

Crafting Scientific Narratives for Children: Strategies for Simplification and Translation.

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Abstract: This article examines the strategies of simplification and translation employed in adapting complex scientific content for children, specifically within the context of the "Get Well Soon" series and its Arabic translation. The study explores how simplification techniques, such as age-appropriate language and cultural adaptation, are applied to ensure that scientific concepts remain accessible to young readers while maintaining scientific accuracy. It also investigates the role of narrative-driven translation in engaging children, enhancing their comprehension and retention of scientific material. The research highlights the importance of cognitive accessibility in children's scientific education, demonstrating that culturally adapted translations significantly improve both engagement and understanding. The findings emphasize that using a combination of simplification, cultural adjustments, and narrative techniques can effectively bridge the gap between complex scientific ideas and young learners.

Keywords: Simplification strategies-translation strategies-scientific content-children-Arabic translation.

Résumé : Cet article examine les stratégies de simplification et de traduction utilisées pour adapter des contenus scientifiques complexes pour les enfants, spécifiquement dans le cadre de la série "Get Well Soon" et de sa traduction arabe. L'étude explore comment des techniques de simplification, telles qu'un langage adapté à l'âge et des ajustements culturels, sont appliquées pour garantir que les concepts scientifiques restent accessibles aux jeunes lecteurs tout en préservant l'exactitude scientifique. Elle examine également le rôle de la traduction narrative dans l'engagement des enfants, améliorant ainsi leur compréhension et leur rétention du contenu scientifique. La recherche met en lumière l'importance de l'accessibilité cognitive dans l'éducation scientifique des enfants, démontrant que les traductions culturellement adaptées améliorent significativement à la fois l'engagement et la compréhension. Les résultats

soulignent que l'utilisation d'une combinaison de simplification, d'ajustements culturels et de techniques narratives peut efficacement combler le fossé entre les idées scientifiques complexes et les jeunes apprenants.

Mots-clés : Stratégies de simplification-Stratégies de traduction-contenu scientifique-enfants-traduction arabe

1. Introduction

Scientific translation is a critical instrument for facilitating the dissemination of knowledge across linguistic and cultural boundaries. While the general objective of scientific translation is to render technical content accurately from one language into another, the process becomes substantially more complex when the target audience consists of children. In this context, scientific translation must accommodate both linguistic transformation and cognitive accessibility. Translating science for children entails more than lexical substitution; it requires a deep understanding of child development, educational psychology, and narrative engagement.

Children's cognitive and emotional frameworks differ significantly from those of adults. Scientific content often characterized by abstraction, technicality, and dense structures may present serious barriers to understanding unless restructured in ways that align with children's developmental stages, learning styles, and linguistic competence. Consequently, the act of scientific translation for younger audiences involves a dual challenge: simplifying complex scientific concepts within the source language and adapting them appropriately during the translation process. As Krieger and Gallois (2017) note, translation for children must combine linguistic accuracy with cultural and cognitive relevance to achieve both readability and engagement.

This study is positioned at the intersection of two interdependent processes: the simplification of scientific content in its original English form and the subsequent translation of that content into Arabic for child readers. It examines how these two dimensions linguistic simplification and cultural-linguistic adaptation operate together to make scientific information both accessible and engaging for a young audience. The *Get Well Soon* series, authored by Indian writer Benita Sen, serves as the primary case study. Designed as a set of educational booklets, the series merges biomedical information with narrative techniques tailored to children's developmental needs, offering a rich corpus

for analyzing the interrelationship between content simplification and translation strategy. Given this context, two questions arise concerning the methods and approaches used to make scientific content accessible to children through both simplification and translation.

1.2 Research Questions

1. What are the most effective simplification and translation strategies used to make complex scientific content understandable for children without compromising scientific accuracy?
2. How are these strategies applied in the case of the *Get Well Soon* series, particularly in its Arabic translation, which merges biomedical information with narrative elements to promote engagement?

These questions inform the central hypothesis of the study, which explores the relationship between narrative adaptation and the comprehensibility of translated scientific texts.

