

Deconstructing Masculinity in Translation: How Female Characters Are Portrayed in Story Weaver’s Children’s Literature

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Abstract

Background:

Masculinity is commonly associated with men, which leads children’s stories to reinforce narrow gender stereotypes. As these stories are translated and circulated across cultures, translation choices may either maintain or reshape such representations. However, the translation of female masculinity in children’s stories remains underexplored, particularly through transitivity perspective. This study examines StoryWeaver translations portraying female masculinity to analyze how masculinity is identified using Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), how it is translated, and how translation techniques affect its representation.

Methodology:

This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach with five purposively selected StoryWeaver stories. Credibility was ensured through data source triangulation via document analysis and methodological triangulation through focus group discussion (FGD). SFL was used to identify constructions of masculinity, while translation techniques analysis examined how masculinity was translated from the source to the target language. A double case study design treated the five stories as individual cases for cross-case comparison across different authors and translators. Data were analysed using Spradley’s ethnographic procedures.

Findings:


Five forms of masculinity were identified, realized through material, mental, relational, behavioral, and existential processes, revealing how female masculinity is linguistically constructed in children’s narratives. Established equivalents dominated the translations, while deletion also influenced the representation of masculinity.

Conclusion:

Translation techniques play a role in shaping how female masculinity is represented, with established equivalents tending to maintain meaning and deletion leading to shifts in representation.

Originality:

The study addresses the limited research on translating female masculinity in children’s literature and shows how translation choices shape gender meanings for young readers across languages and cultures.

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INTRODUCTION

Children's literature plays an important role in shaping how children understand social identity and gender roles [Lewis et al, \(2020\)](#) as it plays an important role in shaping children's understanding of gender and social norms ([Adam & Harper, 2022](#); [Lewis et al, 2020](#); [Casey et al., 2021](#); [Moya, 2021](#); [Kneeskern & Reeder, 2020](#)). A growing body of research highlights how gender has become a central arena of ideological struggle, particularly within contemporary right-wing populist discourse ([Bacchetta & Power, 2022](#)). However, studies indicate that children's books can also function as tools to challenge gender norms. For instance, picture books increasingly present progressive representations of gender through multimodal strategies that combine verbal and visual meaning ([Martínez, 2020](#); [Indriani & Candraningrum, 2021](#)). Nevertheless, gender imbalance still persists in many narratives, with male characters continuing to outnumber female characters across time and modes of representation ([Casey et al., 2021](#); [Moya, 2021](#)).

In social life, masculinity is often socially constructed as being associated with men, who are stereotypically perceived as physically stronger and as possessing traits such as bravery, dominance, and decisiveness in leadership ([Dewi & Danela, 2021](#)). Studies on children's books show persistent gender stereotypes in both textual and visual modes ([Moya, 2021](#); [Casey et al., 2021](#); [Moura, 2025](#)). For instance, male characters are more frequently portrayed as breadwinners across various professions and are more often depicted as being outdoors and engaging in adventurous activities. In contrast, female characters are typically represented as being situated within the domestic sphere and performing household roles, such as doing housework and caring for children ([Lee et al., 2019](#); [Seitz et al., 2020](#); [Mackey et al., 2021](#); [Madalena & Ramos, 2021](#))

[Aley & Hahn \(2020\)](#) found that men are portrayed as powerful figures, whereas women are portrayed as passive figures. Besides, females are frequently conflated with femininity (characterized by delicacy, emotionality, and passivity). This binary opposition is strongly embedded in traditional literary canons, where female characters are often portrayed merely as demure and quiescent figures. Research on the ex-gay movement in the United States demonstrates how female masculinity was discursively linked to deviance and framed as a threat to traditional gender hierarchies ([Babits, 2024](#)). Nevertheless, drawing from social constructionist perspectives, gender is not a permanent, biological fact but rather a cultural concept that evolves and develops in response to shifting societal norms and expectations ([Tierney et al., 1999](#)). This stereotyping is also reflected in gendered language, where female-

associated words tend to focus on affection and communication, while male-associated words emphasize professions, tools, and transportation (Lewis et al., 2020).

