus, translating children's literature serves as a bridge that connects young readers to the diverse cultural landscapes of the world, enriching their understanding and appreciation of global cultures. On the other hand, there are aspects that should be maintained in translation, namely accuracy, acceptability, and readability (Nababan et al., 2012). Translating a children's story is particularly challenging because the translator must carefully choose language that conveys the original meaning while also being culturally appropriate and easily understood by children. If the text is too difficult to understand, it risks losing the child's interest in reading. However, as Nababan et al. (2012) argue, translations that are easy to understand may sometimes compromise accuracy. This highlights the importance of assessing the translation quality of children's stories in terms of their overall storyline.



Previous research on children's stories translation has explored various approaches, yet the aspect of translation quality has often been overlooked (Fitriani & Ifianti, 2021; Noerjanah, 2017). However, some studies have specifically evaluated the quality of children's story translations (Pujowati et al., 2022; Putri et al., 2024; Putri et al., 2024). Notably, Putri et al. (2024) investigated children's story translations across four proficiency levels, i.e. emergent level, early level, intermediate level, and advanced level. Despite their comprehensive approach, their analysis was restricted to the dimensions of accuracy and acceptability, as they found assessing readability—particularly concerning logical metaphor elements—challenging in the context of children's literature. In contrast, Pujowati et al. (2022) and Putri et al. (2024) examined the translation of motivational expressions in advanced-level children's stories and children stories translation by students. Their research considered three aspects of translation quality; however, they did not involve children in assessing the readability of these translations. Instead, discussions with experts were used to evaluate this aspect.

Based on this review, several research gaps are evident. First, many studies do not prioritize translation quality, despite the consensus that children's literature translations should be both accurate and accessible to young readers (Oittinen, 2002). Nababan et al. (2012) further emphasize that translations should be culturally appropriate. Moreover, a research conducted by Putri et al. (2024) investigated reading levels but limited to a single element. Addressing these gaps, the present research aims to evaluate which level of children's story translation—among the four identified levels—maintains the highest quality. Furthermore, this study seeks to understand the impact of these translations on the target readers, the children themselves.

While both children's literature and adult literature are forms of 'literature,' they serve different purposes and audiences. Children's literature is specifically crafted for young readers, often incorporating educational or moral themes (Krissandi et al., 2023). The narrative style in children's books is distinct from that in adult literature. As Shavit (1981) points out, children's stories such as fairy tales are typically shorter and more straightforward. This simplicity is reflected in the use of simpler sentence structures and more direct language. Santosa (2003) adds that children tend to favor oral over written language, using simpler and more concrete words that closely match reality. Sarumpaet (2009) further distinguishes between the two by noting that children's literature often uses straightforward sentence structures, like simple or compound sentences, and language that is familiar to children. In contrast, adult literature employs more complex sentences and abstract language. Additionally, with the introduction of guideline 030/P/2022, translators must consider these differences to ensure their translations are appropriate for the intended age group.

Since the translation for children's literature is considered complex, it should be assessed to know its quality. Nababan (2004) suggests that there are three main aspects of translation quality, namely accuracy, acceptability, and readability. Accuracy involves maintaining the original message in the target text. This aspect is crucial because it ensures that the translation remains faithful to the author's intent and the original content (Newmark, 1988). House (2014) further argues that the accuracy aspect includes preserving the original's content, structure, and function. In simpler terms, an accurate translation conveys the original message without any distortion. However, maintaining accuracy in translation is challenging. Nababan (2004) identifies several issues that can affect accuracy, such as problems with terminology, mistranslations, omissions, and unnecessary additions. Acceptability, on the other hand, pertains to the cultural appropriateness of the target text, including the language structures and norms familiar to the target audience. Nababan et al. (2012) emphasize that a translation is considered acceptable when it aligns with the cultural norms and values of the target audience, covering both micro-level elements (such as word choice and syntax) and macro-level elements (such as tone and style). In term of acceptability, Toury (1979) states that an acceptable translation might involve significant culture and linguistic adjustments to make the text feel natural and culturally appropriate for target audience. The concept of dynamic equivalence, proposed by Nida



(1964), is closely related to both accuracy and readability in translation. It is the closest natural equivalent in the target language that is both easily understood by the target audience and culturally acceptable to them. Without maintaining acceptability, a translation might feel strange for target audience. The last aspect, readability, is about the clearance of a translation to the target readers.

