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Classics into comics: Transformation of children's literature classics into comics and translating them into other languages

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الملخص

تبحث الدراسة في كيفية تحويل قصة أوليفر تويست، التي كتبها تشارلز ديكنز في عام 1839، إلى كوميكس (قصة قصيرة مصورة) وترجمتها إلى لغات أخرى. وتتعلق بالمشاكل الاتصالية وتقنيات صنع المعنى في النص والصورة. إن ترجمة النصوص متعددة الوسائط غير المتسلسلة معقدة، وتتطلب مراعاة السياق الثقافي ودلالات الصورة للحفاظ على الترابط بين النص والصورة في اللغة المستهدفة. كما تستكشف هذه الورقة الطرق التي يتغلب المترجمون بها على هذه التحديات للحفاظ على جوهر السرد مع تقديمه في أشكال مختلفة من شأنها أن تروق لقراءه المختلفين. إن دراسة تكييف وترجمة قصص أوليفر تويست المصورة تضيف لنظرية الترجمة من خلال تسليط الضوء على التفاعل بين التحليل النصي والدلالات البصرية والترجمة اللغوية في الحفاظ على سلامة المواد المصدرية عبر الثقافات. وتتوافق هذه النتائج مع الأبحاث الحالية حول هذا النمط من النصوص، مع الاعتراف بأن الأنماط المرئية والنصية يجب أن تعمل بانسجام وأن تكون محملة بالمعاني المناسبة ثقافياً.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الكوميكس (القصص المصورة)، أدب الأطفال، الترجمة.

Abstract

The study investigates how *Oliver Twist*, written by Charles Dickens in 1839, has been adapted into comic form and translated into other languages. It concerns the communicative problems and techniques of meaning-making in text and image. Translating nonsequential multimodal narratives is complex, requiring consideration of cultural context and image semantics to maintain coherence across text and visuals in the target language. The paper also explores how translators overcome these challenges to maintain the essence of the narrative while presenting it in different forms that will appeal to its various readers. Studying the *Oliver Twist* comic adaptation and translation aids translation theory by highlighting the interplay of textual analysis, visual semiotics, and linguistic translation in preserving source material integrity across cultures. These findings resonate with current research on modes, recognising that visual and textual modes must work harmoniously and be laden with culturally appropriate meanings.

Keywords: Comics, children's literature, translation

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1. Introduction

Cultural imperialism has inspired the use of children's literature as a significant tool in forming cultural beliefs, promoting creativity and teaching people to read. For a long time, such stories have been limited to textual form. However, the media landscape has undergone a significant change towards the use of comics as a method of storytelling. When teaching, comics provide a versatile approach to expanding options regarding the type of readership and improving the impact or uptake by young learners. At the same time, translating includes several creative and interpretative acts. After all, when working with a text, the skeleton of the narrative must remain recognisable despite conversion to the possibilities of comic media.

As a case study for analysing the potential of comic translation, this paper uses *Oliver Twist*, written by Charles Dickens in 1839, as the translation object. Through the comic adaptations of the work, the study endeavours to expose the challenges of maintaining fidelity to the original story alongside the cultural and visual translations across languages. The study aims to provide insights into the relationship between literary translation and visual semiotics to intermediate multimodal translation studies.

2. Literature review

2.1. Children's literature

Children's literature has always played a central role as a carrier of societies and in the moral development of younger readers. It developed from the tradition of sharing stories that required families or communities to pass on values, practices and knowledge. *Oliver Twist* (Dickens, 1839) is an example of a classic work that has been transmitted across many generations in its original form. However, with the advancement in writing abilities and changes in readers' tastes, children's texts have grown more versatile and accommodating, with new trends encompassing engaging options that attract younger generations (Wilson, 2022). Among the lasting trends in this evolution is the use of graphic novels, whereby the image and the word are combined to make a compelling story that appeals to children of modern generations, avoiding the inefficiency of conventional books.

Graphic novels are an excellent medium for retelling such stories because they add value and meaning by drawings to support the words. According to Malzer (2015), what changes with comics and graphic adaptations is not the 'core' of a text but the appearance; the essence can be transformed visually, thereby deepening the meaning and emotions. The visual art enhances not only the text but also the feelings of the reader – such as tension, joy, or sorrow – through colour, the arrangement of the objects and character posture. These works inform the reader through a combination of words and pictures, something that words alone may struggle to accomplish among youth, especially with somewhat obscure source material such as that studied here.

Morality and social questions are integral to children's literature, and this was especially true in the 19th century. In Dickens's *Oliver Twist*, the young hero represents the author's approach to moral issues. In the focal character of Oliver, the readers explore such themes as the battle between good and evil, morality and compassion and justice (Strömberg, 2022). Dickens employed children as examples of societal vices to simplify the lessons and help people understand their problems. Elements of wisdom were embedded as moral lessons into the plot, through which readers were made to consider fairness, integrity and more.