1.3 Hypothesis

Narrative-driven, culturally adapted translations of scientific content for children incorporating multimodal elements and informed by cognitive load theory will yield higher levels of conceptual comprehension, reader engagement, and knowledge retention than literal translations that lack cultural contextualization and narrative integration, particularly in the Arabic version of the *Get Well Soon* series.

In order to examine this hypothesis, the study pursues the following specific objectives:

1.4 Objectives of the Study

- To identify and analyze the most effective strategies for simplifying and translating complex scientific content for children while preserving its core scientific integrity.
- To examine how narrative-based translation techniques such as the use of storytelling, metaphors, and cultural adaptation enhance the cognitive accessibility and appeal of scientific texts for children, with specific reference to the Arabic translation of the *Get Well Soon* series.

- To evaluate the interplay between linguistic simplification and translation strategies in producing scientifically accurate and developmentally appropriate content for young readers.
- To compare the effectiveness of culturally adapted translations with literal translations in terms of conceptual understanding and engagement for children, specifically through the Arabic translation of the 'Get Well Soon' series.
- To assess the role guiding translation strategies for children, aiming to ensure that the complexity of scientific ideas is managed appropriately for young audiences.

1.5 Previous Research Overview

The present research builds upon established scholarship in translation and cultural studies related to the simplification of scientific content for children. Zohar Shavit (1986) emphasized the necessity of adapting both language and structure when translating for children, given their distinct developmental and cultural frameworks. This perspective aligns with the growing recognition that translations for young audiences must prioritize accessibility and cognitive engagement. More recently, Krieger and Gallois (2017) have argued that effective science translation involves not only linguistic clarity but also cultural and communicative relevance, especially when addressing non-expert audiences such as children. These views are echoed in contemporary studies like Van Coillie and McMartin (2020), who examine the influence of educational norms and conceptions of childhood on translation choices. Zhu and Guo (2024) further illustrate the increasing academic interest in children's literature translation through bibliometric analysis, highlighting recurrent challenges such as metaphor adaptation and narrative coherence. Within this evolving landscape, the present research proposes that simplification, narrative framing, and cultural mediation act in unison to make scientific discourse more accessible, meaningful, and pedagogically appropriate for child readers.

2. Methodology

The research methodology for this study adopts a qualitative and descriptive approach to analyse the scientific translation strategies used in the "Get Well Soon" series Benita SEN. The main goal is to assess the effectiveness of simplification, narrative framing, and cultural adaptation in making scientific content accessible and engaging for children. This approach aligns with the

study's objectives and hypotheses, ensuring a thorough examination of the translation strategies employed.

The study uses a case study design, with the "Get Well Soon" serie as the primary corpus of analysis. The series was chosen because of its integration of scientific concepts with storytelling, providing a rich context for exploring how these concepts are translated for young audiences. The case study method allows for an in-depth examination of translation strategies within a specific and controlled context, offering detailed insights into their effectiveness.

Data for the study is collected from the Arabic translation of four booklets from the series Allergies, Fever, Stomach Problems, and Injuries. These booklets were selected because they address common scientific themes relevant to children, offering diverse examples of translation challenges and strategies. The study compares the original English texts with their Arabic translations to analyze how key translation strategies are implemented across languages. To contextualize the findings, the study also reviews academic research on translation strategies, simplification techniques, and narrative framing, drawing on sources like Gentner & Colhoun (2006), (Lemke, 2001) and (Krieger, 2017)

The tools and techniques used in the study include textual comparison, which contrasts the original and translated texts, focusing on lexical choices, metaphor usage, and simplification of complex concepts. Content analysis is also conducted to identify narrative structures and storytelling techniques in the translated texts, assessing their effectiveness in engaging children. Additionally, cultural analysis is employed to examine how culturally specific elements are adapted for the target audience.

The study's findings are context-specific to the "Get Well Soon" series and its Arabic translation. Its focus on simplification and narrative-driven strategies may overlook other translation strategies, such as dynamic or formal equivalence.