In assessing translation quality, several experts have developed various instruments (House, 2014; Machali, 2000; Nababan et al., 2012; Sutopo & Budi, 2016). After reviewing these instruments, the researchers employ the framework formulated by Nababan et al. (2012) for several reasons. Compared to others, this instrument avoids overlap between scores and their qualitative indicators. By using this instrument, the researchers can evaluate translations at a micro level. The scoring system consists of three levels, where a score of 3 represents the highest quality while 1 the lowest.

For accuracy, a translation receives a score of 3 if there is no distortion in the translation of terms, phrases, clauses, or sentences in the target text. If the source text is generally well translated but includes some ambiguity or distortion at the micro level, it is assigned a score of 2. A score of 1 is given when the translation omits key elements of the source text. Regarding acceptability, a translation is awarded a score of 3 if the terms, phrases, clauses, or sentences feel natural in the target language. A score of 2 is given if the translation includes unusual terms or minor grammatical errors. A score of 1 is assigned to translations that do not feel natural and violate the grammatical rules of the target language. Finally, readability is scored as follows: a translation that is easily understood by the target readers receives a score of 3. A score of 2 indicates that the translation can be understood, but the target readers may need to read it more than once due to the use of certain terms. A score of 1 is given to translations that are not understandable to the target readers.

2 Methods

This research is product-oriented, focusing on the outcome of translation rather than the translation process (Nababan, 2007). A qualitative-descriptive design was employed, as this approach is suitable for understanding phenomena related to the subjects, expressed through words and language (Moloeng, 2007). The phenomenon under investigation is the quality of translation, particularly in terms of which aspects are best maintained across four levels. To explore this, a multiple-case study design was adopted, as data sources were drawn from various levels of children's book stories and their translations. The study operated within the third semiotic order, examining children's literature translations from Penjaring (Penerjemahan Daring/online translation) as the target texts, with the source texts coming from Storyweaver. The selection of different levels of children's book stories served as a form of data triangulation. Data sources for this research included texts from Penjaring, Storyweaver, and information provided by informants. A purposive sampling technique was used to select data, following criteria aligned with the study's objectives (Santosa, 2021). The study utilized one type of primary data—translation data, assessed based on three aspects of translation quality. To evaluate translation quality, the researchers engaged informants (raters) in a Focus Group Discussion (FGD). The FGD also served as a method for data collection triangulation. Finally, this research adopted four stages, including domain analysis, taxonomy analysis, componential analysis, and cultural-theme analysis, proposed by (Spradley, 1980).

3 Results

After having FGD and discussing the data with raters, the translation quality through four reading levels was assessed by using translation quality instrument proposed by Nababan et al. (2012). There are eight books assessed in forms of accuracy, acceptability, and readability. Readability was examined by testing the translation to three children for each book. Based on the result, it can be said that the messages in the source text are successfully transferred and culturally appropriate in target language. However, it appears not to be understood by children. Table 1 shows the translation quality assessment of each book.



Table 1: Translation Quality Assessment of Each Level

Reading Level	Titles	Translation Quality		
		Accuracy	Acceptability	Readability
(Emergent Level)	There is Amma!	2.95	3	2.45
	Behind You	2.92	2.92	2.71
	Total	2.93	2.96	2.58
(Early Level)	Riding on Raindrops	2.90	2.87	2.56
	So Noisy!	2.97	2.97	2.48
	Total	2.93	2.92	2.52
(Intermediate Level)	The Winter Night	2.95	2.77	2.64
	Sringeri Srinivas Learns to Laugh	2.77	2.75	2.50
	Total	2.90	2.76	2.57
(Advanced Level)	Strawla The Garbage Queen	2.80	2.77	2.64
	Panam City	2.77	2.85	2.69
	Total	2.78	2.81	2.66

3.1 Accuracy

As shown in Table 1, accuracy achieved a high score, indicating that the translators were largely successful in conveying the intended meaning in the target text. According to Nababan et al. (2012), translation accuracy can be classified into three categories: accurate, less accurate, and inaccurate. The researchers assessed the translation quality through micro-level evaluations with raters, focusing on these levels of accuracy.

