

# Translating Children's Literature: An Exploration of Techniques Used in English-Vietnamese Translation of Aesop's Fables

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**Abstract:** This study aims to explore techniques employed in translating children's literature. In particular, it examines those used in translating story titles, proper names, personal pronouns, and life lessons. Using a purposive corpus built from a collection of Aesop's fables written in English and their translation into Vietnamese, the study has attained considerable findings. The results show that the techniques used were universal. All the techniques mentioned above have been found in the Vietnamese versions of selected Aesop's fables. Nonetheless, due to differences in language properties between English and Vietnamese, some instances of translation were far more complicated and tended to combine techniques. This study found a new application for the adaptation technique in translating proper names that can be described as *domesticated replacement*. The study also suggests that by using bilingual fables as material for teaching English to young learners, teachers can raise their awareness of linguistic differences between English and Vietnamese, and help them appreciate the richness of English and Vietnamese, encouraging them to express similar ideas in different linguistic and cultural contexts.

**Keywords:** Children's literature, English for young learners, fables, translation techniques.

**Subject classification:** Linguistics.

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## **1. Introduction**

Literature provides a vivid reflection of a nation's socio-cultural life. It uncovers people's sociopsychology, cultivates readers' empathy, and teaches life lessons in a special way. Parallel to literature, translation acts as a gateway for readers from other cultures to explore a nation. For this reason, literary translation has become an important subfield that enables the literary works of a nation to reach the hearts and minds of readers across boundaries. Within literary translation, translating children's literature has become a magnet of interest for linguists, translators, and educators. Research has proved that translating for children plays a crucial role in developing their cultural and literary understanding and appreciation (Norton, 1992) on one hand, and challenges translators in handling their translation techniques on the other. Important as it is, translating for children has not been at the forefront for scholars and educators in teaching and learning foreign languages. This study focuses on the case study of the English-Vietnamese translation of Aesop's fables. It aims to explore the techniques used in translating these stories from the English into Vietnamese and explains, where possible, the choice of translation techniques used. The study ultimately considers the implications for teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) by deducing aspects of language development for its teaching to young learners in the Vietnamese EFL context. This study, therefore, seeks answers to the following questions:

- (1) What techniques were used in translating typical language categories in Aesop's fables from English to Vietnamese?
- (2) What properties in the fables are useful for language development for young learners?

## **2. Theoretical background**

### *2.1. The significance of children's literature*

Children's literature is a type of literature written for children's entertainment (García de Toro, 2020), so it varies in genre. Unlike its adult counterpart, literary works for children are often shorter in length and simpler in language (Oittinen, 2000). It is intended to cultivate their understanding of culture and values, thus highlighting moral lessons (Hollindale, 1997). Familiar themes are

used in children's literature, such as family and friends, or neighbors and neighbor relationships. Alivand (2016) noted that children's literature embodies several values. It provides the young with reading for pleasure, national heritage pride, life experience and morals, and inspires language and personal development. In terms of language learning, children's literature supports vocabulary development (Bland, 2018), reading skills (Nikolajeva, 2014), and intercultural awareness (Bland, 2016).

Among associated genres, fables have been a universal literary text type appropriate for children because the characters depicted are often animals, which makes stories familiar and appealing to young readers (Blackham, 1985). Fables often embody values of education and language learning. They are invaluable from a language learning perspective due to their familiar and meaningful nature, which aids vocabulary acquisition and comprehension (Bland, 2018; Pittaway, 2013). The use of familiar animals and similar scenarios helps children understand the context of new words and phrases. Moreover, the use of simple sentence structures and a repetitive narrative style can reinforce grammatical patterns and syntax (Oittinen, 2000).

Undoubtedly, Aesop's fables have been the most popular and influential of this genre of literature around the world. They tell stories of ordinary life and conclude with explicit morals about good quality, good manners, and appropriate daily conduct (Zafiropoulos, 2001).