3. Effective Strategies for Simplifying Scientific Texts for Children

Translating scientific texts for young readers is not merely a matter of simplifying vocabulary; it requires a thoughtful mediation between scientific accuracy and cognitive accessibility. Children, especially in the early stages of education, do not yet possess the abstract thinking required to grasp complex scientific terms and processes. Thus, the translator's role becomes fundamentally pedagogical reconstructing the content in a way that maintains its core scientific integrity while aligning with a child's worldview, language level, and curiosity. The Get Well Soon series, which serves as the primary

corpus of this study, demonstrates several effective strategies employed to make health and science information digestible for children. Below is an analysis of four key strategies, each illustrated with examples drawn directly from the corpus.

3.1 Simplification Without Loss of Meaning

The first and most critical strategy involves simplifying terminology and sentence structures without diluting the scientific message. The challenge lies in preserving the essence of the scientific concept while presenting it in language that is both familiar and non-intimidating to a child reader.

For example, consider the child-friendly explanation: “The spleen filters blood and fights infections that attack you” (Get Well Soon, Allergies, 2017a, p. 10). This replaces the more complex medical phrasing: “The spleen functions as a lymphoid organ responsible for the filtration of blood and the immunologic removal of pathogens.”

Another example is: “Pollen can set you sneezing... doctors say you have hay fever” (Allergies, 2017a, p. 9), as opposed to the technical version: “Airborne pollen acts as an aeroallergen, causing allergic rhinitis in sensitized individuals, often presenting with sneezing and nasal inflammation.”

In these examples, metaphors such as describing immune cells as “soldiers” are used to replace complex immunological terminology. Instead of referring to terms like “macrophages” or “pathogen recognition,” the metaphor conveys the concept of active bodily defense in a way children can easily grasp. Simplification here is not merely lexical but also conceptual: while the scientific fact that white blood cells identify and neutralize threats is retained, it is reframed in narrative and visual terms that align with a child’s cognitive development.

3.2 Use of Metaphors, Similes and other Figures of Speech

Writers of popular science for children often employ figurative language particularly metaphors, similes, and familiar analogies to render complex biomedical ideas accessible. In the *Get Well Soon* series, these rhetorical strategies function as pedagogical tools that bridge abstract physiological concepts with children’s lived experience.

Metaphor is used extensively to translate invisible processes into narrative forms. The immune system, for example, is framed as a military force: «*The immune system is the body's army against its enemies.*» (*Injuries*, 2017b, p. 4)

This metaphor positions pathogens as hostile invaders and immunity as defense, grounding microbial action in a child's understanding of conflict. The military frame is extended with: «*Defends itself against invading germs,*» which not only sustains the metaphor but personifies the body as an agent capable of self-protection.

Personification is also used to animate biological components with voice and agency. In the same section, immune cells are given a narrative voice: «*White blood cells have a load of work.*» This statement casts cells as workers with responsibility and effort, linking immunological activity to familiar experiences like being tired or overwhelmed.

Simile, meanwhile, offers visual comparisons to explain otherwise abstract biological functions. In the *Injuries* booklet, collagen is introduced as: «*Collagen are like tailors. They are very good at sewing up broken skin.*» This simile allows young readers to conceptualize wound healing through the familiar action of mending fabric, replacing technical language with everyday imagery. In the *Allergies* booklet, familiar comparisons continue to shape children's understanding. Pollen is described as: «*Pollen, which looks like powder...*»

This analogy grounds an invisible allergen in a common household substance. Similarly, environmental allergens are made playful and tangible: «*Teeny-weeny dust mites that hide in the dust.*» Here, diminutives and animation reduce fear and increase relatability, portraying allergens as discoverable figures rather than threats.

3.3 Storytelling as a Structural Device

Beyond isolated metaphors, full storytelling frameworks are commonly used to make scientific concepts more engaging and easier to understand. This approach presents scientific ideas not as isolated facts but as part of a narrative, which aligns with children's natural learning styles.

In *The Body's Army*, the immune system is framed as a battle within the body: «Deep inside your body, a battle is going on. You can't see it, but your body's army is fighting hard to keep you healthy.»

The white blood cells are portrayed as heroes, and infections as villains, organizing the immune response into a familiar narrative structure threat, conflict, and resolution. This makes complex biological processes more relatable and easier to follow.