The distribution of translation accuracy differs across the reading levels. For the emergent reader level, 32 data are classified as accurate, while 2 data are deemed less accurate. At the early reader level, 94 data are identified as accurate, 5 data are less accurate, and 1 datum is inaccurate. In the intermediate reader, 213 data are found to be accurate, 13 are less accurate, and 4 are inaccurate. Finally, for the advanced reader level, 63 data are accurate, while 15 are classified as inaccurate. These data highlight a trend where the accuracy of translations tends to increase with higher reading levels, though notable inaccuracies still persist at the advanced level. The findings suggest that translation quality may vary depending on the complexity of the text, particularly in the case of more sophisticated reading levels. The followings are the accurate, less accurate, and inaccurate translations found in each level.

1. ST: "Please buy all the things on this list," Amma says.
TT: "*Tolong beli semua barang yang ada di daftar ini, ya,*" ucap Mama.
(Taken from There is Amma!/Itu Mama! Emergent Reading Level)
2. ST: He'll claw it away.
TT: *Dia akan mengusirnya.*
(Taken from The Winter Night/Malam di Musim Dingin Intermediate Reading Level)
3. ST: They swam with the water, guided by the flow, through crevices and dark, hidden areas.
TT: *Mereka berenang mengikuti arus, melewati celah-celah yang gelap dan tempat-tempat tersembunyi.*
(Taken from Riding on Raindrops/Berpetualang dengan Tetesan Hujan Early Reading Level)
4. ST: He called out loudly- "Jabra, Jabra!"
TT: (no translation)
(Taken from The Winter Night/Malam di Musim Dingin Intermediate Reading Level)

The examples above are valued score of 3, 2, and 1 in accuracy. An accurate translation should not have any distortion in meaning and addition information. However, adding and omitting are



sometimes needed as long as it is functioned to make the translation clearer and adjust the grammatical issues between two different languages. Examples 1 and 2 are accurate translation since the translator successfully transferred the meaning. In Example 1, there are some additions (*yang, ada, di, and ya*). Here, these elements are not considered as adding information, but the translator tried to make the translation clear in the target text, and so does Example 2. In the source text, the writer uses the word *claw* to express the dog chasing other animals away. As shown in the target text, this word seems to change the meaning. However, the word *mengusir* (repel) here is accurate since the translator successfully expressed the writer's intention. Therefore, these two examples are considered as accurate. Meanwhile, Examples 3 and 4 are considered lowering the accuracy. The translator incorrectly transferred the writer's intention by translating the water to *arus* in Indonesian. This phrase was meant to refer to specific water in the story rain drops. Nevertheless, *arus* (waves) in Indonesian has different meaning from it. Since the translator only made mistake in translating one word in a sentence, the accuracy is decreasing to become less accurate. Different from Example 3, translator omitted the whole sentence in the story. Omission in this case failed to deliver the whole meaning. Consequently, it was valued 1 which means inaccurate.

3.2 Acceptability

Acceptability pertains to both grammatical and cultural considerations Nababan et al. (2012) . The table indicates that this aspect is as well maintained as accuracy, signifying that the translation tends to sound natural and appropriate in Indonesian as the target language. According to translation quality assessment by Nababan et al. (2012), an acceptable translation is rated with a score of 3, while a less acceptable one is rated with a score of 2. Lastly, a score of 1 is assigned to an unacceptable translation.

The acceptability of the children's stories translations varies across the four reading levels. As indicated in the table, the acceptability fluctuates between the levels. The emergent reader level achieves the highest overall score for acceptability, while the intermediate reader level shows the lowest. Specifically, in emergent reader books, 43 translations are deemed acceptable, with only one instance being less acceptable. For early reader books, 70 translations are acceptable, while nine are rated as less acceptable. In intermediate reader books, 181 translations are categorized as acceptable, 43 as less acceptable, and seven as unacceptable. Finally, advanced reader books contain 67 acceptable translations, 11 less acceptable, and two unacceptable. Examples below show the data that are acceptable, less acceptable, and unacceptable in four reading levels.