There remains a research gap in examining the construction of female masculinity through language in StoryWeaver stories. Previous research, focusing on thematic analysis, fails to provide a systematic categorization and in depth analysis of how masculine traits—such as agency, assertiveness, risk taking, and physical strength—are linguistically realized through the verbs and participant roles used. Consequently, this study aims to address this methodological deficit by employing Transitivity Analysis, an integral component of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). By analyzing how language is deployed to represent their actions, cognition, and social status, this research can furnish robust, quantitative evidence concerning the construction of masculinity in women within Story Weaver. This crucial second layer will examine how these specific, linguistically constructed expressions of masculinity are handled during interlingual transfer. This involves identifying the translation techniques used and analyzing what impact those techniques have on the conveyed meaning of masculinity (e.g., is a strong Material Process translated as a softer Mental Process?). Thus, this study is expected to enrich the discourse on complex gender representation by integrating linguistic evidence with critical discourse, providing a deeper understanding of language's indispensable role in challenging and transforming social stereotypes.

Concurrently with the escalating global awareness of gender parity, a significant narrative shift is taking place. Numerous contemporary children's stories are now challenging these antiquated boundaries by featuring female characters who are potent, autonomous, and who even embody qualities traditionally ascribed as masculine. Story Weaver emerges as an ideal, large-scale platform for scrutinizing this phenomenon, given that this digital repository furnishes thousands of free and accessible stories, many intentionally fostering more diverse and progressive gender narratives. Currently, many stories on StoryWeaver portray female characters as figures who embody traits socially coded as masculine and are no longer depicted as weak. This shift in representation makes the phenomenon of changing portrayals of female characters particularly important to investigate further. This shift in representation makes the phenomenon of changing portrayals of female characters particularly important to investigate further.

However, there is still a problem in children's stories regarding the representation of gender, which continues to rely on traditional stereotypes. Despite this, exposure to counter-stereotypical characters has been shown to reduce children's endorsement of gender

stereotypes (Kneeskern & Reeder., 2020), and gender expression itself can fluctuate depending on social context and interaction (Belts et al., 2021). Nevertheless, the depiction of female characters who are rarely shown engaging in activities typically associated with men creates a framing in children's minds that women are only feminine. As a result, children tend to develop a narrow understanding of gender, leading them to believe that masculine traits belong exclusively to boys, even though such traits can also be embodied by girls.

Depicting female characters with masculine traits is highly complex because it must take into account social acceptability. Society still holds the stereotype that women should be feminine, while masculinity is considered to belong only to men (Dennis & Kunkel, 2012). As a result, children's stories still often depict female characters as predominantly feminine and gentle, so that the representation of masculinity in women is less exposed. Consequently, children's literature plays an important role in providing a broader understanding of the representation of masculinity. This is because children's literature serves as an early foundation in the process of learning values and shaping children's identities. In addition, authors have a significant role in constructing representations of masculinity and femininity in female characters (Politis, 2022).

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach with a double case study design to examine the translation of masculine expressions attributed to female characters in children's literature. Female masculinity is operationally defined as masculine-coded traits such as agency, dominance, assertiveness, and risk-taking as linguistically realized in the actions and roles of female characters. A double case study design is used because it enables in-depth comparison across five StoryWeaver texts, allowing cross-case analysis of variations in narrative representation and translation.

Data Source

The corpus consists of five bilingual StoryWeaver texts (English–Indonesian), as presented in Table 1. The corpus consists of five bilingual StoryWeaver children's stories (English–Indonesian), selected for comparative analysis. Texts were purposively selected based on four criteria: (1) availability of complete parallel versions, (2) presence of female protagonists with masculine-coded traits identified through preliminary transitivity-based reading, (3) availability on the StoryWeaver platform, and (4) open-access status. The

identification of masculine-coded traits during selection was guided by initial linguistic scanning of agency, actions, and participant roles to ensure consistency.