## *2.2. Techniques for translating children's literature*

In translation theory, there has been confusion over technical terms used to describe the approach to translation. Various terms include translation strategies, translation methods, translation techniques, and translation procedures, and some of them are used interchangeably. To ensure consistency of terminology, this study employs the term 'translation techniques' to mean different ways in which the translator deals with an individual text segment. This study also adopts a combination of inventories of techniques offered by Molina and Albir (2002), and Newmark (1988), which are commonly used to translate children's literature in previous studies, including literal translation, liberal translation, borrowing, adaptation, and transliteration. These techniques are elaborated on later in this paper when discussing translating techniques for particular areas in children's literature.

Translating for children is complicated because the translator not only transfers the message on a linguistic level but also negotiates cultural values. Linguistically, they should render a target text in a simple, familiar language for

children to understand. Culturally, there must be domestication of concepts because children have little experience of life (Oittinen, 2000). One of the challenges in translating this genre of literature, is that the translator must convey the values of the source text while ensuring familiarity with the target reader. Arsova (1999) argued that translating titles, characters' names, puns and culture-related terms are challenging linguistic properties in translating children's literature.

### 2.2.1. Techniques for translating titles

The title of a literary work is the first impression that is made on the reader. It can spring from the characters, the setting, the main event, or the theme of the work (Bobadilla-Perez, 2007). According to Newmark (1988), titles can be either descriptive (related to characters, setting and event) or allusive (related to the underlying message of the work). Doyle (1989) pointed out that the most commonly used techniques in translating titles are literal translations, near literal translations, and liberal translations.

'Literal translation' is a direct translation technique, closely tied to the source text in a word-for-word translation process. For example, the English sentence *I want a cup of coffee* would be translated literally as *Tôi muốn một tách cà phê* in Vietnamese. Near literal translation is like literal translation with a little adjustment. The English title *The silence of the lambs* translated into Vietnamese as *Sự im lặng của bầy cừu* is a good example of near literal translation in which the addition of the classifier *bầy* makes it smooth and eligible in the target language although there is no such word in the source title.

'Liberal translation', on the other hand, indicates a free style of translation, conveying the meaning in a way that is convenient to the target audience regardless of the denotative meaning of the source text (Newmark, 1988). In other words, liberal translation is a kind of free style translation, focusing more on the message rather than on the form of the target text. For example, the English expression *It's a piece of cake* will be translated into Vietnamese as *Đồ dễ ợt* rather than the propositional meaning of the statement. Liberal translation makes it possible to convey the attitude underlying in the source text.

### 2.2.2. Techniques for translating names

It is generally agreed that proper names remain unchanged in translation as a sign of respect for the person or character. Newmark (1988) emphasized that

translating names often falls into three groups of techniques, namely borrowing, adaptation, and transliteration.

‘Borrowing’ is the way of retaining a name from the source language in the target text. This occurs when there is an equivalent gap between the source language and the target language, or the original expression has become universal to readers (Vo et al., 2022). For example, the God of Light Apollo in Greek mythology is translated into Vietnamese as *thần Apollo* for both reasons.

‘Adaption’ is a technique that provides an adjustment or equivalence between the source and target languages. In translating for children, translators often adapt names in the target language. This is particularly true for languages of the same language family. For example, the English name *Cinderella* has similar versions in Roman languages, such as *Cendrillon* (French), *Cenicienta* (Spanish), and *Cenerentola* (Italian), and similar versions in Germanic languages, including *Aschenputtel* (German), *Assepoester* (Dutch), and *Askungen* (Swedish). However, it is argued that the use of foreign names in the target text may disinterest the reader from the text (Lathey, 2006). For this reason, Nord (2003) suggested a replacement to avoid the risk of readership distance. Take the English name *Cinderella* again. It is translated into Vietnamese as *Lọ Lem*, a name that has nothing to do with *Cinderella*. The name seems to have been taken from part of the character’s life, which is arguably also Newmark’s (1988) allusive adaptation technique.

In translation between languages that follow different orthographical systems, names can be deliberately presented in a different script or writing system for ease of reading. This technique is called ‘transliteration’. In translating for children, this type of phonetic transliteration imitates the sounds of the original language as closely as possible for easy pronunciation. For example, the Zeus (the sky and thunder god in ancient Greek mythology) is presented in Vietnamese as *thần Dớt (Zót)*.