- 1) ST: May asks, "Where is the broomstick?"
TT: *May bertanya, "Sapunya di mana?"*
(Taken from *Behind You/Di Belakangmu* Emergent reader level)
- 2) ST: As soon as they stepped into the sea, the tide carried them through a vast cave network.
TT: *Sesaat setelah mereka menyelami laut, air pasang membawa mereka melalui jaringan gua yang luas.*
(Taken from *Riding on Raindrops/Berpetualang dengan Tetesan Hujan* Early Reader Level)
- 3) ST: "It's only three rupees, how will we buy the blanket if you give him the money? How will you survive the deep winter nights of Maagh and Poos in the field? Tell him, we will pay him at harvest time. Not now."
TT: *"Uangku hanya 3 rupee, bagaimana kita bisa membeli selimut kalau uangnya kau berikan padanya? Bagaimana kamu bisa bertahan di malam musim dingin di ladang di bulan-bulan Maagh dan Poosh? Katakan padanya, kita akan membayar utang saat panen tiba. Jangan sekarang."*
(Taken from *The Winter Night/Malam di Musim Dingin* Intermediate Reader Level)
- 4) ST: " Her plastic smile."



TT: "*Senyum dari plastik.*"

(Taken from *Strawla The Garbage Queen/Sedotani Si Ratu Sampah* Advanced Reader Level)

The examples above show different acceptability degree. Acceptable translation is depicted in Example 1. It is acceptable since it sounds natural in Indonesian, and the words used in the target text are not crossing the Indonesian grammatical rules or culture. Meanwhile, Examples 2 and 3 show that the acceptability is decreasing. It is caused by the use of unfamiliar words/terms in translation such as *jaringan gua* (in Example 2) and rupee, the Indian currency (in Example 3). The phrase *jaringan gua* (cave network) is unfamiliar even for its subject in Indonesian references. The familiar one is *sistem gua* that refers to a group of interconnected caves. Besides, maintaining the term rupee decreases the acceptability since it is not the currency that is known by all Indonesian people especially for children. However, if this translation is aimed to teach the target readers, they should add footnotes. Another way can be done by transferring the Indian currency to Indonesian currency. Lastly, the translation of an idiom in Example 4 sounds very strange. The phrase *plastic smile* refers to a condition of smiling without feeling happy. However, the unnatural translation here is understandable since the word plastic in the phrase suits the material that is made up a straw (the character who is smiling in this context is Strawla, the straw). Indonesian does not have any reference to plastic that can be used to transfer this. Based on the context where Strawla smiles when knowing the bitter truth, Indonesian has the equivalence that is *tersenyum kecut*. The phrase *tersenyum kecut* cannot bear the material of the character 'plastic' as the phrase *plastic smile* does.

3.3 Readability

Readability refers to the level of how the target readers understand the translation. As stated by Nababan et al. (2012), there are three level of readability high (3 score), medium (2 score), and low (1 score). As stated in methodology, the researchers involved 12 children and observed how easy they understand translations. The researchers divided them into groups based on their classification as mentioned in methodology.

Although the readability score of all levels is beyond 2.5, which is considered having a good quality, some children met difficulties when reading the translations. Also, the score experienced going up and down between the levels. The result shows that the target readers (7-8-year-old-children) a bit hardly understood the books belonging to the early readers. It is proven by the score of 2.52/3. Meanwhile, the books belonging to advanced readers gained the highest score of 2.66/3. This indicates that the books are understandable for the target readers (12-13-year-old-children). The examples below show the example of high, medium, and low readability found in the four levels.

