

Translating For Young Minds: Techniques to Ensure Accuracy And Acceptability In Children's Bible Stories

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Abstract

Background:

Children's literature, particularly bible stories, plays a crucial role in shaping children's moral values. However, translation quality in children's bible stories is often overlooked, impacting accuracy and acceptability. This study examines the translation techniques used in Classic Children's Bible, assessing their influence on translation quality, particularly accuracy and acceptability.

Methodology:

This descriptive qualitative study is product-oriented research which was focused on 43 children's Bible stories. Data were collected from Classic Children's Bible and its Indonesian translation. They were analyzed through content analysis, taxonomy analysis, componential analysis, and cultural theme analysis.

Findings:


The study found that some techniques influence translation quality in terms of accuracy and acceptability. The mostly used techniques (established equivalence, transposition, and modulation) contribute to accuracy and acceptability. In addition, it also found the translator's effort in maintaining the original story through correction technique. However, accuracy and acceptability are considered to gain a nearly perfect score because of several techniques (discursive creation and deletion).

Conclusion:

This study confirms the crucial role of translation techniques in ensuring accuracy and acceptability in children's Bible story translations. Translation techniques such as established equivalence, transposition, and modulation were effective while discursive creation, deletion, and reduction reduced accuracy.

Originality:

The translation of children's Bible stories has been studied primarily in terms of methods, techniques, and quality. However, several studies examined some linguistic parts, not the whole story. In filling the gap, this study investigated the translation techniques in 43 children's Bible story translations as the whole story.

Keywords	: Translation techniques; accuracy; acceptability; classic children's bible stories.
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INTRODUCTION

Children's literature, particularly children's stories, has been widely written and distributed across Indonesia. These stories serve as effective media not only for entertainment but also for enhancing children's reading skills. A significant number of children's stories are actually translations from different languages. [Puurтинен \(2002\)](#) stated that children's stories also play a critical role in shaping children's behavior and thought through moral values. Despite this, some translators perceive translating children's stories as less challenging as translating stories for adult audiences. [Thomson-Wohlgemuth \(1998\)](#) notes that deletion, unnecessary addition, and the shifts from formal to informal registers in didactic speech are found in some well-translated children's stories. Unfortunately, the lack of Indonesian children's literacy [Nurjaman \(2024\)](#) and experience that the children have remain a concern, which may indirectly contribute to the neglect of translation quality in children's literature. As a result, the translation quality is worried to be neglected.

This issue is particularly significant in the context of religious texts such as children's bible stories. While Christianity does not originate in Indonesia, translation has served as a vital bridge, enabling people who have faith in it to read the bible. Giving the access for the children, the stories from the bible are compiled into children's stories. These stories are generally written in English and expected to be easily understood by the children. Consequently, children's bible stories must be written in the simplest sentences. Some experts [Nuttall et al, \(2022\)](#), [Crawley and Mountain \(2006\)](#), and [Puurтинен \(2002\)](#) highlight that the complexity and intricacy are the main problems in maintaining the readability. Puurтинен's research, for instance, demonstrated that the readability level of children's stories in Finland is closely linked to the complexity of the sentences.

Children's bible stories differ from other forms of children's literature as their primary purpose is to convey religious teaching with entertainment serving as a secondary function. [Nababan et al. \(2012\)](#) also explain that reducing and adding messages in several texts, such as legal, medical, technical, and religious texts, lead the negative effect since these kinds of text are widely used by the people. According to [Kulkofsky et al. \(2011\)](#), children tend to believe accurate retellings with emphasis on adjustment as a function of context with the high accuracy condition by employing more word-for-word but less inaccurate stories. However, when the retellings are biased of the original and involve several adjustments, this may lead the children to believe more in inaccurate retellings. Similarly, [Krisifu et al. \(2025\)](#) claim that the involvement of more adjustments in the translation, this results in misleading translation. This