Table 1 Source of data

No	Source Text Title	Author	Target Text Title	Translator
1	Princess Bahati	Deogratias Simba	Rencana Putri Bahati	Debora Naomi
2	The Weightlifting Princess	Sowmya Rajendran	Putri Angkat Besi	Dafros Leru
3	When I Grow Up	Priyardarshini	Saat Aku Besar	Wika Barathayomi
4	The Night the Moon Went Missing	Shreya Vedav	Malam Menghilangnya Bulan	Nila Azmi Ismail
5	Who will rescue the Princess	Shital Choudry	Siapa yang akan menyelamatkan sang putri?	Shafa Fira

Data Collection

Data collection involved close reading of source and target texts and extraction of clauses containing masculine-coded expressions. FGD was conducted by providing researchers' worksheets containing paired source (BSU) and target (BSA) texts from the children's storybooks. The sessions involved experts in Systemic Functional Linguistics and translation studies who reviewed the data, discussed linguistic markers, and identified translation techniques based on Molina and Albir's framework. Validation was achieved through guided discussion until consensus was reached on the classification of transitivity patterns and translation techniques.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using Systemic Functional Linguistics, particularly transitivity analysis, to identify constructions of masculinity in female characters, and translation techniques based on Molina and Albir's framework to examine how these constructions were rendered in the target text (Molina & Albir, 2002). Meaning shifts were identified through systematic comparison between source and target texts, with translation techniques used to explain the causes of such shifts.

The analysis was conducted using Spradley's ethnographic procedures, consisting of domain, taxonomic, and componential analyses (Spradley, 1980; Santosa, 2021). Domain analysis identified key categories of data, including types of masculinity, transitivity patterns, and translation techniques. Taxonomic analysis organized these categories to show relationships and shifts in meaning across texts, while componential analysis examined contrasts and recurring patterns that reveal how female masculinity is constructed and transformed in translation. Documentary data and validated FGD results were integrated

throughout the analysis to ensure triangulation. Finally, cultural themes were derived to interpret the broader ideological meanings of female masculinity in children’s literature

FINDINGS

This section presents the findings in relation to the research questions of the study. The findings are organized into four parts corresponding to the research objectives: (1) the categories of masculinity portrayed in female characters in the selected children’s stories, (2) the transitivity patterns used to express masculinity in the source and target, (3) the translation techniques identified based on Molina and Albir’s, and (4) the impact of translation techniques on shifts in representation of masculinity.

Table 2. Finding

No	Type of Masculinity	Transitivity	Frequency	Translation Techniques	Shifting
1	Others	Relational	3	Paraphrase; Established Equivalent; Variation; Transposition	
		Material	36	Deletion; Variation; Established Equivalent; Paraphrase; Transposition; Explication; Pure Borrowing	No masculinity (2 data)
		Behavioral	3	Established Equivalent; Variation; Explication	
		Existential	1	Established Equivalent; Modulation	
2	Physical	Material	8	Established Equivalent; Variation; Paraphrase; Transposition; Pure Borrowing	
		Relational	5	Established Equivalent; Variation; Reduction; Paraphrase; Pure Borrowing; Explication	
		Verbal	1	Discursive Creation; Variation; Established Equivalent	
		Mental	1	Explication; Established Equivalent	
3	Intellectual	Relational	7	Deletion	No masculinity (1 data)
		Mental	4	Deletion; Variation; Discursive Creation; Established Equivalent	No masculinity
		Material	1	Variation; Established Equivalent	
		Verbal	1	Variation; Established Equivalent; Explication	
4	Interpersonal	Mental	1	Established Equivalent; Paraphrase;	
		Material	1	Variation; Established Equivalent; Pure Borrowing	
		Relational	1	Modulation	Relational to behavioral
5	Emotional	Material	2	Pure Borrowing; Established Equivalent	
Total			76		

Types of masculinity

An analysis of 76 linguistic data points within children's stories published via the StoryWeaver platform indicates that the representation of masculinity in female characters is diverse and complex. Based on [Chafetz's \(1978\)](#) classification, five types of masculinity were identified, signaling the construction of alternative gender identities within these narratives.