Similarly, in *Ouch! That Hurt!*, germs are personified to explain the healing process: "Diarrhoea germs hide in many places. They live in the stomachs of people and animals. A favourite hiding place for diarrhoea bugs like Di is a dirty hand." (Stomach Problems, P8)

By personifying germs like "Di," the story transforms the concept into a more tangible and engaging drama. The act of washing hands becomes a heroic action, making the scientific content more relatable and memorable for young readers.

3.4 Incorporation of Interactive Elements

Interactivity plays a key role in children's cognitive development, and the *Get Well Soon* series effectively incorporates prompts that encourage children to engage actively with the material. These prompts, ranging from questions to creative tasks, facilitate deeper understanding by linking scientific concepts to the child's personal experiences.

In *Fever*, children are asked to reflect on their own experiences with illness: "Can you think of a time when you had a cold? What did you do to feel better?" (Fever, 2017b, p. 6)

This question not only invites children to recall their own experiences but also encourages them to connect their personal knowledge to the content, reinforcing the learning process.

In *The Body's Army*, children are asked to draw a germ-fighting superhero: "Draw your own germ-fighting superhero. What powers would they have?" (Get Well Soon, 2017a, p. 8)

This creative task invites children to use their imagination while applying the concepts of immune defense they've learned. It makes the scientific content more tangible and fun, encouraging children to think actively about how their bodies fight germs.

These interactive elements do more than simply enhance engagement; they help children internalize scientific concepts by linking the content to their personal knowledge and experiences. In translations, these prompts are often retained with slight modifications to make them more accessible, ensuring the interactive nature of the learning experience remains intact across cultures.

4.Effective Strategies for Translating Scientific Texts for Children

This comprehensive analysis evaluates translation strategies employed in translating the "Get Well Soon" children's educational series, specifically focusing on four booklets: "Allergies," "Fever," "Stomach Problems," and "Injuries." The nuanced examination reveals strategic considerations and methodological adaptations critical to successful cross-cultural communication in children's literature.

4.1 Cultural Adaptation

Cultural adaptation is strategically utilized to bridge potential comprehension gaps caused by culturally bound references.

Example1:

- **Original:** "You do not have to look far for Allergens! Eating vegetables like brinjal especially those with a lot of seeds, mushrooms, **and taro or colcosia** can leave some people with an itchy palate (the roof of the mouth). (Allergies, p.8)
- **Arabic Translation:** مسببات الحساسية موجودة في كل مكان.. أكل الخضار مثل الباذنجان، خصوصاً تلك التي تحوي على كثير من البذور الكوسة، والخيار يمكن أن تسبب حكة في الحنك (سقف الفم)
- **Analysis:**
The translator adopts a culturally aware strategy by replacing vegetables like taro and colcosia commonly used in Indian cuisine but unfamiliar to most Arabic-speaking children with more recognizable options such as zucchini and cucumber. Since these items carry cultural significance in the source context, especially in terms of size and commonality, their direct translation could confuse the target audience. By choosing familiar vegetables, the translator ensures the idea of common food allergens is conveyed clearly, enhancing both understanding and relevance for the Arabic child reader. Replacing culture-specific references enhances cultural coherence.

Example 2:

- **Original:** When we are fit and fine, our body temperature is about **98F**.
- **Arabic Translation:** 37 عندما نكون بصحة جيدة وسليمة تكون درجة حرارة جسمنا وثلاثون درجة سلسيوس.
- **Analysis:** The translator replaces the Fahrenheit measurement (98) with its Celsius equivalent (37), which is the standard unit used in the Arab world. While this may appear as a cultural substitution, it also serves a simplification function by using a familiar reference point for young Arabic-speaking readers. This adaptation supports immediate comprehension and avoids confusion, aligning the scientific fact with the metric system commonly taught in Arabic-speaking educational contexts.

4.2 Simplification

Simplification reduces lexical and syntactical complexity to align with the cognitive capacities of young audiences.