### 2.2.3. Techniques for translating personal pronouns

Translating personal pronouns often employs Newmark’s (1988) allusive adaptation translation technique. Yet, it is too general to label a translation instance as ‘adaptation’. Research has shown that translating personal pronouns has been problematic between language pairs, including English-Vietnamese (Mohammed et al., 2021; Trieu, 2019). The English dyad ‘*I - you*’ has been translated into Vietnamese through various kinship terms depending on the attitude (Trieu, 2019)

and the complicated hierarchy system of Vietnamese social relationships (Vo, 2019). The '*I - you*' system in English is static, while the Vietnamese equivalent differs in terms of intimacy, respect, and authority (Vo, 2016). The neutral version of '*I*' is *tôi*, indicating a normative formal way of self-addressing. However, there is no neutral way of addressing the addressee because of a hierarchy system of social relationships as mentioned, but in children's literature, if the characters are peers, the translated version of *you* is *bạn* ('friend'). In a rustic interaction, the pair *mày-tao* is common between peers or between interlocutors with unequal power. With the varied terms of address in Vietnamese, translating personal pronouns from English should be context-dependent. An equivalent must depend on underlying attitudes and relationships between the particular interlocutors. In this regard, the translation employs cultural adaptation. However, the form *you* can be either plural or singular. The addition of the Vietnamese quantifier *các* as in *các bạn* should be the linguistic adaptation.

The third personal pronouns have also been problematic when translating. In a general sense, the English-Vietnamese equivalents are *he* - *anh ấy*; *she* - *cô/chị ấy*; *it* - *nó*; and *they* - *chúng/họ*. Nonetheless, the actual use of Vietnamese terms of address varies from situation to situation, and there are many variants of third personal pronouns, such as *nó/hắn* for *he/she* and *chúng nó* for *they*. In this present study, the translation of these personal pronouns is considered.

#### 2.2.4. Techniques for translating life lessons

As mentioned, the purpose of a fable is to teach life lessons or convey a moral. The latter are often expressed through advice on right and wrong, and proper behavior. These expressions are either affirmative statements, which can be translated literally, or idioms, the translation of which is more than merely linguistic rendering. Adelnia and Dastjerdi (2011) argued that translating idioms was a hard task for translators because it involved cultural differences between two particular languages. Therefore, a literal translation of life lessons expressed in the form of idioms may fail to communicate the intended meaning, hence creating unintended misunderstandings.

Adaptation is the appropriate technique to use when translating idioms associated with life lessons. Baker (1992) suggested several ways of adapting idioms. One ideal way is to use an idiom of similar meaning and form. The rendering is uniform, not only in meaning but also in rhyming:

[EN] *So many men, so many minds.*

[VI] *Chín người, mười ý.*

Nonetheless, not all idioms are a perfect match as in the above example. There are equivalent idioms between English and Vietnamese that are similar in meaning but dissimilar in form. However, these idiomatic equivalents are still helpful in transferring life lessons from the source language into the target language.

[EN] *When in Rome, do as the Romans do.*

[VI] *Nhập gia tùy tục.*

In some cases, however, the life lesson is untranslatable. Therefore, a paraphrase must be used. Paraphrasing is a way of restating the meaning of the message in the target language without the influence of words and phrases in the source text.

[EN] *Better beans and bacon in peace than cakes and ale in fear.*

[VI] *Thà ăn đồ ăn dở mà an toàn còn hơn ăn đồ ăn đồ sang trong sợ hãi.*

This example is a life lesson from Aesop's fable The Town Mouse and the Country Mouse. The target text clarifies the message that it is better to eat poor food in safety than it is to eat rich food in fear. It has nothing to do with such words as bean, bacon, cake or ale.