Furthermore, the consideration of character as a dominant factor in children's literature cannot be overestimated, with older, traditional books being its most striking examples. The main characters in *Oliver*

Twist, such as Oliver, Nancy, Fagin and Bill Sikes, are all examples of different classes of morality (Naciye, 2023). The readers, especially younger ones, are offered material that teaches specific moral lessons and helps them understand human qualities. For example, Oliver is a pure person, whereas Fagin is a professional pickpocket, and Sikes is a robber and a murderer. These contrasts in character type help teach values like empathy, tenaciousness and moral decision-making. Children's literature, therefore, while entertaining the young, also influences their thought processes, enabling them to appreciate and manoeuvre through moral dilemmas.

The use of graphic novels for children's stories adds a new dimension to children's literature. These adaptations enhance the reading experience by combining text and art, allowing readers to turn from one to the other. This approach also brings literature within the reach of diverse audiences, especially those with learning disabilities and lower literacy levels (Miller, 2019). For children who struggle with reading, graphic novels use illustrations to improve their understanding. Thus, they are an excellent means of promoting literacy through adapting and presenting classical works to a new generation of children.

2.2. *Transformation of children's literature classics into comics.*

In translating classic texts into comics, decisions regarding what to draw and how to draw it should be equally well considered. Cohn (2012) states that comics produce a phraseological triad of written language and images. This integration enables the artist and the translator to offer the audience the text's content, spirit and subtext, as well as connotations of the speaking characters' intentions and moods. This visualisation is indispensable when adapting a work such as *Oliver Twist*, where plot twists carry profound social messages. The graphic mode must, to some extent, break down complex issues and make such matters as poverty, justice and morality more attractive to children.

Comics in translation also focus on the pictorial elements of adaptation. While choosing the formats to represent characters, it is essential to decide what kind of reading experience the author wants to provide (Zanettin, 2014).

Another notable approach to transforming children's classics into comics is the distortion of the plot. In the rhythm of traditional novels, description and thoughts are prominent. In contrast, comics are a visual medium that requires a faster tempo and less dialogue.

Visual features are highly effective for narration in comic adaptations. Colour, framing and panel size are significant in terms of the tone and rhythm of the events. Due to the reappropriation of the figures in the text and their representation through visual images, including art and illustrations, comics make a text more comprehensible, pertinent and engaging to the current generation (Murray, 2021). By laying down the foundation for a symbiosis between pictures and texts, comic books provide new versions of classics that might influence young readers' views on poverty, justice and other social problems.

2.3. *Translation theory and picture books.*

The translation of pictures, comics and other multimodal texts involves complex challenges extending beyond just language. These types of text use a combination of visual and textual elements, making the translation process more intricate. Simply relying on linguistic translation may overlook cultural nuances, context and the interplay between images and words, resulting in a loss of meaning or impact. In these texts, the meaning of the text is embedded in the words employed in the text and the figures of speech. At the same time, the translator also needs to make decisions regarding translating the images. Hence, the translator

has to coordinate both of these functions for any given language and culture (Schlicke, 2016). This makes multimodal translation incredibly complex, as the translator has to overcome both the linguistic differences between the two languages as well as those in the cultural and graphic signs and values received and transmitted using images and icons.

In traditional translation theory, the principal purpose of a translated text is to relay meaning from one language to another (see Catford, 1965; Nida & Taber, 2003; Vinay & Darbelnet, 1958;). However, where comics and picture books are concerned, the illustrations are of almost equal importance in interpreting the text's message. As translation studies approach images as textual units, visual language can be understood as the ability of pictures and picture-like elements to convey meaning inherent in text or replace words. For instance, the images in a picture book can express a character's feelings, the scene's mood, or details related to the story (Schlicke, 2016). In many cases, these images can be more informative to the reader than the text since they define the vision of the story the author aims to impart to the reader.

Perez-Gonzalez (2014) outlines the necessity of understanding texts for translation such as picture books and comics as multimodal. According to this view, it is crucial for translators to appreciate how the images work in terms of the text.

The difficulty of translating illustrations is most recognisable in genres such as comics and picture books. While these texts allow for captions, the emotions, character relationships and themes are often depicted through aesthetic features such as the presentations' hue or tone, positions and arrangements. As a rule, the text and visuals do not fully coincide, thus challenging the translator to harmonise them. This task demands the skills to understand the source and target cultures along with how the image-based language works (Wilson, 2022). Finally, in multimodal translation, the translator coordinates and integrates the translated text and images to present a culturally relevant story.