explains the reason why the accuracy in translating the bible stories should be highly prioritized and followed by acceptability and readability. Those stories are also categorized as sensitive texts as legal texts, medical texts, and religious texts. As an example, the word ‘*son*’ in a sentence *Abraham’s servant asked the young woman who she was – and found that she was the son of Abraham brother* is translated into *anak perempuan* (daughter). At first glance, there is a gender switch in target text. The translator seems not to be faithful to the source text. Surprisingly, the translator actually took the right decision to switch the gender since the sentence is miswritten from the story in Genesis 24:15: “Before he had finished praying, Rebekah came out with her jar on her shoulder. She was the daughter of Bethuel son of Milkah, who was the wife of Abraham’s brother Nahor.” On the contrary, the translation would be misleading if the translator was faithful to the source text. Considering this phenomenon, examining the children’s bible story translations gives an urge in assessing their translation quality. This study aimed to investigate the translation techniques which lead to negative and positive impact on quality. Knowing the translation quality in terms of accuracy and acceptability through the translation techniques contributes to academical and practical benefits. For other researchers, this study provides theoretical insight into the effect of translation techniques on the translation quality of religious texts. This study also provides insights, recommendations, and critics for editors and translators working on the Classic Children’s Bible. Thus, the Children’s Bible translation does not mislead the children’s faith as of their early ages, and the community particularly parents may utilize such work to improve their children’s reading interest.

Some researchers have investigated various aspects in the translation of religious texts in Christian (Pelawi, 2015; Brata, 2010; Sujatmiko, 2010). They focused on translation methods, techniques, and translation quality assessment in the forms of accuracy, acceptability, and readability. The results show that in translating these kinds of texts, the translators tend to apply communicative, adaptative, semantical, dynamic translation methods. Therefore, ideology is mostly domestication. Therefore, the translations are target text oriented. Along with the results, the translation techniques applied are meant to the target texts. Having target-text-oriented translation, accuracy, acceptability, and readability still reach a high score. However, the objects of their research are the religious texts for adults.

Other researchers have focused on investigating children story translation (Gamage & Bamunusinghe, 2024; Krisifu et al., 2025; Purnomo et al., 2022; Purnomo et al., 2020; Putri et al., 2024; Putri, et al., 2020). The two-research conducted by Purnomo et al. focuses on

proposing amplification techniques on children's picture books and strategies as well as the impact on trans adapting fables into a parable. Meanwhile, Alla investigated the complexities in children's story translation. The complexities varied from micro text (pragmatics, sarcasm, and poetics) to macro text. Furthermore, Ulwiyah conducted research by employing the SFL approach on investigating textual meta function on theme-rheme. Taking the same approach, the research conducted by Putri et al. assessed and compared the translation quality of ideational meta function on logical metaphors in leveling children's storybooks. Gamage & Bamuningshe and Krisifu examined children's rhymes. However, Gamage and Bamuningshe did not work on the children's rhyme bible storybook as what Krisifu did. Based on the reviews, examining certain linguistic aspects in translation only assesses some parts not as a whole text. Examining the translation as a whole text offers a holistic translation assessment through the storyline and how the translators transfer the meaning from source text into target text.

Eventually, the research leaves a gap in examining children's bible story translations as the whole text. Hence, this research examined the grammatical units in the children's bible story translations, translation techniques, and their impact on accuracy and acceptability. This paper does not discuss the readability aspect since it has been presented in the previous articles (Nababan, H. et al., 2019).

METHODOLOGY

This research focuses on translation outcomes, evaluating the translated product without linking it to the process undertaken by the translator. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, the study aimed to provide a comprehensive description of the translation techniques applied and their impact on translation quality, particularly in terms of accuracy and acceptability. The research used an embedded case study design, and its data were collected with the purposive sampling technique. The research employed an embedded case study design, with a focus on predetermined variables such as translation techniques, applied in the translation of the children's Bible storybook, and their impact on translation quality, particularly accuracy and acceptability. As Sutopo (2006) explains, in an embedded case study, the research problem is defined in advance and then explored in-depth in the field. In addition, the study incorporated an ethnographic approach, where the researcher actively engaged in data collection, reflection, and interpretation of the data within its cultural and contextual framework (Santosa, 2021). The ethnographic element complemented the embedded case study by allowing the researcher to gather more nuanced data through direct fieldwork, particularly to fill gaps not covered by the primary data sources. The primary data sources consist of two

types: 1) the book *Classic Children's Bible* and its Indonesian translation, and 2) five informants (raters). The primary data sources consist of two types: 1) the *Classic Children's Bible* and its Indonesian translation, and 2) three informants (raters). The three raters were selected based on specific criteria to ensure their representativeness and the validity of their assessments. These criteria include: 1) proficiency in both English and Indonesian, 2) expertise and knowledge in translation, 3) practical experience in translation, and 4) willingness to participate and contribute to the research. To control subjective interpretations of religious content, the raters were provided with clear guidelines and criteria for evaluating the translations. To achieve data validity and ensure reliable and objective interpretation of religious contents, data and findings in this study were triangulated. The decision to use the *Classic Children's Bible* as the data source was influenced by several factors, such as the book's collection of classic Bible stories for children, its availability in Indonesian, its common use in Sunday school programs, and its rich linguistic material suitable for analysis. The informants involved in the study were chosen based on criteria such as having a strong English proficiency, having the theoretical and practical abilities in the field of translation, and having a willingness to contribute to the research.