### *2.3. Bilingual literature in language development for young learners*

Vo and Cao (2024) pinpointed four roles literature plays in language learning: it provides an authentic source of material, enriches learners' cultural experience, fosters language proficiency, and motivates personal growth. With respect to children's literature, it plays a fundamental role in children's language development. It not only provides them with an intriguing window into the world (Galda & Cullinan, 2002) but also substantially develops their language skills by exposing them to "linguistic and narrative conventions" (Fox, 1993: 185) through reading and writing, and cultivating their sense of pronunciation and speaking through listening to others reading for them. When it comes to bilingual literature, children also have an opportunity to explore and expand a rich, vibrant vocabulary (Pittaway, 2013). The vocabulary in children's literature offers an exploration of descriptive language for them to make sense of verbal communication by incorporating words with illustrations and images (Winch et al., 2010). Certainly, children's literature is an ideal tool for teaching a foreign language.

As argued, Aesop's fables have an educational value because they are universal stories that can be understood across languages and cultures. As Swope (2019, par. 2) put it:

Aesop's fables have long been considered the ideal pedagogical vehicle, second only to the Bible when it comes to instructing young people in morality. They offer wise counsel from an unusual source: common animals. A sheep, fox, mouse, or tortoise convey messages our children need to hear.

The study of techniques in the translation of Aesop's fables is necessary to attain a comparative perspective of the versions, thereby exploring language properties worth deploying in teaching young learners of English.

### **3. Materials and methods**

Data used for this study came from a parallel collection. It comprises 10 fables collected from Blanche Winder's (1965) *Aesop's fables* by Airmont Publishing and 10 Vietnamese equivalent versions from Nguyệt Tú's (1998) *Truyện ngụ ngôn Aesop* by Kim Đồng Publishing House. There have been numerous translated versions of Aesop's fables available in Vietnamese, but for a few reasons only one version was selected. *Firstly*, the research group believed that Nguyệt Tú's (1998) *Truyện ngụ ngôn Aesop* was translated into Vietnamese using the English version as the source text, as there was a concurrently-existing bilingual book with exactly the same content. Unfortunately, the publisher of this bilingual book is unidentified, and therefore the research group could not officially use it. *Secondly*, the publisher of Nguyệt Tú's (1998) *Truyện ngụ ngôn Aesop* was particularly for children, so the research group believed that the content was checked and guaranteed to be appropriate.

To achieve the intended objectives, data was approached qualitatively and analyzed for translation techniques under the themes of titles, proper names, personal pronouns, and moral lessons. Items in the source language were compared with their target language counterparts to identify the translation techniques to be used. The findings were used to generalize the trend in using translation techniques and explain, where possible, the rationale behind them. Based on the information or available evidence, opinions about language properties under consideration for language development in EFL young learners were formed and discussed.



## 4. Findings and discussion

### 4.1. Techniques used in translating titles

As documented in research into children's literature, titles are simple and memorable. Therefore, the common translating technique is literal translation. This is true of the findings in the present study, which shows most of the titles were literally translated, as presented in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Title Translation Techniques

Fable Code	English titles	Vietnamese titles	Translation techniques
F1	The Ass in the Lion's Skin	Lừa đội lột sư tử	literal
F2	The Ass and the Lapdog	Lừa và chó	literal
F3	The Hare and the Tortoise	Thỏ và rùa	literal
F4	The Ass's Brains	Óc lừa	literal
F5	The Frogs Desiring a King	Lũ ếch muốn có vua	literal
F6	Androcles	Người nô lệ An Du	mixed
F7	Avaricious and Envious	Lòng tham và thói ganh ghét	near literal
F8	Hercules and the Wagoner	Thần Héc-quyn và người đánh xe	mixed
F9	Belling the Cat	Đeo chuông cho mèo	literal
F10	The Wind and the Sun	Gió Bắc và Mặt trời	near literal

There is probably no other way than literal translation because the titles in fables are simply presented in a noun phrase, structured as follows:

- Noun phrase + AND + Noun phrase
- Noun phrase + PREP + Noun phrase
- Noun phrase + post modifier
- A genitive noun phrase

There are also instances of near literal and mixed techniques of translation. Although literal translation remains the primary choice, there is certain adaptation to make the title natural-sounding and familiar to the target reader. Some adaptations are made to fit the target language grammar or semantics. For example,

the English title *Avaricious and Envious* was nominalized in the Vietnamese title as *Lòng tham và thói ganh ghét*, while retaining the literal meaning of words in the title. The titles adapted into *Gió Bắc và Mặt trời* (for *The Wind and the Sun*) and *Thần Héc-quyn và người đánh xe kéo* (for *Hercules and the Waggoner*) by adding words such as ‘*Bắc*’ (the direction of wind) ‘*thần*’ (God), and *người đánh [xe]* (for the suffix *-er* in *waggoner*) were situation-based to provide readers with more information that is not familiar in the target culture. These cases can be seen as near literal translation.

