

Understanding The Meaning Of *Mathal* In *Kalilah Wa Dimnah* Using Malay Proverb

Nik Norimah Tuan Mat*¹, Noor Eliza Abd Rahman², Azman Che Mat³

^{1,2}Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin, Terengganu, Malaysia

³Universiti Teknologi Mara Terengganu, Malaysia

niknorimah@yahoo.com*¹, nooreliza@unisza.edu.my², azman531@uitm.edu.my³

Abstract

Translating figurative language in literary work is not an easy task. *Mathal* is a figurative language in Arabic that is used widely in Arabic literary works. This paper intends to analyze the translation of *mathal* in *Kalilah wa Dimnah* to Malay and examine the equivalence meaning of *mathal* with Malay proverbs. This is a qualitative study using the content analysis method. The research material of this study is the Arabic literary work, namely *Kalilah wa Dimnah*. Nine (9) samples of data were chosen purposively from the book. This study aims to analyze the translation of *mathal* in *Kalilah wa Dimnah* based on metaphor translation strategies proposed by Newmark (1988). To find the equal Malay proverbs with similar meaning, the data were compared contrastively by referring to *Kamus Istimewa Peribahasa Melayu (KIPM)*. The findings revealed that the translator likely tends to use the literal strategy in translating *mathal* to Malay. The target readers can understand the translation. However, these translations are less culturally connected to the readers. Therefore, it is suggested to add the equivalent proverb in the target language to maintain the stylistic impact from the source language to the target language. This strategy can preserve the meaning and context embedded within the proverb. This paper demonstrated the equivalence of *mathal* and Malay proverbs regarding meaning. Translators must consider this aspect in translating proverbs to convey the intended meaning effectively in the target language. This study indicates the significance of cultural equivalence in translating literary work. The findings of this study benefit translators in the field of Arabic-Malay translation and improve the understanding of *mathal* using Malay proverbs, especially among non-Arabic speaking students.

Keywords: Translation; *Mathal*; Malay Proverb; Equivalent Meaning

INTRODUCTION

Translation is a tool that connects people all over the world. People manage to understand various literary works in different languages because of translation. However, translating literary works is not an easy task, especially dealing with figurative language. Figurative language, according to (Mohd & Hassan, 2006) refers to word or phrases that have implicit meaning which cannot be understood literally or grammatically. Figurative language is commonly used in Arabic literary works.

Mathal or known as Arabic proverb, is defined as similitude or likeness that referring to similarity in any sense with other (Mat Hassan, 2016). Arabic proverbs (*amthal*) contain virtuous values as guidance in living life (Baking, 2024). Hence, widely used by Arab community as it reflects the cultural and thinking values of their community. Malay proverb is a phrase or combination of phrases in a fixed arrangement that contains certain meaning (Pustaka, 2005). Proverbs are commonly used by Malay folks to convey

their thoughts explicitly or implicitly (Hamzah & Hassan, 2011). Malay proverbs also reflect the mindset of Malay community in all aspects of life (Mat Hassan, 2016).

Arabic proverbs and Malay proverbs are similar in several aspects. Both are similar in term of short sentence basically consist of simile and metonymy with precise meaning. Both are used to express experiences and events and visualize socio-cultural aspects. Both are passed down from generation to another generation and remain until now as a reflection of their communities (Nik Radhiah Nik Ali, 2015). However, there are also several differences between Arab proverb and Malay proverb because of the cultural aspects among Arabian people and Malay people, the environment and also different species of flora and fauna in their living countries (Nik Radhiah Nik Ali, 2015).

Proverbs are commonly used in literary works, hence translators face difficulties in translating proverbs. (Aleskandarani, 2024) stated that proverbs cannot be translated literally only by searching the meaning of each word in dictionary (Bin Zabidin & Binti Abbas, 2021) also urged that literal translation is not suitable to translate proverbs because it may cause the loss of meaning. This suggest that translators must apply other strategies to translate proverbs to provide a nuanced translation. (Othman, 2022) explained that cultural problems were caused by the difference of behaviours, beliefs, educations and manners among two different society or communities. (Subhan et al., 2023) also stated that translating proverbs is challenging due to the cultural and contextual characteristics of the proverbs. Contextual characteristics of the proverbs refer to the functionality of the translated text. Hence, translators must encounter these challenges to manage the difficulties in translating proverbs (Lomotey & Csajbok-Twerefou, 2021).