An ethnographic approach was also used in this research, where the researchers were directly involved in collecting data through focus group discussions (FGD) to gain a deeper understanding of the translation techniques used and their influence on translation quality. The FGD instrument included presenting linguistic data from the Source Text (ST) and Target Text (TT) in tables, along with translation quality assessment guidelines to evaluate accuracy and acceptability. The assessment was not performed individually by each of the raters, but collectively by the raters and researchers during the FGD. The main data for this study included linguistic data, namely words, phrases, clauses, and sentences from both the Source Text (ST) and Target Text (TT). In examining linguistic data, this study employed the concept proposed by [Kridalaksana \(2011\)](#) which included morphemes, words, phrases, clauses, and sentences. Meanwhile, the translation data covered translation techniques and translation quality. To obtain data, the researchers carried out two stages of data collection: document analysis to obtain linguistic data and FGD to explore translation techniques and their impact. This study employed translation techniques proposed by [Molina & Albir \(2002\)](#) and translation quality instruments proposed by [Nababan et al. \(2012\)](#) to assess the impact caused by the translation techniques. The translation quality aspects are limited only to accuracy and acceptability since readability has been discussed in the previous study. The researchers employed three data

analysis techniques; domain analysis, taxonomy analysis, and componential analysis (Spradley, 1980). Each technique served a specific purpose in achieving the research objectives. Domain analysis was used to classify the linguistic data by grouping the 43 Bible stories into five sub-domains based on their content. This classification allowed the researchers to focus on specific areas relevant to the study, ensuring a structured approach to analyzing the stories. Taxonomy analysis helped identify and count the translation techniques applied in each story. By categorizing these techniques according to Molina and Albir's (2002) 18 translation methods, the researchers were able to analyze the frequency and patterns of translation technique usage, from the most to the least common. Finally, componential analysis involved comparing the grammatical units of the source text (ST) and the target text (TT), linking these units to the translation techniques used and examining their impact on the quality of the translation, specifically in terms of accuracy and acceptability. This step provided insights into how the translation techniques affected the overall quality of the translation. By integrating the results of these three analyses, the study constructed a clear connection between translation techniques and translation quality, offering a comprehensive view of the translation process of children's Bible stories from English to Indonesian.

FINDINGS

Across Stories 1 to 43, the grammatical units identified include 43 words, 38 phrases, and 1,215 sentences. Story titles in both ST and TT are mostly phrases rather than full sentences. The body of the ST contains 1,210 sentences, whereas TT has 1,360 sentences and 2 phrases. Both texts feature various sentence structures, but TT includes additional phrases and structural modifications, with some sentences simplified or restructured. The translation techniques used for words, phrases, and sentences are detailed in the following table.

Table 1 The distribution of translation techniques of titles and body of 43 children's Bible stories.

Section	ST		TT		Translation techniques	F
	Grammatical Units	Total	Grammatical Units	Total		
Stories 1-43	Title	Phrase	Phrase	38	Established equivalent	81
					Modulation	3
					Generalization	3
					Explication	2
					Transposition	1
					Calque	1
	Sentence	5	Sentence	5	Established equivalent	15

Body	Sentence	1210	Sentence	1360	Established equivalent)	6959
					Explicitation	555
					Variation	443
					Modulation	424
					Implicitation	311
					Transposition	216
					Discursive creation	72
					Reduction	63
					Generalization	65
					Compensation	54
					Calque	30
					Addition	17
					Particularization	12
					Paraphrase	12
					Correction	11
					Literal	7
					Description	1
					Deletion	1
					Linguistic amplification	1
			Phrase	2	Established equivalent	11
					Implicitation	3
					Explicitation	1
Total		1296	Total	1403	Total	9375

Table above presents a summary of the linguistic data and translation techniques applied by the translator. It shows that each story, both in the ST and in the TT, is divided into two main sections: story title, and body of the story. Of the 43 stories analyzed, there are a total of 1,296 linguistic data in the ST, consisting of 43 word data (3.31%), 38 phrase data (2.93%), and 1,215 sentence data (93.75%). Meanwhile, in the TT, there are 28 word data (1.93%), 55 phrase data (3.80%), and 1,365 sentence data (94.27%).