1. "*Itu bukan Mama. Mama tidak berjenggot!*"
(Taken from *Behind You/Di Belakangmu* Book for Emergent Readers)
2. *Hanya satu artinya: ada petualangan yang menanti mereka.* (Taken from *Riding on Raindrops/Berpetualang dengan Tetesan Hujan* book for Early Readers)
3. *Munni yang sedang menyapu lantai berbalik dan mengomel, "Uangku hanya 3 rupee, bagaimana kita bisa membeli selimut kalau uangnya kau berikan padanya?"* (Taken from *The Winter Night/Malam Di Musim Dingin* book for Intermediate Readers)
4. *Jadi, sekitar tahun 1500-an, wilayah Bengali terbagi ke dalam banyak negeri merdeka.* (Taken from *Panam City/Kota Panam* book for Advanced Readers)

Based on observations, it can be concluded that the readability of a translation is influenced by children's language acquisition. When three children were asked to read the same sentence, each demonstrated a different level of comprehension. For example, out of the three emergent readers, only one understood the word **berjenggot** (beard). This term, used to describe a person's appearance, seemed unfamiliar because emergent readers typically have a limited vocabulary in their



mother tongue. Similarly, one of the early readers did not understand the word “*petualangan*” (adventure).

Moreover, the same issue arises with proper names like “Bengali” and terms like “rupee” as seen in Examples 3 and 4. Although the target readers are assumed to have sufficient knowledge, these unfamiliar terms can still reduce readability. This suggests that maintaining certain proper names and terms in the text can hinder comprehension, as such terms are often outside the readers' experiential knowledge. Consequently, readability is closely tied to the readers' experience and prior knowledge.

4 Discussion

The findings of this study reveal that the translation's accuracy is highly prioritized across four different levels. However, in maintaining this accuracy, readability becomes a secondary focus, with lower scores compared to accuracy and acceptability. When prioritizing accuracy, translators often encounter challenges throughout the translation process. Baker (2011) identifies several strategies for translating texts effectively. These strategies, as noted by Molina and Albir (2002), are employed to address problems encountered during translation. According to Baker, translation equivalence can be classified into eight categories: word-level equivalence, above-word-level equivalence, grammatical equivalence, thematic textual structure, cohesive textual structure, pragmatic equivalence, semiotic equivalence, and ethical and moral considerations.

In relation to word-level equivalence, the translators of the books under study frequently borrowed names from the source text to maintain the translation's fidelity to the original. While this strategy preserves the accuracy of the translation, it can hinder comprehension for the target readers—children. Coillie and Verschueren (2006) suggests several techniques for handling proper names in translation. These include reproduction, non-translation with additional explanation, replacement of personal names by common nouns, phonetic or morphological adaptation, use of exonyms, name replacement familiar to the target readers, substitution, addition of particular connotations, and deletion. In the translations produced by freelance translators affiliated with the Agency for Language Development and Cultivation, deletion was never applied when translating proper names. Instead, when a proper name appeared to be unfamiliar, additional information was provided through footnotes. This approach aligns with the purpose of the translated books, which aim to introduce children to diverse cultures. This purpose is consistent with Puurtinen (2006), who argues that children's books not only serve to entertain and enhance reading skills but also function as vehicles for imparting knowledge about the world.

Despite these efforts, the readability of the translated texts remains compromised, as children often overlook footnotes and struggle to retain the additional information regarding proper names. Furthermore, the borrowed proper names in the translations often resemble common words in Indonesian, creating confusion and affecting the overall comprehension of the text. This issue is evident in translations across different language pairs, such as English to Chinese, English to Persian, and vice versa (Ahanizadeh, 2012; Dongmei & Ganapathy, 2023; Gong, 2021; Jaleniauskiene & Čičelytė, 2009). These studies emphasize that prioritizing accuracy can lead to a decline in readability, especially when the target audience is unfamiliar with borrowed terms. This observation aligns with Nababan et al. (2012), who assert that an accurate translation may not always be easily understood. In the context of children's literature, achieving a balance between accuracy and readability is critical, as readability influences the effectiveness of the translation in conveying the intended message to young readers.