According to Turki (Mohammed & Ho-Abdullah, 2021), some of proverbs have shared schemas that demonstrate universal construal. The similarity in proverbs between different languages indicates shared values or universal construal of proverbs. For example, the English proverb 'Silence gives consent' has a similar meaning with Arabic proverbs 'السكوت علامة الرضا'. These proverbs mean that someone agree with something if he does not object to it. The similarity in these proverbs is the universal experience in human communication, which is silence can be a means of communication (Mohammed & Ho-Abdullah, 2021). Therefore, in process of translating proverbs to another language, it is permissible to look into similar proverbs in source language and target language.

Several studies have been conducted to compare the meaning of proverbs in different languages. (Zaid & Wan Suhaila, 2017) identified similarities of thinking values in Malay and Japanese proverbs. The study suggested the learning of similarities and differences between Malay and Japanese proverbs. (Kurniawan et al., 2018) found that many Indonesian proverbs and English equivalences had the same meaning. The study described five (5) cultural aspects; history, religion, language, values and social-organization that influenced the differences between Indonesian proverb and English equivalence. Meanwhile (Ghazali et al., 2021) identified equivalent proverbs in Malay and English. The study concluded that the comparison between English and Malay proverbs can help student to learn proverbs. (Bin Zabidin & Binti Abbas, 2021) identified equivalent meaning of Malay and Arabic proverbs. The study proposed the usage of equivalence method for translating Arabic proverbs to Malay in order to convey the intended messages. (Othman, 2022) concluded that cultural and environmental aspects are important to improve the understanding of languages. (Subhan et al., 2023) identified the similar meaning of Arabic proverbs in Indonesian proverbs. The study suggested that cultural adaptation managed to convey intended messages in Arabic proverbs. These

previous studies highlighted the comparative studies between proverbs in different languages. Based on the previous studies as mentioned above, this study found that it is essential to highlight the similarities between Arabic proverbs and Malay proverbs in translating Arabic literary work into Malay. There have been limited studies focusing on the equivalence of Arab proverbs and Malay proverbs in literary text. Therefore, this paper intends to highlight the translation of *mathal* in *Kalilah wa Dimnah* into Malay to further the discussion of the previous studies. The objectives of this paper are to analyze the translation of *mathal* in *Kalilah wa Dimnah* to Malay and examine the equivalence meaning of *mathal* with Malay proverbs.

Kalilah wa Dimnah was originally written by Baidaba, an Indian philosopher for the King, entitled as *Panchantra*. It was then translated from Sanskrit into Persian by al-Barzawy, a trustee of the Anusyirwan King. This version of translated book was entitled as *Kalile va Demne*. Later, the book was translated into Arabic by Abdullah ibn al-Muqaffa' entitled as *Kalilah wa Dimnah* (Mat Hassan, 2016). This book was translated into various languages all over the world. Previously, *Kalilah wa Dimnah* has been translated into Malay by Sitti Hadijah Mappeneding in 2017, entitled as *Kalilah & Dimnah: Inspirasi Cendekiawan Merentas Masa*. *Kalilah wa Dimnah* is a literary work that consists of sixteen animal-themed stories. The book used animal as the main characters as symbolizing human being to convey messages and values to the readers. This is the special features of the book that differentiate it from the other books.

METHOD

This is a qualitative study using content analysis. The study highlights the translation of *mathal* in *Kalilah wa Dimnah*. The book was chosen because the writer of the book, Ibn al-Muqaffa' used figurative languages frequently as a medium to convey messages to the readers. The data consisting of *mathal* (Arabic proverb) and its translation in Malay was identified as data source. A total of nine samples of data were chosen purposively and analyzed descriptively to investigate the strategies used by the translator. In term of data analysis, Newmark's metaphor strategies (1988) were utilized. Newmark (1988) proposed seven strategies; reproducing the same image in the target language, replacing the source language image with another standard target language image, changing the metaphor by simile, changing the metaphor by simile combined with sense, converting to sense or literal language, deleting and reproducing the metaphor combined with sense. Then, the data were compared contrastively by referring to *Kamus Istimewa Peribahasa Melayu* (KIPM) to find the equal Malay proverbs with similar meaning.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results of the analysis and the discussion of the results. The strategies used by translator in translating elements of *mathal* will be discussed.