Example 3:

- **Original:** Frequent and unsupervised use of antibiotics for minor illnesses like colds or fever may disrupt your body's natural defences and lead to more severe health problems.
- **Arabic Translation:** إذا أخذت دواء الجراثيم كثيرًا بدون إذن الطبيب ممكن تمرض أكثر.
- **Analysis:** The translator deliberately omits complex biomedical terms such as "antibiotics," "natural defenses," and "severe health problems," opting instead for child-friendly vocabulary and structure. This conscious simplification reflects an understanding of the cognitive limitations of young readers. By focusing on the essential idea and using everyday language, the translation maintains the core health warning while ensuring clarity and engagement for its target audience.

4.3 Omission:

Deliberate omission is employed to avoid potential confusion or reader disengagement.

Example 4:

- **Original:** **ACHOO syndrome** means some people sneeze when they see sunlight. It stands for Autosomal Dominant Compelling Helio-Ophthalmic Outburst
- **Translation:** بعض الناس يعطسون عند رؤية ضوء الشمس بسبب حالة نادرة تتعلق بالعين والضوء

Analysis: The translator's decision to omit the acronym ACHOO and its complex medical explanation reflects a thoughtful application of the omission strategy. By removing technical and potentially confusing elements, the translator prioritizes clarity and accessibility for young readers. This strategic simplification enhances comprehension and maintains engagement, especially in a pedagogical context where dense terminology could hinder understanding.

4.4 Literal and Semantic Translation

Literal translation maintains fidelity to the source text, while semantic translation preserves meaning at deeper interpretative levels.

Example 5:

- **Original:** "Allergens can make it difficult for some people to breathe."
- **Arabic Translation:** "يمكن لمسببات الحساسية أن تسبب صعوبة في التنفس عند (الحساسية ص14) بعض الأشخاص"
- **Critical Analysis:** This literal yet carefully semantic translation preserves essential pedagogical intentions. The choice effectively balances linguistic precision with reader comprehension, reinforcing educational clarity.

4.5 Addition (Explication)

Additions, particularly explication, enhance comprehension through supplementary explanations.

Example 6:

- **Original:** "But if the Itchy rashes continue or if you find it difficult to breathe, there is no time to lose"(allergies,P16)
- **Arabic Translation:** "لكن أو إذا وجدت صعوبة بالتنفس، لا يمكن إضاعة أي وقت إذا استمر الطفح الجلدي المصاحب بحكة" (الحساسية ص 16)
- **Analysis:** Expanding the description reflects a thoughtful pedagogical strategy, explicitly facilitating understanding of potentially unfamiliar medical phenomena. This translation demonstrates an advanced sensitivity to the developmental linguistic needs of child readers.

4.6. Equivalence Strategy

The equivalence strategy in translation refers to the approach of ensuring that the translated text preserves the original meaning, function, and effect of the source text while adapting the language and structure to suit the target language and culture. This strategy focuses on achieving equivalency in terms of semantic content, cultural relevance, and emotional resonance. According to Krieger and Gallois (2017), equivalence in translation involves making sure that the scientific integrity and message are not lost while ensuring the translation is culturally appropriate and engaging for the target audience. This is particularly important in the translation of content for children, where simplicity, engagement, and clarity are key like the following example from the booklet of Allergy by SEN.

Example 7:

English Version:

Many things can trigger an allergy...
Any time, any place and then,
If so many things are guilty,
Beware of an allergen.

Arabic Translation:

Original translation:

الكثير من الأشياء تسبب الحساسية، في أي وقت و في أي مكان ، ثم و إذا وجد العديد من
الجنة، فاحذر مسببات الحساسية.