The "Others" category is the most dominant representation of female masculinity (43 data), as shown in clauses that place female characters within decision-making and leadership contexts. For example, in "*Princess Bahati liked sitting with her father during these meetings,*" female characters are linguistically positioned within formal meeting settings, indicating their inclusion in strategic and governance-related spaces traditionally associated with authority. Across the dataset, similar clauses consistently situate female characters in contexts of community involvement, problem-solving, and decision-related events, which collectively construct them as active participants in socially significant actions.

In addition, female masculinity is also represented through physical activities (15 data). This category is identified when female characters are linguistically constructed as performing actions that require bodily strength, endurance, or physical effort. For example, in the clause "*They have to lift the ancient iron throne,*" female characters are explicitly assigned a material action involving heavy physical exertion. The verb *lift* signals a physically demanding process that requires strength, positioning the female characters as active agents directly involved in strenuous activity. This linguistic pattern consistently places female characters in roles that involve bodily performance rather than passive observation or support roles. Another example is Princess Veerai. She is represented through physical masculinity, as shown in the clause "*Princess Veerai knew archery, sword, fighting, horse riding, and all the other warfare,*" where the enumeration of combat-related skills constructs her as a character associated with physical strength, combat ability, and martial competence.

Then, female masculinity is also found in intellectual form (13 data). The findings show that women are associated with being skilled in science. Traditionally, women are often perceived as disinterested in the natural sciences. However, in these stories, female characters are instead highlighted for their intelligence in conducting experiments and completing missions that are typically considered men's responsibilities. For example, in the context where Princess Behati presents her idea to address drought, the clause "*The King and his advisors were impressed*" shows that her contribution is positively evaluated within the narrative. The word "*impressed*" indicates that her idea receives recognition from other participants in the

story, suggesting that her cognitive input is acknowledged and considered meaningful in addressing the situation described in the narrative.

In this study, only three data points were found that represent female masculinity constructed through interpersonal male traits. One example is when Princess Bahati could not bear to see the suffering of the people, plants, and animals. Her high level of empathy made her unable to ignore their suffering. Therefore, she decided to take courageous action. This courage, which leads to further action, is a characteristic of leadership. In this context, women are depicted as having strong social influence because they are able to exercise control and take on leadership roles. This study shows a contradiction in gender construction. Traditionally, women are often positioned as supporters of men. Conversely, women are granted narrative space to negotiate and exhibit strong social abilities, which can shape young readers' perceptions regarding an inclusive and gender-unbiased leadership style.

Emotional masculinity, found in only two data points, is the rarest type of masculinity but is no less important analytically. This category describes female characters who are capable of demonstrating self-control, emotional firmness, and stability of feeling when faced with demanding or uncertain situations. This representation directly challenges classic gender stereotypes that assume women are more emotional, impulsive, or less capable of managing psychological pressure. In the data found, the female characters are shown to be able to suppress fear, regulate panic, and maintain composure in critical situations—a portrayal typically assigned to traditional masculinity.

The scarce appearance of emotional masculinity may indicate two possibilities. Firstly, that children's narratives generally remain more comfortable positioning women within mental, physical, or intellectual forms of masculinity, while emotional masculinity is deemed more sensitive and requires a stronger narrative context. Secondly, its existence, despite being limited, suggests an effort by contemporary children's literature to challenge one of the most deep-rooted stereotypes about women, namely the idea that women cannot control their emotions under difficult circumstances. Thus, these two data points carry high ideological weight despite their low number, as they open a new interpretive space suggesting that emotional stability is not an exclusive male trait but a human capacity that can be possessed and displayed by women. For instance, *“Princess Bahati led the youth of Sushusu to help execute the plan.”* This action can be classified as a form of masculinity because leadership, strategic authority, and command over a group have traditionally been framed as masculine-

coded attributes in many sociocultural contexts. By assuming a directive role, mobilizing a collective, and overseeing the execution of a plan, Princess Bahati performs traits commonly associated with *instrumental masculinity*: assertiveness, decisiveness, and hierarchical control. Her leadership position demonstrates agency aligned with masculine social expectations regarding who is entitled to lead, strategize, and orchestrate collective action. In doing so, she transcends conventional femininity, which is historically linked to supportive or secondary roles rather than command.