Table 1. Translation of sample data 1

Source Text	من سار إلى غير غاية فيوشك أن تنقطع به مطبئة
Target Text	Orang yang berjalan tanpa arah tujuan, hampir-hampir tunggangannya binasa tak dapat berjalan lagi (Sitti Hadijah 2017: 63).

This *mathal* reflects the habit of travelling among Arabian people. They travel for various purposes such trading or seeking better place to stay. However, someone will face

difficulties in the long journey without a clear purpose to travel. This *mathal* is translated as ‘*orang yang berjalan tanpa arah tujuan, hampir-hampir tanggungannya binasa tak dapat berjalan lagi*’. The translator converted source text to sense or literal language. The translator conveyed the source text’s intended meaning in target language. This translation can be understood by readers. However, to help better understanding of the meaning, this *mathal* can be replaced with another standard target language image. The searching of equivalent Malay proverb in *KIPM* found an equivalent match to convey the intended meaning in the target language. Malay proverb that is equal to represent this Arab proverb is ‘*ke mudik tentu hulunya, ke hilir tentu muaranya*’ which means ‘*sesuatu pekerjaan (perjalanan) haruslah ada ketentuannya*’ (Hussain, 1975). Even though the image or symbol that is used in both proverbs is different, they have a similar meaning that equal to each other. Both of these proverbs conceptualise the importance of a clear motive and purpose in life.

Table 2. Translation of sample data 2

Source Text	والماء إذا دام انحداؤه على الحجر لم يزل به حتى يثقبه ويؤثر فيه
Target Text	Tapi air, jika terus menitik pada batu, lama kelamaan batu itu akan berlubang dan meninggalkan kesan juga (Sitti Hadijah 2017: 131).

This *mathal* is translated as ‘*tapi air, jika terus menitik pada batu, lama kelamaan batu itu akan berlubang dan meninggalkan kesan juga*’. The translator reproduced the same image in the target language by using literal strategy. This translation remained faithful to the source language and appropriate. Translator maintained the source language image in the target language. This translation can be understood by readers. However, to help the target readers comprehend the meaning, this *mathal* can be replaced with another standard target language image. The searching of equivalent Malay proverb in *KIPM* found an equivalent match to convey the intended meaning in the target language. Malay proverb that is equal to represent this Arab proverb is ‘*batu yang keras air pelekuknya; hati yang keras lidah pelembutnya*’ which means ‘*orang yang keras hati dapat dipujuk dengan perkataan yang lemah lembut*’ (Hussain, 1975). Both of these proverbs symbolize the influence of something or somebody towards someone. Basically, people can be influenced when frequently see or facing some events in their lives. Even though the image or symbol that is used in both proverbs is different, they have a similar meaning that equal to each other.

Table 3. Translation of sample data 3

Source Text	لا خير في القول إلا مع العمل
Target Text	Cakap tak serupa bikin (Sitti Hadijah 2017: 137)

This *mathal* is translated as ‘*cakap tak serupa bikin*’. The translator reproduced the same image in the target language by using literal strategy. This translation remained faithful to the source language and appropriate. Translator maintained the source language image in the target language. This translation can be understood by readers. However, to help the target readers comprehend the meaning, this *mathal* can be replaced with another standard target language image. The searching of equivalent Malay proverb in *KIPM* found an equivalent match to convey the intended meaning in the target language. Malay proverb that is equal to represent this Arab proverb is ‘*kebanyakan halilantar kurang hujan*’ which means ‘*cakap saja yang besar, tetapi hasilnya tidak ada*’ (Hussain, 1975). Both of these proverbs criticize someone that speaks too much, but does not working to fulfil the required action. Even though the image or symbol that is used in both proverbs is different, they have a similar meaning that equal to each other.

Table 4. Translation of sample data 4

Source Text	إِنَّ الْبَحْرَ بِأَمْوَاجِهِ وَالسُّلْطَانَ بِأَصْحَابِهِ
Target Text	Laut diukur dengan ombaknya dan pemimpin dengan pendamping-pendampingnya (Sitti Hadijah 2017: 137).