The concept of acceptability in translation involves ensuring that the translated text adheres to the cultural and linguistic norms of the target language. According to Nababan (2008), a translation that does not meet these cultural expectations will sound unnatural and may alienate its readers. Previous studies by Putri et al. (2024) on logical metaphor and Putri et al. (2024) on motivational



expression translations in Indonesian children's literature have found that Indonesian translators tend to retain the structure and content of the English source text. Despite this tendency towards source-text fidelity, the translations remain culturally acceptable within the Indonesian context. This suggests that, although the translators prioritize maintaining the original meaning, they employ techniques that allow for cultural and linguistic coherence, ensuring that the translations do not sound awkward or foreign to Indonesian readers. However, when translating pragmatic expressions, the translators show a greater inclination towards adapting the form and content to ensure cultural relevance and reader comprehension, while still striving to maintain accuracy (Harjanti et al., 2020). This flexibility in translating pragmatic elements indicates that Indonesian translators balance source-text fidelity and cultural acceptability, adapting specific elements as necessary to align with the norms of the target language.

In contrast, studies on other language pairs have shown different tendencies. Yuan (2018) emphasize that Chinese translations prioritize cultural acceptability over strict adherence to the source text. Chinese translators often modify the source content to better fit cultural expectations, enhancing naturalness and readability for Chinese readers. Similarly, research on English-Persian translations (Biria & Abadi, 2016; Zanjibar et al., 2022) highlights a strong preference for cultural adaptation. Persian translations frequently demonstrate a significant level of modification to ensure that the text aligns with the cultural and social norms of the target audience. This approach suggests that, for both Chinese and Persian translators, acceptability takes precedence over strict fidelity to the source text. The findings presented in this study align with the aforementioned research on Indonesian translations, showing that acceptability can be maintained even when the translations lean towards source-text fidelity. However, the approach differs significantly from the tendencies observed in Chinese and Persian translations, where acceptability is achieved through more extensive adaptation and modification to meet the cultural expectations of the target audience.

Puurtinen (2006) argues that translators should prioritize high readability by employing clear and simple language, especially when translating for children. However, the findings of this study indicate that the translations do not always adhere to the recommended reading levels for young audiences. Despite this, the readability scores are generally high, with an average score exceeding 2.5 out of 3. The observations show that children from different reading levels sometimes struggle with understanding certain words, and some have difficulty grasping the meaning due to complex sentence structures. Similarly, D. K. Putri et al. (2024), who analyzed conjunctive relations, found that the translations produced by the Agency for Language Development and Cultivation tend to preserve complex structures through the use of conjunctions, which can hinder comprehension. However, their research did not specifically evaluate the readability of these translations. In contrast, Herianto et al. (2019) found that the readability of translated Bible stories was generally high due to the use of target-language-oriented translation techniques, such as established equivalence and explication. Nonetheless, readability decreased when technical terms and complex vocabulary were used, making the text more challenging for children to understand. Studies conducted in other countries, such as China and Iran, have also examined readability in children's literature translations, but these studies did not involve children as participants to directly assess the readability of the texts (Ghoreishi & Aminzadeh, 2016; Guo, 2022).

5 Conclusion

The present study provides a comprehensive evaluation of translation quality in children's literature across four reading levels—emergent, early, intermediate, and advanced—by assessing accuracy, acceptability, and readability. The findings indicate that while accuracy is generally high across all reading levels, readability is often compromised due to the use of complex sentence structures and unfamiliar terms. This suggests that maintaining high accuracy does not necessarily



equate to high readability, as observed in certain cases where translations adhered strictly to source text elements but failed to convey the meaning effectively to young readers. Acceptability was found to be culturally appropriate for Indonesian readers, demonstrating that translators were able to balance source-text fidelity with cultural relevance.

In comparison to other language pairs, such as English-Chinese and English-Persian, the study reveals distinct tendencies in how the translators translate the literary text. Indonesian translators tend to preserve the original structure and content, focusing on cultural coherence and accuracy, while Chinese and Persian translators prioritize cultural acceptability through extensive adaptation and modification of the source text. This divergence highlights the varying approaches in achieving translation quality across different linguistic and cultural contexts. Ultimately, the study underscores the need for a holistic approach in translating children's literature, one that carefully considers the interplay between accuracy, acceptability, and readability to ensure that the translated texts are not only faithful to the source material but also accessible and engaging for young readers.

Disclosure Statement

The author(s) claim there is no conflict of interest.

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