Transitivity System

The second finding of this research illuminates how the transitivity system is utilized to represent masculinity in female characters within the StoryWeaver children's stories. In terms of transitivity, female masculinity in the data is realized through six types of processes, namely Material, Mental, Relational, Behavioral, Verbal, and Existential processes. The Material Process appears in 59 data points, consisting of Others (36), Physical (8), Intellectual (1), Interpersonal (1), and Emotional (2), while the Mental Process is found in 33 data points, distributed across Others (25), Physical (1), Intellectual (4), and Interpersonal (2). The Relational Process occurs in 27 data points, which include Others (3), Physical (5), Intellectual (7), and Interpersonal (1), whereas the Behavioral Process appears in 3 data points, all within the Others category. The Verbal Process is found in 3 data points, consisting of Physical (1) and Intellectual (1), and the Existential Process appears in 1 data point, found in the Others category.

Translation Techniques

This study investigates the translation techniques employed to render expressions denoting masculinity in female characters within Story Weaver. The analysis reveals that translators adopt a heterogeneous array of techniques aimed at either preserving or adapting the representation of masculinity in the target text, carefully negotiating linguistic, cultural, and sociopolitical divergences between the source and target contexts. In terms of translation techniques, the data shows that various translation techniques are employed to render the linguistic realization of female masculinity in the StoryWeaver children's stories. In the "Others" category, the Relational Process is translated using paraphrase, established equivalent, variation, and transposition, while the Material Process employs deletion, variation, established equivalent, paraphrase, transposition, explicitation, and pure borrowing. The Behavioral Process is translated through established equivalent, variation, and explicitation, whereas the Existential Process is rendered using established equivalent and modulation. In the

Physical masculinity category, the Material Process is translated through established equivalent, variation, paraphrase, transposition, and pure borrowing, while the Relational Process uses established equivalent, variation, reduction, paraphrase, pure borrowing, and explicitation. The Verbal Process applies discursive creation, variation, and established equivalent, and the Mental Process uses explicitation and established equivalent. For Intellectual masculinity, the Relational Process employs deletion, while the Mental Process uses deletion, variation, discursive creation, and established equivalent; the Material Process uses variation and established equivalent, and the Verbal Process applies variation, established equivalent, and explicitation. In the Interpersonal category, the Mental Process is translated through established equivalent, paraphrase, and modulation, while the Material Process uses variation, established equivalent, and pure borrowing. Finally, in Emotional masculinity, the Material Process is translated using pure borrowing and established equivalent. Techniques, such as transposition and paraphrasing, are implemented selectively to optimize syntactic naturalness, textual coherence, and stylistic appropriateness. Transposition facilitates grammatical and structural adjustments to maintain narrative fluidity, whereas deletion excises elements deemed redundant or culturally incommensurate, albeit with potential implications for the fidelity of masculine characterization.

Shift in Translation

This study indicates that deletion as a translation strategy in rendering expressions of female masculinity on the StoryWeaver platform may influence character representation. Based on systematic comparison across multiple data points, deletion is observed to remove certain linguistic elements from the source texts, which in several instances correspond to reduced explicitness of masculine-coded meanings in the target texts. However, the extent of this effect is not uniform across the dataset, as the impact of deletion varies depending on the type of expression and narrative context in which it occurs.