2.4. *Translation of images and cultural context.*

Translating images in children's comics, when derived from source material, calls for sensitivity to the cultural and aesthetic orientation of the material. Like any other aspect of a comic book, a picture may have connotations unique to its original culture. For such works, the graphics have to be interpreted for the specific viewing audience but in a way that does not distort the essence of the stimulus. Bandia et al. (2024) argue that translation is not primarily a linguistic activity and is instead a cultural one because the original and the receiving cultures both have a history, society and art that must be considered. This applies as much to informational items as to artistic works, meaning that in the process of translation and adaptation of the latter, translators, editors and illustrators must strike a balance between the target-oriented 'consumption' of the work and its 'preservation' in response to the requirements set by the original author or designer.

For example, translating the plot of a novel such as *Oliver Twist* into comic form for a new culture entails not only the conversion of the text; in addition, the external localisations of characters, situations and actions must be chosen to align with the new audience's values and expectations. Various elements in *Oliver Twist* may require a fresh approach to appeal to populations of the modern world, especially non-English speaking ones. For some cultures, this could entail changing the imagery of the characters or the costumes or even modifying appearance or movements to reflect the standards of the new audiences' perceptions. Translators must also consider how the characters' expressions along with the location and culture depicted in a picture should be altered to match the target audiences. In some cases, this adaptation may include modifying some of the visual signs related to cultural distinctions in dress, facial accessories or the cultural environment.

Translating *Oliver Twist* into comics for young people poses another difficulty because the translator must select between the historical and modern approaches. Even though the words chosen might remain quite similar to the original, the pictures that define the comic must reflect today's society and politics. For example, problems like poverty, class distinction and child labour, which are the major themes of Dickens, may have to be represented in a contemporary style (Fulton, 2021). This could include using ambience or present-day signs or symbols that help make the stories meaningful to present generations while preserving the spirit of the stories.

Additionally, the cultural, historical and social aspects of translating images in children's comics should be considered to achieve the desired result: producing secondary comics that are meaningful literary works for their readers. Each culture that participates in this endeavour enriches the adaptation process to ensure that every classic novel is capable of making sense to new generations of people all over the world.

3. Data and methodology

The classic novel *Oliver Twist*, authored in 1838 by renowned British writer Charles Dickens, serves as the foundational text for the data used in this study. This timeless tale, which explores the themes of poverty and social injustice and deals with the struggles of orphaned children in Victorian England has transcended its original publication format. It was adapted and published as a comic in English in 2011 by Kalyani Navyug Media, making the narrative more accessible and engaging for a younger audience. Following this, the comic version of *Oliver Twist* was translated into Arabic by Jarir Bookstore, a reputable publisher known for its commitment to bringing diverse literary works to Arab readers.

In this study, we employ a comparative descriptive method to analyse the transformation of the narrative from its original prose form into a comic format and subsequently into Arabic. Royce (2007) offers a descriptive framework for examining intersemiotic semantic relationships in a multimodal text. He shows how the verbal and visual modes interact and complement one another on the page, often becoming intricately entwined to form a cohesive multimodal whole. He explains that such intersemiotic complementarity may be examined on the ideational, interpersonal and textual levels using Halliday's (1973) three metafunctions of language. He renames the latter as compositional in the context of visual-verbal interactions (p. 67). According to Royce (2007), the first step in a multimodal analysis is to identify these components. Tracing the lexical items that are semantically related to these visual aspects on a verbal plane and determining the nature of these links constitute the second stage. The emphasis here will be on the lexical items, as no changes or modifications are made to the visual elements for the presentation to Arab audiences. This approach allows us to systematically examine the specific translation techniques employed in rendering the comic version for young Arab readers. Focusing on this comparative analysis, we aim to identify any significant changes to the textual components of the story during the translation process. Through the analysis, we hope to shed light on the intricate dynamics of translation and adaptation, as well as their implications for intercultural communication and literary appreciation.

4. Line of argument

4.1. *What happened to Oliver Twist when adapted into a comic.*

As mentioned, because comics based on novels integrate visuals underpinned by words, they add value and significance to the original text, making this a perfect medium for recounting such stories. However, they

can also make the original story and storylines less compelling, as the themes and characters will most likely be presented in a more abbreviated manner.