However, some titles are more than just a straight translation. *Gió Bắc và Mặt trời* (for *The Wind and the Sun*) was based on the climatic characteristics of the target culture, i.e. the northern wind is cold and strong. The addition of the phrase ‘*người nô lệ*’ in *Người nô lệ An Du* (for *Androcles*) was based on the plot of the story. The name *Androcles* rendered as *An Du* was evidence of localization to create a sense of closeness for the reader. These cases are instances of mixed techniques of liberal translation and transliteration, a technique for translating names as suggested in the literature.

The translating techniques of titles in the English-Vietnamese translation of Aesop’s fables are, on the one hand, consonant with those asserted by Doyle (1989), and dynamic through a combination of descriptive and illusive techniques as pointed out by Newmark (1988).

#### 4.2. Techniques used in translating proper names

Proper names are indicators of identity and should be retained in the target texts. However, foreign names can cause problems for young readers, but they still need to be translated in some way. Translating proper names often creates challenges. The adaptations vary depending on the situation.

In the data used for this study, there were few proper names because, as the titles of fables suggested, characters in the selected stories are animals, or natural phenomena. Nonetheless, the instances of proper names in the translated texts have shown similarities in translating techniques discussed in the literature. In particular, there were three proper names: *Hercules*, *Jupiter*, and *Androcles*. Interestingly, they were representatives of three different techniques of translating proper names discussed in the literature.

*Hercules*, occurring four times in the fable collection, was translated into

Vietnamese as *thần Héc-quyn*. This is evidence of adopting the transliteration technique with phonetic modification by presenting the French pronunciation of the name in Vietnamese orthography. This technique is in line with previous studies about translating proper names. However, the technique is more complicated. The phonetic modification was borrowed from French with unmuted sound /h/. It is probable that the English pronunciation of *Hercules* as /'hɜ:rkjʊ,liz/ is hard for Vietnamese readers because there are no equivalent sounds. The French pronunciation has the mute sound /h/, which is not familiar to Vietnamese readers. Therefore, a combination of borrowing and localizing sound was adopted for the transliteration of the name.

The name *Jupiter* occurred eight times in the data. The name itself refers to a planet with *Sao Mộc* being an equivalent in Vietnamese. For this the name *Jupiter* in the data was translated into Vietnamese as *thần Sao Mộc*. This is an instance of adaptation, but one that is indirect. The indirectness is shown through the reference to a planet of the same name, which is then used as the equivalent to render the name of the character in the fable.

The name *Androcles* /'ændrə,kli:z/ is unfamiliar in both form and sound and it is hard for young readers to remember the name of the character in the story. The choice of referring to the character by the name *An Du* that has similar sound to the name in the story is neither adaptation nor transliteration. This is an instance of a complicated process of handling unfamiliarity in the target text.

In the case of translating the source text in English, the name *Androcles* pronounced as /'ændrə,kli:z/ is recognizably foreign. Young readers have limited knowledge and understanding about other cultures and languages, so they find it difficult to assimilate foreign names (Lathey, 2006). In translating this text, the French pronunciation /ãndʁɔkl/ of the name was considered but not entirely borrowed. The sound pattern was then given a Vietnamese similar one that could be accepted as a name. The technique in this situation is arguably a combination of allusive adaptation and domestication. So far, this technique has not been explored and it should be given a technical term that is recommended as *domesticated replacement* in the present study.

#### 4.3. Techniques used in translating personal pronouns

Data has shown that there are various ways of translating the dyad '*I - you*' from English to Vietnamese. The equivalents are *tôi - bạn* in some situations and *tao - mày* in others. However, there is a mixture in the use of personal pronouns in the Vietnamese versions of the fables.