In this case, the deletion technique is applied to translate sentences that represent female masculinity in the intellectual category. As a result, in the target language, this form of female masculinity does not appear. Consequently, the transitivity system in the target text is also not identifiable. For example, the sentence “*Princess Bahati stood before the royal court*” indicates female masculinity in the “Others” category. This is shown in the context where Princess Bihati bravely leads and offers solutions in front of the king so that the people and animals do not suffer. This masculinity is constructed through a material transitivity system, as can be seen from the verb “stood.” However, the translator does not translate this sentence, so in the target

language the representation of masculinity and the transitivity system do not appear. This is what is referred to as a shift. Similarly, "*They accepted her plan, and executed it with the citizens of Sushusa*" constructs female agency in collective action through a material process involving cooperation. Its reduction in translation results in a less explicit representation of her active involvement in communal implementation. Likewise, "*She applies every ounce of her strength*" represents physical masculinity through material action emphasizing bodily effort. Its deletion reduces the explicitness of physical exertion in the translated version.

In addition, this deletion also eliminates the representation of agency—that is, the character's ability to act independently and control their surroundings. In the original text, women are depicted as resilient, active, and competent individuals, utilizing all their abilities to achieve their goals. Without the translation, the characters in the target text lose this aspect, making them appear less active or even inactive. From a narrative perspective, the loss of such sentences also diminishes dramatic impact, reducing the tension, effort, and struggle that should be depicted through the characters' physical actions. As a result, readers of the target language no longer perceive the level of difficulty or hard work undertaken by the characters, leading to a change in situational meaning.

DISCUSSION

Female masculinity in the present study is reflected in multiple forms across the StoryWeaver corpus, including intellectual, physical, emotional, and relational dimensions as realized through linguistic choices in the texts. Previous research by Bourdieu (2001) emphasizes that masculinity is not a fixed biological attribute but a socially constructed product shaped by cultural norms and power relations. This perspective is reinforced by Connell (1995), who conceptualizes masculinity as a plural and dynamic construct that extends beyond physical traits to include intellectual, emotional, and institutionalized forms of competence. In line with this theoretical grounding, the present study demonstrates that intellectual masculinity—identified in 13 instances and realized through knowledge, intelligence, and professional orientation—is embedded in the representation of female characters in StoryWeaver narratives. This finding resonates with Casey et al. (2021), Lee & Chin (2019), and Adam & Harper (2021), who argue that children's literature functions as an ideological site where gendered identities are reproduced, despite the persistence of male overrepresentation in earlier materials.

However, the present study extends these findings by showing that, within the StoryWeaver corpus, female characters are not only represented within traditional gender frameworks but are also linguistically constructed through masculine-coded traits such as

agency, leadership, and problem-oriented actions. This suggests a shift from mere gender reproduction toward more complex and hybrid representations of femininity, although such representations remain unevenly distributed across the dataset. This finding is also supported by [Elorza \(2022\)](#), who shows that picture books challenge gender stereotypes through ideational meaning by representing male characters in activities that do not align with traditional masculinity. While that study focuses on male characters, the present study extends this perspective by demonstrating how masculine traits are constructed in female characters through linguistic choices in StoryWeaver texts.

The presence of intellectual masculinity also aligns with [Connell's \(1995\)](#) argument that contemporary masculinity increasingly incorporates cognitive authority and professional competence. Rather than being confined to male bodies, masculinity here is redistributed as a set of socially valued capacities that female characters may also embody. This is further supported by [Beltz et al. \(2021\)](#), who highlight the fluidity of gender expression across social contexts, suggesting that gendered traits are not stable essences but situational performances. In addition, [Lazar \(2007\)](#) reinforces that intellectual masculinity is linguistically realized through mental and relational processes, which construct authority through reasoning, evaluation, and social positioning.

Physical masculinity, on the other hand, is manifested in representations of strength, endurance, and bravery under pressure. As argued by [Hearn & Morgan, \(1990\)](#), masculinity has historically been associated with bodily strength, dominance, and control, often enacted through confrontation or resistance. This interpretation is extended by [Moya \(2021\)](#) and [Martínez \(2019\)](#), who demonstrate that children's picture books construct masculinity through multimodal resources, combining verbal narration and visual cues to represent embodied agency. Although less frequent, the presence of physical masculinity in female characters indicates a disruption of traditional gender binaries, where women are no longer confined to supportive or passive roles but are also depicted as physically agentic subjects.