In *Oliver Twist*, one of the themes that undergoes transformation in the comic adaptation is morality. In the novel, a complex view of good and evil influenced by societal circumstances is provided by examining the mischievous crooks Fagin and Bill Sikes, two of the most famous villains in the book. Dickens uses stereotypes as a technique, which naturally create a certain impression of Fagin and portray a character that can be changed in the comic form. The illustrative representation of Fagin allows for fluidity and, often, a different perspective will be given on such a character that either counters or confirms what is socially accepted and expected given the circumstances surrounding the creation of the comic. In the original text, Fagin's visage is characterised as 'repulsive' and 'very old and shrivelled', with his red hair partially hiding his face (Dickens, 1992, p. 18, 93). Other times, he is compared to a predator of some kind or a 'loathsome reptile' (p. 18).

When they first meet, Fagin gives the lads instructions to make a bath for the weary, dirty waif next to the fire. On the surface, the adult appears to provide fatherly care for these youngsters. However, the fire is a metaphor for Fagin's hellish wickedness. When Fagin gives the lads these instructions, he begins the long, drawn-out process of corrupting Oliver. Dickens writes:

In short, the wily old Jew had the boy in his toils; and, having prepared his mind by solitude and gloom to prefer any society to the companionship of his own sad thoughts in such a dreary place, was now slowly instilling into his soul the poison which he hoped would blacken it and change its hue forever. (Dickens, 1992, p.120)

The initial appearance of Fagin in the comic narrative differs in some respects from Dickens's portrayal of the character, as seen in the following image. He looks like a mischievous crook, but is younger and has black hair.



Image 1: *Oliver Twist*, graphic novel, 2011, Kalyani Navyug Media, p. 18.

Later, when Oliver first encounters him, Dickens portrays the old man standing over a fire with his blazing red hair flowing down. Like the devil wielding his staff, he holds a toasting fork with three prongs. For young Oliver, who is inexperienced, his city is like hell; the streets are congested and dirty, and the air reeks of noxious odours. Fagin's residence is described as an 'infernal den', a 'lair' and 'dark as a grave' (Dickens, 1992, pp. 244, 417, 242). This is only one of several horrific descriptions that depict London as hell. Dickens writes:

A dirtier or more wretched place he had never seen. The streets were narrow and muddy, and the air was impregnated with filthy odours. There were a good many small shops, but the only stock in trade appeared to be heaps of children, who, even at that time of night, were crawling in and out at the doors or screaming from the inside. (Dickens, 1992, p. 50)

However, no details about London or its representation as hell are included in the comic version. Dickens had to write many pages and descriptions to introduce the theme of evil. He uses London (hell) and Fagin (the devil) to present evil, while in the comic version, these symbols are not used. Instead, the theme of evil is only introduced through colours and visual depictions. The characters in the *Oliver Twist* comic are vividly drawn, each embodying specific traits and societal roles. Translating these complex figures into visual representations requires careful consideration. For instance, Oliver's innocence and vulnerability must be effectively communicated through facial expressions and body language. Similarly, the menacing presence of Bill Sikes and the nurturing nature of Nancy need to be depicted in ways that resonate with readers. The challenge lies in ensuring that these visual interpretations align with Dickens's original intentions while also appealing to a modern audience. Thus, the character's representation is particularly subject to transformation in adaptations. Comic adaptations can simplify these representations. Visual signals, such as exaggerated characteristics or striking symbols, can symbolise internal conflicts through the visual drama. In addition, the interaction of images and text affects the audience's commitment to the character development and emotional depth.

In fact, comic adaptations often simplify or even dismiss profound critiques, becoming considerably attenuated, with a tendency to favour engagement through humour and adventure. The setting Dickens presents with stark realism could thus be transformed into a fanciful one (Cook, 2019). This deliberate alteration not only modifies the tone of the story but also impacts the reader's understanding, leading to a more superficial grasp of its implications. For example, Dickens (1992) describes Oliver on his ninth birthday as 'a pale thin child, somewhat diminutive in stature, and decidedly small in circumference' (p. 6).



Image 2: *Oliver Twist*, graphic novel, 2011, Kalyani Navyug Media, p. 6.

Dickens also tells us about the poor conditions Oliver has suffered through, writing:

The boy was lying, fast asleep, on a rude bed upon the floor; so pale with anxiety, and sadness, and the closeness of his prison, that he looked like death; not death as it shews in shroud and coffin, but in the guise, it wears when life has just departed; when a young and gentle spirit has, but an instant, fled to Heaven: and the gross air of the world has not had time to breathe upon the changing dust it hallowed. (p. 128)

In the comic version, Oliver's look does resemble Dickens's depiction of the character, although it is milder and adapted to the child imagination. All readers will see Oliver the same way, as shown in the following image:

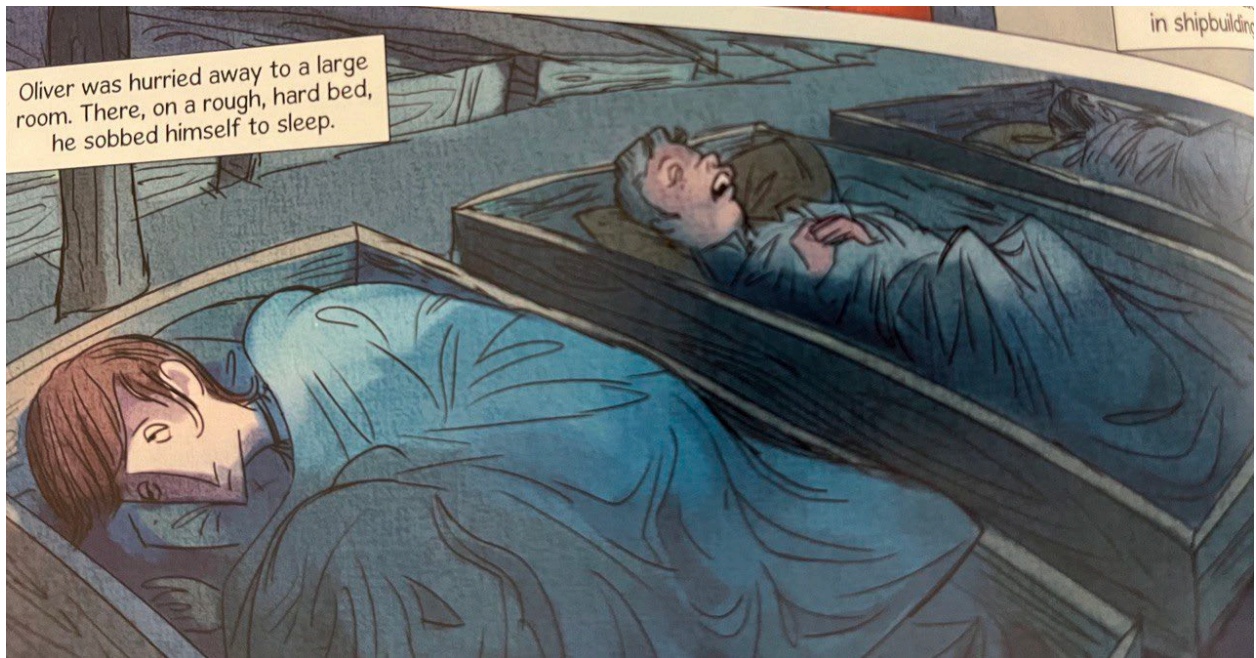


Image 3: *Oliver Twist*, graphic novel, 2011, Kalyani Navyug Media, p. 8.

With that said, it is essential to also note that the characters, including Oliver, Fagin and Nancy, are described only with words in the novel, without visually portraying their intended personality. Through the facial expressions, body position and costumes across the characters, the comic artists bring them to life in a way that is almost as expressive. For example, a scene in the novel involving the evil Fagin and his gang can be portrayed using many small, shallow images in grey tones (Harestad, 2024). Conversely, some or all of the scenes of hope, like that showing Mr. Brownlow adopting Oliver, contain more white and lighter shades as well as many loose panels. All these visual signs affect the reader's feelings and direct them through an experience that enriches the identified emotional plot of the story.

4.2. *The translation of the comic version into Arabic*

The translation of *Oliver Twist* into a comic book allows for a discussion of how translation changes or enhances traditional literature's purpose. The following is an examination of a few samples of the Arabic *Oliver Twist* comic, which demonstrate several translation techniques employed to make the comic version accessible to young Arab readers.

Example 1



Image 4: *Oliver Twist*, graphic novel, 2011, Kalyani Navyug Media, page 5. And the translated version published by Jarir Bookstore, p. 5.

This picture depicts Mr. Bumble, referred to as 'the parish beadle' ('the parish official' in the English text), whose responsibility is to ensure that the youngsters in the workhouse are receiving proper treatment. He is going about his regular duties. 'Parish beadle' is rendered as *مكررة زيارات* instead of the literal translation *شماس الأبرشية*. Similarly, 'parish official' is rendered as *زيارة للتفتيش* instead of *مسؤول الأبرشية*. The translator in this context made a conscious decision to simplify and alter the target text to ensure it is relatable and accessible to contemporary readers who may be unfamiliar with certain terms, such as *شماس الأبرشية* (*Shamas al-Abreshia*) or *مسؤول الأبرشية* (*Masul al-Abreshia*). This choice reflects an understanding of the potential gaps in cultural and linguistic knowledge among the audience. The approach is particularly significant when considering the diversity of the target audience, as readers hail from various backgrounds and may not have the same level of exposure to specific cultural or religious institutions. For instance, the concept of a parish may be familiar to those with a strong Christian background, but it could present challenges to others who lack that context. As such, it is essential to acknowledge that varying levels of background knowledge can significantly impact how individuals interpret and engage with the text. In light of this, the translator's decision to provide a thorough explanation serves multiple purposes. Not only does it enhance the clarity of the text; it also fosters inclusivity by ensuring that all readers – regardless of their previous experiences or knowledge – are able to engage with the material in a meaningful and thoughtful way. This consideration of the audience underscores the importance of cultural sensitivity in translation work and is in line with the comic medium, which always seeks content that enriches the reader's understanding and appreciation.