For the story title section, both in the ST and the TT, the grammatical units used are phrases and sentences, with the same number of occurrences: 38 phrases and five sentences. In this section, the translator applied seven translation techniques: established equivalent, modulation, generalization, explication, transposition, reduction, and calque. The technique *established equivalent* was used the most, with a frequency of 96 times (89.72%), while the techniques with the lowest frequency of use were *transposition*, *reduction*, and *calque*, each used only once (0.93%).

In the final part, both the ST and the TT build the body of the story using sentences, comprising simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex sentences. However, in the TT, two phrases also play a role in constructing the body of the story. This section uses nineteen translation techniques, including established equivalent, explication, variation, modulation, implication, transposition, discursive creation, reduction, generalization, compensation,

calque, addition, particularization, paraphrase, literal, description, deletion, and linguistic amplification.

Although both texts use sentences, there is a difference in the number of sentences that make up the ST and the TT. The TT contains 150 more sentences than the ST. This difference in the distribution of linguistic data between the TT and ST is related to the use of the unit transposition technique, where complex and compound sentences are transformed into compound and simple sentences (down-rank). A similar transformation also occurs in the character development section. However, in this case, the unit transposition is an up-rank, moving from words to phrases.

This study highlights the impact of translation techniques on translation quality, particularly accuracy and acceptability. The choice of techniques directly influences how well the source message is conveyed and received by the target audience. In 43 Classic Bible Stories for Children, the average accuracy score is 2.92, indicating generally high accuracy. Three stories (21, 30, and 43) achieve a perfect score of 3.00, while most others are close to perfect. The lowest accuracy score is 2.81 (Story 22). The reason a story achieves near-perfect accuracy is related to such translation techniques applied as deletion, discursive creation, and reduction. Deletion omits meaning, discursive creation alters the message by shifting context, and reduction removes parts of the original content. As seen in two examples, the shift in meaning happened because of discursive creation techniques. In the first, “**from the middle of the river bed**” is translated as *tepi* (edge) instead of *tengah* (middle), causing a shift in meaning. In the second, “**Then Samuel waited to see what God would do next**” is mistranslated by changing the subject from “God” to “**Samuel**,” altering the original intent. These changes demonstrate how translation choices can reduce accuracy by shifting meaning away from the source text. Although these techniques reduced the accuracy, this study found one technique namely correction technique which keeps the accuracy although the translator shifts the meaning. This technique is applied when the translator realizes the source text is miswritten. Therefore, the translator decides to translate it differently from the source text in order to correct the content in the target text. As an example, this sentence *Abraham's servant asked the young woman who she was – and found that she was the son of Abraham brother* uses ‘son’ (*anak laki-laki* in Indonesian) to refer to a young woman. However, the translator translated it into ‘*anak perempuan*’ (daughter) which is aligned to the real story in the bible. The faithfulness in this case can lead to misunderstanding between the readers and the truth of the bible.

Additionally, the average acceptability score of the translation is 2.99, which is considered nearly perfect on a scale of 1 to 3, where 3 represents a perfect score, the score ranging from 2.75 to 2.99 is categorized as nearly perfect, the score between 2 and 2.75 is graded as mediocre, yet any score below 2 is classified as low. 39 stories receive a perfect acceptability score of 3.00, while four stories (Stories 1, 2, 33, and 35) are rated as nearly perfect. Story 2 has the lowest acceptability score at 2.93, but it is still considered nearly perfect because only two out of 28 data analyzed in story 2 show low acceptability. The slight decrease in acceptability in some stories can be explained by the use of techniques such as discursive creation, literal translation, and deletion.

For example, in **Story 2**, the sentences **“He tricked me into tasting the fruit”** and **“God punished the serpent: now he would crawl on his belly”** present a translation challenge with the pronoun **“he.”** In the TT, **“he”** refers to the serpent, but in the translated version (TT), it is rendered literally as **“dia,”** which is commonly used in Bahasa Indonesia to refer to a singular third-person pronoun for people, not animals or objects. In English, **“he”** can refer to a person or a non-human entity, like an animal, that is understood to be male. However, in Bahasa Indonesia, **“dia”** is reserved for referring to human subjects. When referring to non-human entities, it is necessary to repeat the specific noun, such as using **“ular”** for serpent. Therefore, in this case, where **“he”** refers to the serpent, translating it as **“dia”** in Bahasa Indonesia is incorrect. To ensure the translation is both accurate and appropriate, **“he”** should be translated as **“ular itu”** (the serpent) to make it clear that the pronoun refers to the serpent. This adjustment will improve the grammatical accuracy and cultural relevance of the translation.