Proposed equivalent translation :

أي شيء في أي وقت بالحساسية قد يصيب،
فاحذر من الحساسية و مسبباتها أيها اللبيب
فالحرص و الوقاية خير من الذهاب إلى الطبيب

Analysis: The original Arabic translation ("...الكثير من الأشياء تسبب الحساسية") adopts a literal approach that, while lexically accurate (e.g., rendering "guilty" as "جناة"), lacks the narrative and cultural scaffolding essential for pediatric audiences. Conversely, the proposed equivalence-based version ("أي شيء في أي وقت...") operationalizes Krieger & Gallois' (2017) principles of child-centric translation through: (1) cultural domestication (replacing clinical terms with the endearing "أيها اللبيب" and the proverbial "...الوقاية خير"); (2) cognitive accessibility via rhythmic patterning (-īb/-abīb/-aṭīb), mirroring the *Get Well Soon* series' use of military metaphors (e.g., "يُصيب" framing allergens as attackers); and (3) narrative cohesion by transforming disjointed warnings into a mnemonic triad. This aligns with the study's findings that successful translations for children must balance semantic precision (preserving the scientific core) with developmental appropriateness (storytelling and cultural resonance), achieving what Venuti (2012) terms "ethically attuned adaptation" – where fidelity to content coexists with adaptive ingenuity for the target audience's cognitive and cultural framework.

5. Findings and Results

The study revealed several key findings regarding the effectiveness of various translation strategies used to simplify complex scientific content for children, particularly within the context of the Arabic translation of the "Get Well Soon" series. These findings emphasize the importance of balancing **simplification** with the preservation of **scientific accuracy**. Simplifying complex terminology and sentence structures without compromising scientific integrity is crucial. This approach aligns with recommendations to avoid jargon and use plain language when communicating scientific concepts to younger audiences (Rae, 2023)

The study found that **metaphors** and **familiar examples** were highly effective in conveying scientific principles in a relatable manner. For instance, comparing white blood cells to "soldiers" and germs to "invaders" helped make complex biological concepts understandable for children. This strategy is supported by research highlighting the use of analogies and metaphors to make complex ideas accessible to children (Ebonoan, 2017). **Integrating storytelling**

as a structural device also played a central role in improving understanding. Framing the immune system as an "invisible battle" inside the body allowed children to visualize biological processes in a dynamic, narrative-driven format, which is consistent with findings that narrative structures enhance comprehension and engagement in children's literature.

Additionally, incorporating interactive elements, such as prompting children to reflect on personal experiences with illness, fostered a deeper connection to the material, making it more engaging. This approach is in line with effective science communication strategies that encourage active learning (Hernández, 2024). Cultural adaptation proved critical in ensuring the relevance of the content for the target audience. For example, vegetables like taro and colcosia, which may not be familiar to Arabic-speaking children, were replaced with more culturally common vegetables like zucchini and cucumber. This change ensured that the content resonated with the target audience without compromising the scientific message. This practice aligns with the concept of domestication in translation, which aims to make texts relatable to the target culture (Venuti, 2012).

Furthermore, simplifying complex medical terminology, such as "antibiotics" and "immune defenses," was necessary to make the material cognitively accessible for younger readers. The research also demonstrated the significance of using semantic translation, especially when literal translation could lead to confusion. While literal translations ensured accuracy, semantic translation was crucial for maintaining clarity and enhancing understanding in the context of the target audience's cognitive development.

Overall, the study found that employing a combination of strategies simplification, metaphors, storytelling, cultural adaptation, and semantic translation was essential in translating scientific content effectively for children. These strategies not only preserved scientific accuracy but also ensured the content was engaging, cognitively accessible, and relevant to young readers.

5. Conclusion

The examined translation strategies demonstrate the importance of balancing simplification, cultural adaptation, and scientific integrity to make complex content accessible and engaging for children. Through the use of metaphors,

storytelling, and semantic translation, the study highlights how scientific messages can be effectively conveyed while maintaining cultural relevance. These strategies ensure that the material is both scientifically accurate and cognitively accessible for young readers, particularly in the context of the Arabic translation of the "Get Well Soon" series.

Looking ahead, future research could explore the integration of multimodal learning tools such as visuals, interactive graphics, and digital platforms into the translation of scientific texts. Additionally, comparative studies across multiple languages and cultural contexts could reveal more universal strategies for translating science to children. Longitudinal studies on how early exposure to simplified scientific materials influences later learning and retention would also provide valuable insights into the long-term benefits of these translation strategies. As such, expanding research in these areas will continue to improve how scientific content is communicated to young learners across the world.

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