In the fable *The Hare and the Tortoise*, the use of ‘*I - you*’ by the Tortoise character in response to the Hare’s ridicule about its slowness is translated into Vietnamese as *tôi - bạn*. This indicates a distance between the peers. It is also evidence of a neutral attitude of the speaker to the conversational partner. On the other hand, the use of ‘*I - you*’ by the Hare character while talking to the Tortoise is translated into Vietnamese as *tao - mày*. This is to suit the Hare’s arrogance and self-appraisal. The translation technique in this situation is a cultural adaptation. In the fable *Belling the Cat*, the dyad ‘*I - you*’ used by a mouse while proposing a solution for early detection of the mouse at a mouse community meeting was translated into Vietnamese as *tôi - các bạn*. This is evidence of linguistic adaptation. Apart from that, most of the translations of the dyad ‘*I - you*’ in the data were the pair *tao - mày* but the expressiveness varied from one instance to another. In the fable F1, the Fox talked to the Ass ridiculously:

[EN] Ah, I knew you by *your* voice.

[VI] À, nghe tiếng *của mày* là tao biết ngay.

The rustic pair *tao - mày* is used to render ‘*I - you*’ in this situation based on the attitude of the Fox who looked down on the Ass. On the contrary, the way the Fox in another fable (F4) talked to the Lion, considered as the symbol of power, is translated in another way:

[EN] Brains, *your* Majesty! It had none, or it would never have fallen into *your* trap.

[VI] Óc ư, thưa *ngài*! Nó làm gì có óc, nếu có thì chẳng bao giờ nó lại lọt vào bẫy *của ngài*.

The use of *ngài* for ‘you’ is an indication of cultural adaptation. The translator has integrated the indexical and social meaning into one word. In the same fable, however, when the Lion talked to the Ass, ‘*you*’ was translated as *mày* to show the Lion’s disrespect towards the Ass. This implies that translating personal pronouns between English and Vietnamese is context-dependent and the relationship between the interlocutors affects the choice of address terms.

As far as third personal pronouns are concerned, there are instances of variants as mentioned in section 2.2.3. Although the pronoun ‘*he*’ is used many times for animal characters in the fables, it is translated into Vietnamese as *nó* because the distinction between human and animal is quite clear-cut in Vietnamese culture. This adaptation on the one hand helps young readers understand more easily while on the other hand it raises their awareness in using Vietnamese correctly. For example:

[EN] When the Lion came back, *he* soon noticed the absence of the brains, and asked the Fox in a terrible voice.

[VI] Khi sư tử trở lại, chẳng mấy chốc *nó* để ý không còn bộ óc nữa, bèn giận dữ hỏi cáo.

Translating personal pronouns is a thoughtful task for translators. It is challenging when the language pair is of different language families, like English and Vietnamese. Proper translation also contributes to developing readers' language awareness.

#### 4.4. Techniques used in translating life lessons

Data has shown that life lessons given in the fables are statements about appropriate manners and behaviors, and the consequences that can happen if people act against them. There was no idiom found in the data. However, the adopted translation techniques were somewhat a mix between different techniques.

**Table 2:** Techniques for Translating Life Lessons

Fable Code	English	Vietnamese	Translation techniques
F1	Fine clothes may disguise, but silly words will disclose a fool.	Trang phục đẹp để có thể làm người ta ngộ nhận, nhưng lời lẽ ngu ngốc thì thể hiện rõ bản chất của kẻ ngu ngốc.	Liberal translation
F2	Clumsy jesting is no joke.	Không nên hành động quá trớn.	Adaptation (Paraphrasing)
F3	Slow and steady wins the race.	Chậm mà chắc.	Adaptation (similar meaning, dissimilar form)
F4	Wit has always had an answer ready.	Kẻ láu lỉnh luôn có sẵn câu trả lời.	Literal translation
F5	Better no rule than cruel rule.	Đừng đứng núi này trông núi nọ.	Adaptation (paraphrasing)
F6	Gratitude is the sign of noble souls.	Lòng biết ơn là biểu hiện của những tâm hồn cao thượng.	Literal translation