DISCUSSION

This study confirms that translation techniques directly impact the accuracy and acceptability in children’s bible stories. As displayed before, the result aligns with several studies. Firstly, this study discusses the shift on grammatical units and its impact on accuracy. This study meets the same case as the one that [Ardi \(2010\)](#) did. This study found any translator’s effort in maintaining accuracy by correcting the text. This happened because the error in the source text appeared. This error may lead to the misunderstanding since the source text does not align with the original story from the Bible. The research conducted by [Putri et al. \(2024\)](#) shows that some techniques (discursive creation, deletion, modulation) may lead to accuracy loss without shifting the grammatical units (read: explicit and implicit conjunctions). However, the modulation technique happening in these children’s bible story translations did

not affect the meaning although this technique shifted the structure from words to phrases. The changes that are caused by some techniques (established equivalence, implicitation, explicitation, transposition, particularization, description, and reduction) split the grammatical units from words and sentences to phrases. A technique, reduction, that reduced the accuracy aligns with the study conducted by [Krisifu et al. \(2025\)](#). Similarly, [Kosiuha \(2024\)](#) argues that equivalents, variable counterpart, rearrangement, specification, generalization, grammatical substitution, contextual substitution, addition, omission, adaptive translation, antonymic translation, transcription, tracing, borrowing, and others solve the problems raised by the lack in the target language of equivalent terms for elements present at different levels in the source text, namely: words, phrases, or idioms.

As mentioned before that modulation techniques found in these children's bible stories translation did not affect the accuracy, the studies conducted by [Krisifu et al. \(2025\)](#), [Putri et al. \(2024\)](#) mentioned that modulation may lead to accuracy loss. In the objects they observed, modulation techniques shift the meaning. Modulation techniques can affect the translation quality both positively and negatively. [Vinay & Darbelnet \(1964\)](#) state that modulation can be classified into several types: abstract to concrete, explicative modulation, the part for the whole, one part for another, reversal terms, the negation of the opposite, active to passive, space for time, exchange of intervals for limits, and change of symbols. However, the modulation found in this research and those are different. The modulation technique does not affect the quality of these children's bible story translations since the translator shifted the negative tone into positive tone without changing the meaning (the change of 'no' in 'there is **no** God' become '*satu-satunya* (the only one) Allah Israel'). Meanwhile, the modulation happening in translating conjunctive relations and rhymes in children's literature shifts the logical meaning and rhyme types ([Krisifu et al., 2025](#); [Putri et al. 2024](#)).

Secondly, speaking of acceptability aspects, the score of these children's bible story translations is considered high. 43 children's bible story translations gain mostly above 2.8. This is in line with that of [Krisifu et al. \(2025\)](#), which prioritizes acceptability over accuracy. In some stories, however, the acceptability reduces because of some translation techniques. [Krisifu et al. \(2025\)](#), [Putri et al. 2024](#) and [Putri et al. 2024](#) highlight that discursive creation, literal translation, reduction, and deletion produce unnatural expression or altering the original meaning. As [Molina & Albir \(2002\)](#) state that discursive creation is a technique making the translation out of context; it shifts the meaning making the message incorrectly transferred. Meanwhile, some translation techniques (established equivalence, paraphrase, compensation,

transposition, modulation) consistently ensure natural and culturally appropriate translation. This aligns with the research by [Salami et al. \(2024\)](#), which found that titles in children's books are often translated using the modulation technique, allowing flexibility to adjust to the target reader. Although in some cases, these techniques may lead to the shift of grammatical units, they contribute to follow Indonesian grammatical rules.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the significant role of translation techniques in determining the accuracy and acceptability of children's Bible story translations. Established equivalence, transposition, and modulation were the most effective techniques ensuring a natural and faithful translation. However, the modulation techniques that can be applied when translating a text are meant to make a natural translation. Conversely, discursive creation, deletion, and reduction negatively impacted accuracy by altering meaning and omitting essential details. The result indicates that accuracy and acceptability of 43 children's Bible story translations is considered high. Given the religious and educational significance of these stories, the accuracy should be prioritized while maintaining the acceptability and readability ([Nababan et al., 2019](#)). Future research could explore the effectiveness of sentences in the children's story translation in increasing readability.

In conclusion, this study not only reinforces previous findings but also emphasizes the critical role that selecting the appropriate translation techniques plays in achieving a balance between accuracy and acceptability. This study shows that shifts in grammatical units are sometimes unavoidable due to the inherent differences between languages and careful application of translation techniques can mitigate any negative impact these shifts might have on the final translation.

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