From a linguistic perspective, the transitivity system ([Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004](#)) plays a central role in constructing these gendered meanings by mapping processes, participants, and circumstances. The dominance of material processes in representing physical and emotional masculinity reflects the centrality of action and agency in constructing gendered power. This aligns with [Halliday & Matthiessen \(2004\)](#), who identifies material processes as the primary resource for representing concrete action in discourse.

However, the relatively limited presence of mental and relational processes in constructing intellectual masculinity suggests an uneven distribution of cognitive agency across gendered representations. As Lazar (2007) argues, intellectual masculinity relies heavily on mental and relational constructions of authority, yet such representations remain less visible compared to action-based depictions. This imbalance is further complicated by findings from Beltz et al. (2021), who emphasize that gendered cognition and expression are shaped by interactional and contextual dynamics, rather than fixed categories.

In terms of translation, the predominance of Established Equivalent, Variation, and Explicitation indicates a strong orientation toward linguistic and cultural adaptability while maintaining referential stability. Baker (2011) explains that such techniques are commonly used to ensure semantic clarity and communicative equivalence in the target language. However, translation is not ideologically neutral; as Munday (2001) argues, translation decisions inevitably reshape meaning and can either preserve or distort underlying ideological structures. The use of deletion techniques can cause distortion and a shift in meaning from the source language to the target language (Arbain, 2023).

This becomes particularly evident in the application of deletion, which emerges as a critical site of meaning loss in the dataset. Deletion is used to omit elements that are considered redundant or difficult to render, yet its consequences extend beyond simplification. As shown in this study, deletion is observed to affect the representation of intellectual masculinity in several instances, particularly in expressions encoded through mental and relational processes that construct cognitive agency, rational judgment, and social influence. This aligns with Hsing (2011) and Li (2020), who argue that translation can function as a site of gender negotiation, where female identity may be either preserved or diminished depending on translational choices. Similarly, Wang & Chen (2023) highlight that translator intervention has the potential to challenge gender stereotypes, but in cases of deletion, this potential may be reversed through the erasure of gendered agency.

Moreover, Munday (2001) further emphasizes that while deletion may enhance textual efficiency, it risks flattening ideological depth, particularly in discourses involving identity construction. In the present study, deletion not only removes intellectual masculinity but also weakens material transitivity structures that encode physical agency and assertiveness in female characters. Consequently, characters who are originally constructed as active, strategic, and powerful are repositioned as less agentive in the target text.

Finally, studies by Politis (2022), Madalena & Ramos (2021), and Yigit et al. (2024) collectively stress that children's literature is a crucial site for early gender socialization, where repeated exposure to gendered representations shapes children's cognitive frameworks of identity and behavior. Therefore, translation technique such as deletion do not only affect linguistic form, but also influence how gender, agency, and social roles are represented in the target texts, since some meanings become less explicit or less visible in the translated narratives.

CONCLUSION

These five stories offer a remarkably diverse portrayal of femininity intertwined with masculinity. *Princess Bahati* exemplifies decisive leadership, *The Weightlifting Princess* foregrounds physical strength, *When I Grow Up* emphasizes ambition and independence, *The Night the Moon Went Missing* highlights emotional depth and imaginative capacity, and *Princess Veraai* foregrounds courage and mastery in specific domains. Through judicious application of translation techniques such as established equivalence, explicitation, and variation, translators can preserve the essence of these characters within the target culture, while simultaneously conveying female masculinity in a more inclusive and empowered manner. These translation techniques also enable the translator to navigate the challenges inherent in transferring complex concepts of gender and masculinity, ensuring that the narratives remain both culturally resonant and comprehensible to the target-language readership.

DECLARATION OF GENERATIVE AI

AI-assisted tools (e.g., ChatGPT, Grammarly, and QuillBot) were used solely for language polishing, grammar checking, and improving clarity of expression. All ideas, analyses, and interpretations presented in this manuscript are entirely the authors' own. The authors reviewed and approved the final version and take full responsibility for its content.

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