F7	Vices are their own punishment.	Thói xấu của mình trừng phạt chính mình.	Near translation	literal
F8	Gods help those that help themselves.	Trời chỉ cứu những ai biết tự cứu lấy mình.	Near translation	literal
F9	It is easy to propose impossible remedies.	Nói thì dễ, làm mới khó.	Adaptation (similar meaning, dissimilar form)	
F10	Kindness affects more than severity.	Sự tử tế có sức ảnh hưởng hơn là bạo lực.	Literal translation	

Some of the life lessons portrayed in fables are often expressed in statements of advice on expected manners and behaviors. In previous studies, most of these moral statements were found to be literally translated. However, in the English-Vietnamese translation of the selected fables, near literal translation was more common than literal translation. In addition, there were instances of adaptation - a technique for translating moral lessons expressed in the form of idioms, according to Baker (1992). Most of the adaptations paraphrased the life lessons. Interestingly, two instances were translated into idioms in Vietnamese, using adaptation of similar meaning with dissimilar form:

[EN] Slow and steady wins the race.

[VI] Chậm mà chắc.

[EN] It is easy to propose impossible remedies.

[VI] Nói thì dễ, làm mới khó.

There is also an instance of liberal translation:

[EN] Fine clothes may disguise, but silly words will disclose a fool.

[VI] Trang phục đẹp dễ có thể làm người ta ngộ nhận, nhưng lời lẽ ngu ngốc thì thể hiện rõ bản chất của kẻ ngu ngốc.

In this instance, the translator paraphrased the life lesson in a free manner by rendering *làm người ta ngộ nhận* (make people misconceive) for the verb ‘disguise’ and *bản chất của kẻ ngu ngốc* (the nature of a fool) for ‘a fool’.

The translation of life lessons in English fables into Vietnamese investigated in this study showed a diversity in techniques compared to other previous studies (Adelnia & Dastjerdi, 2011; Baker, 1992). It also implies considerations of expression styles between the two languages.

#### *4.5. Properties of fables useful for teaching English to young learners*

The analysis of translation techniques has yielded implications of the language properties that need thoughtful consideration when teaching English to young learners through bilingual sources. The findings suggest that by using bilingual fables as material for teaching English to young learners, teachers can raise their awareness of linguistic differences between English and Vietnamese.

In terms of language knowledge, the consciousness of differences in the use of personal pronouns should be noted. While using bilingual material in teaching a foreign language, the language awareness and the sense of culture in both the target language and the mother tongue are raised. Moreover, bilingual fables often present stories that are grounded in familiar situations or universal themes, making new vocabulary meaningful and easier to comprehend. Young learners can deduce meaning from the context of the story, encouraging active engagement in the text.

In terms of language skills, the titles and the life lessons can be used to develop learners' critical thinking through pre-reading and post-reading activities, and enhance their speaking skills, accordingly. Skills in paraphrasing or summarizing can also be developed through the examination of the life lessons.

In terms of style and genre, young learners may start acquiring the primitive form of narrative through fables provided that the teachers help them with questions to explore the structure of the plot, and develop a comparative perspective if they look into the plot of the target texts. This can help children appreciate the richness of English and Vietnamese, encouraging them to think creatively about how to express similar ideas in different linguistic and cultural contexts.

### **5. Conclusion**

The present study has investigated a self-built corpus of 10 Aesop's fables in English and 10 equivalent Vietnamese stories. By looking into the techniques used in translating titles, proper names, personal pronouns, and life lessons, the study has achieved considerable results. The analysis of translation techniques suggested that even in simple expressions and universal topics like fables, there are both linguistic and cultural differences. The techniques recommended in translation theories have been useful but too general. It is essential to have a culture-specific approach to translation techniques to manage individual translation instances, to adapt suitably

while translating for children. From the findings, some key points for consideration are suggested while teaching English to young learners using bilingual materials to develop their language knowledge and skills, as well as language and cultural awareness.

Despite the results, the study has certain limitations associated with a modest corpus and the simplicity of the language used in fables. However, a careful examination, a thorough review of literature, and a well-designed parallel corpus have shed light on the findings. The study hints at future research into the subfield of translating children's literature and the use of literature in language teaching.

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