Example 2

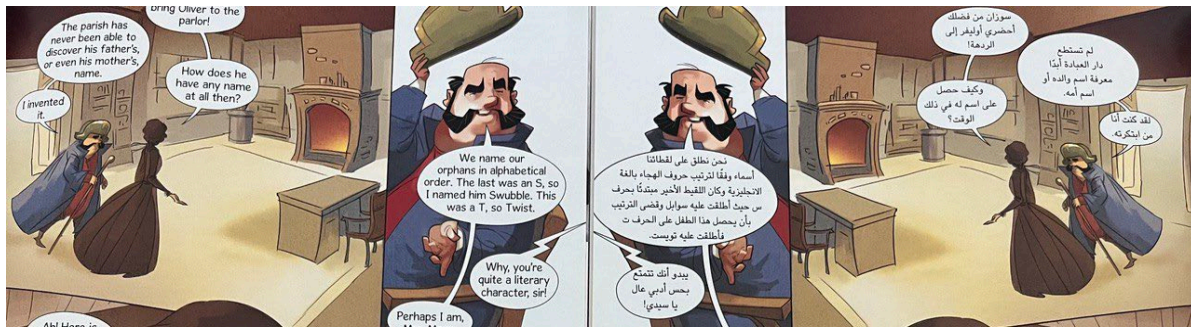


Image 5: *Oliver Twist*, graphic novel, 2011, Kalyani Navyug Media, p. 7. And the translated version published by Jarir Bookstore, p. 7.

Mr. Bumble is shown in this image describing to Mrs. Mann how they name their orphans. In the English text, Mr. Bumble says, 'We name our orphans in alphabetical order'. The sentence is translated into Arabic as نحن نطلق على لقطاتنا أسماء وفقاً لترتيب حروف الهجاء. Here, the translator opted for a cultural replacement strategy in dealing with the term 'orphan'. In Arabic, the word *yateem* (يتيم) has specific connotations that differ significantly from the typical English understanding of the term. In Arabic, an 'orphan' is defined as a child who has lost one or both parents. However, the context in which the translator is working presents a different nuance. Here, the term 'orphan' refers not only to those whose parents have died but also to individuals whose parentage is unknown. Given this complexity, the translator chose to alter the term for the reader, ensuring they grasp the multiple layers of meaning inherent in the Arabic terminology. This decision highlights the importance of cultural context and linguistic precision in translation, as it helps to inform the reader about the specific circumstances surrounding the concept of being an orphan in this context. It is worth mentioning that in Dickens's original text, the word 'orphans' was not used; instead, Dickens writes, 'We name our fondlings in alphabetical order'. The term 'fondlings' carries a denotation similar to لقطاتنا in the Arabic.

Example 3

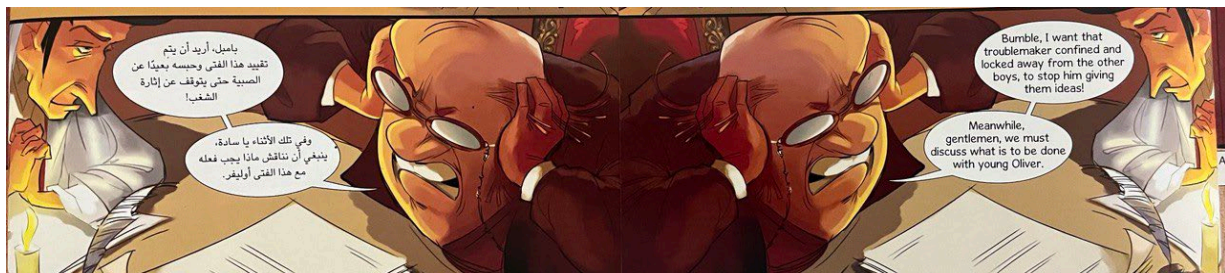


Image 6: *Oliver Twist*, graphic novel, 2011, Kalyani Navyug Media, p. 10. And the translated version published by Jarir Bookstore, p. 10.

Mr. Limbkins, who is irritated by the ruckus, orders Mr. Bumble to confide in Oliver and keep him away from them to prevent him from giving other children ideas. In the English text, the phrase used is 'to stop him giving them ideas'. It is rendered into Arabic as حتى يتوقف عن إثارة الشغب. In this passage, the translator is actively engaged in the process of modifying the source text to enhance its clarity and directness, ensuring

that the target audience easily understands the intended message. For instance, if they simply translated the phrase as *ليتوقف عن تزويدهم بالافكار*, the readers would likely struggle to grasp the underlying meaning conveyed in the original text. Therefore, the translator finds it more effective and beneficial to explicate the meaning in a way that is relatable and digestible for the readers rather than adhering rigidly to a literal translation of the text. This approach is particularly prevalent in comics translation, where the medium inherently simplifies narratives to align better with the visual elements and illustrations accompanying the text, ultimately making the storyline more accessible and engaging for the audience. Reader-focused explanations centre on the audience, particularly how the translator interprets their expectations and needs. Translation (especially for children) can be viewed as a high-risk communication challenge, since the readers may not share the same cultural context with the author as those of the source text (Pym, 2004). Thus, explication is common when translating for children and from a more globally dominant language such as English. The explication technique was found to be more preferred when translating for children from Chinese into English as an effort to satisfy the expectations of the target audience (Zhang, 2021, p. 212).

Example 4



Image 7: *Oliver Twist*, graphic novel, 2011, Kalyani Navyug Media, p. 13. And the translated version published by Jarir Bookstore page 13.

These images depict two dialogues involving Mr. Bumble and Mr. Limbkins. Some of the phrases within these speech bubbles include 'be grateful', which is said by the judge to Mr. Limbkins, and 'for heaven's sake', which is uttered by Mr. Bumble to Oliver. 'Be grateful' is translated into Arabic as *احمد الله*, while 'for heaven's sake' is translated as *ارجو منك*. The translator here opted for localisation of the text for the target readers. Thus, 'be grateful' was rendered as *احمد الله* instead of *كن ممتننا*, and 'for heaven's sake' as *ارجو منك* instead of *بحق السماء*, despite the existence of accurate and literal translations. These choices better assist the targeted reader in engaging with the text, as the expressions are more familiar.

Example 5



Image 8: *Oliver Twist*, graphic novel, 2011, Kalyani Navyug Media, p. 27. And the translated version published by Jarir Bookstore, p. 27.

In this image, we see Bill Sikes, a notorious character known for his menacing demeanour, yelling at the people seated in the room, angrily demanding to know who threw the beer at him. His outburst creates a tense atmosphere, revealing both his frustration and volatile nature. The specific sentence, ‘Who threw the beer at me?’ is rendered in Arabic as *من الذي القى الشراب علي*. Notably, the translator opted for a form of generalisation when translating the word ‘beer’ into Arabic. Baker (2011) refers to this as being ‘culture-specific’:

The source-language word may express a concept which is totally unknown in the target culture. The concept in question may be abstract or concrete; it may relate to a religious belief, a social custom or even a type of food’ (p. 18).

Later on, she suggests using a more general word to deal with such cases (p. 23). By choosing this approach, the translator aims to make the phrase more accessible and acceptable for contemporary target readers who might find the original term jarring or out of place. The choice not to translate it as *بيرة* (the standard term for ‘beer’) highlights a sensitivity to the cultural context. Using the word *بيرة* could potentially alienate the audience due to its implications in various social settings. However, substituting the word ‘beer’ with *عصير* (juice), while it might seem neutral, would significantly misrepresent the character’s intent and nature, especially since Bill Sikes is portrayed as an evil and unscrupulous character in the story. Therefore, the translator’s decision reflects a careful balance between fidelity to the original text and the need to resonate with modern readers while also conveying the appropriate characterisation of Bill Sikes in the narrative.

4.3. Discussion

Dickens wrote *Oliver Twist* in a specific historical and cultural context. Translating this work into a comic necessitates consideration of its relevance to contemporary issues. While the themes of social inequality and exploitation remain pertinent, the way they are presented must resonate with modern readers. This may involve updating certain elements to reflect current social challenges while ensuring the core messages of the original text are preserved.

Moreover, Dickens’s prose is characterised by its rich language, humour and social critique. The dialogue often includes regional dialects and idiomatic expressions that are crucial for character authenticity.

Translating these dialogues into a comic book format poses a challenge; the essence and rhythm of the original text must be maintained while ensuring clarity and brevity. Additionally, the use of slang and period-specific language can be a barrier to contemporary readers, necessitating careful localisation without losing the historical context.

Translating comic texts requires the application of specific strategies that address the unique multimodal nature of comics, where visual and textual elements interact to create meaning. In this context, techniques such as explicitation, generalisation, simplification, cultural replacement and localisation are particularly effective. Explicitation involves making implicit information explicit, which can enhance clarity for the target audience. This is crucial in comics, where visual clues may not always convey the intended message across different cultures. Generalisation allows translators to use broader terms that can encompass various meanings, thus making the text more accessible to a broader audience. Cultural replacement and localisation involve substituting culturally specific references with those familiar to the target audience, ensuring that the humour and context are preserved. Simplification, on the other hand, reduces complexity in language and structure, making the comic easier to understand, especially for younger readers or those with limited language proficiency (Altenberg & Owen, 2015; Baker, 2011; Dharmawan, 2023; Larasati & Rasikawati, 2022).

The suitability of these strategies for short texts like comics stems from the inherent brevity and immediacy of the medium. Comics often rely on concise dialogue and rapid visual storytelling, which necessitates efficient translation methods that maintain the original's emotional and narrative impact. For instance, using explicitation can clarify character motivations or plot points that may be visually implied, while generalisation can help convey themes without losing the essence of the narrative (Larasati & Rasikawati, 2022). Cultural replacement is vital in comics that feature humour or references that may not resonate with the target audience, ensuring that the comic remains engaging and relatable (Hosler & Boomer, 2011). Furthermore, simplification can enhance reader engagement by making the text accessible, thereby broadening the comic's appeal (Saswati, 2021). Collectively, these strategies facilitate a translation process that respects the original work while adapting it for new cultural contexts and audiences.

5. Limitations of the study

It is worth mentioning here that there are limitations to this research on translating classics from comics, primarily stemming from the focus on a single literary work, *Oliver Twist*, and its adaptation into a comic format. While *Oliver Twist* serves as a rich example due to its complex themes of poverty, social injustice and childhood, the findings may not be universally applicable to other classic texts or their comic book adaptations. Each classic novel possesses unique narrative structures, character development and cultural context that may influence how themes and characters are represented in the comic form. Consequently, the insights gained from this study may not adequately address the nuances found in other adaptations, potentially limiting the generalisability of the conclusions drawn regarding character portrayal and thematic transformation.

Additionally, the exploration of translation issues, particularly in the context of translating comics into Arabic, presents its own set of challenges. The research may not fully encompass the diverse strategies employed by translators across different cultural contexts, as the focus remains on the specific adaptation of *Oliver Twist*. The complexities of translating humour, idiomatic expressions and culturally specific references in comics can vary significantly, and the strategies that work for one comic may not be effective

for another. Moreover, the study does not account for the potential impact of reader reception and interpretation, which can differ widely based on cultural background and personal experiences. This limitation highlights the need for further research that encompasses a broader range of classic texts and their adaptations and a more comprehensive examination of translation practices across various languages and cultures.

6. Conclusion

In a nutshell, the study has expounded on the foundational concepts of literary translation, discussing the double aims of translation, particularly the stipulations created by the cultural relay and the problems encountered when translating idioms. Multimodal translation theory was examined in relation to comics, with a focus is on the translation of both text and image to provide culturally and linguistically consistent meanings. The adaptation of *Oliver Twist* to a comic-based orientation involves giving attention to comparative aspects on the linguistic and visual planes to remain as faithful to the original theme as possible while ensuring a broad audience base. The findings of this study could be helpful in enhancing the understanding of balancing cultural fidelity and linguistic adaptability, particularly in navigating idioms and cultural references. The study's focus on multimodal translation theory (text and image) offers frameworks for preserving thematic integrity across media formats like comics. It also offers practical strategies for multimodal consistency (e.g. aligning visual metaphors with textual themes) when adapting literary works into comics. The *Oliver Twist* case study demonstrates how to retain core themes (e.g. social critique) while modernizing narratives for diverse audiences. It can be used as a pedagogical tool to teach translation challenges (e.g. idiomatic constraints) and adaptation techniques in interdisciplinary contexts (e.g. literature and media studies).

This research provides benefits for future research on translation studies, comics and children's literature. For such reasons, there is a need for further research on a medium such as comics, which, in informing the reader on available classics, also helps foster their understanding of popular culture. It demonstrates the benefits of presenting excellent historical and literary works like *Oliver Twist* to modern generations, making them understandable and more manageable for children and people learning English as a second language. Finally, the approach will aid educational programmes, foster cultural relations and help keep the works of great world authors available to new generations.

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د. أمل الخالدي، أستاذ مساعد في الترجمة في قسم اللغة الانجليزية بكلية الاداب في جامعة الجوف المملكة العربية السعودية. حاصله على درجة الدكتوراه في دراسات الترجمة من جامعة ليدز عام 2020 تدور اهتماماته البحثية حول ترجمة ادب الأطفال واليافعين

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