This *mathal* is translated as '*laut diukur dengan ombaknya dan pemimpin dengan pendamping-pendampingnya*'. The translator reproduced the same image in the target language by using literal strategy. This translation remained faithful to the source language and appropriate. Translator maintained the source language image in the target language. This translation can be understood by readers. However, to help the target readers comprehend the meaning, this *mathal* can be replaced with another standard target language image. The searching of equivalent Malay proverb in *KIPM* found an equivalent match to convey the intended meaning in the target language. Malay proverb that is equal to represent this Arab proverb is '*seperti raja dengan menteri*' which means '*seia sekata dalam semua perkara*' (Hussain, 1975). Both of these proverbs symbolize close relationship between two people. Even though the image or symbol that is used in both proverbs is different, they have a similar meaning that equal to each other.

Table 5. Translation of sample data 5

Source Text	فَإِنَّ الْحَجَرَ الصَّالِبَ الَّذِي لَا يَنْقَطِعُ لَا تُجْرَبُ عَلَيْهِ السُّيُوفُ، وَالْعُودُ الَّذِي لَا يَنْخَتِي لَا تُعْمَلُ مِنْهُ الْقَوْسُ، فَلَا تَتَعَبُ
Target Text	Pedang bukan ke batu konkrit dicacakkan dan ranting kayu yang tidak meri, orang tak buat busur (Sitti Hadijah 2017:139).

This *mathal* is translated as '*pedang bukan ke batu konkrit dicacakkan dan ranting kayu yang tidak meri, orang tak buat busur*'. The translator reproduced the same image in the target language by using literal strategy. This translation remained faithful to the source language and appropriate. Translator maintained the source language image in the target language. This translation can be understood by readers. However, to help the target readers comprehend the meaning, this *mathal* can be replaced with another standard target language image. The searching of equivalent Malay proverb in *KIPM* found an equivalent match to convey the intended meaning in the target language. Malay proverb that is equal to represent this Arab proverb is '*basah kuyup mandi peluh, tanam padi lalang yang tumbuh*' which means '*berpenat lelah membuat sesuatu pekerjaan tetapi hasilnya sia-sia belaka*' (Hussain, 1975). Both of these proverbs forbid someone from doing something useless. Even though the image or symbol that is used in both proverbs is different, they have a similar meaning that equal to each other.

Table 6. Translation of sample data 6

Source Text	إِنَّ الشَّجَرَةَ الْمُرَّةَ لَوْ طَلِبَتْ بِالْعَسَلِ لَمْ يَجِدْهَا ذَلِكَ شَيْئًا
Target Text	Pokok yang pahit sekalipun disadur dengan madu tak guna juga (Sitti Hadijah 2017: 145).

This *mathal* is translated as '*pokok yang pahit sekalipun disadur dengan madu tak guna juga*'. The translator reproduced the same image in the target language by using literal strategy. This translation remained faithful to the source language and appropriate. Translator maintained the source language image in the target language. This translation can be understood by readers. However, to help the target readers comprehend the meaning better, this *mathal* can be replaced with another standard target language image. The search of equivalent Malay proverb in *KIPM* found an equivalent match to convey the intended meaning in the target language. Malay proverb that is equal to represent this Arab proverb is '*buah peria itu kalau ditanam atas sakar, dibaja dengan madu, disiram*

dengan manis, dan diletakkan di atas tebu, apabila masak pahit' which means 'orang yang jahat perangnya, tak dapat diperbaiki lagi, biarpun dihiasi dengan pangkat dan kekayaan' (Hussain, 1975). Both of these proverbs symbolize the characteristic of bad people.

Table 7. Translation of sample data 7

Source Text	مَا تَرَكَ الْأَوَّلُ لِلْآخِرِ شَيْئًا
Target Text	Cuba siasat dari awal dulu (Sitti Hadijah 2017: 151)

This *mathal* is translated as 'cuba siasat dari awal dulu'. The translator reproduced the same image in the target language by using literal strategy. This translation remained faithful to the source language and appropriate. Translator maintained the source language image in the target language. This translation can be understood by readers. However, to help the target readers comprehend the meaning, this *mathal* can be replaced with another standard target language image. The searching of equivalent Malay proverb in *KIPM* found an equivalent match to convey the intended meaning in the target language. Malay proverb that is equal to represent this Arab proverb is 'awal dibuat, akhir diingat' which means 'sebelum membuat sesuatu pekerjaan hendaklah difikirkan masak-masak supaya selamat pekerjaan itu' (Hussain, 1975). Both of these proverbs encourage people to be just and fair in treating others to avoid cruelty especially in judgement. Even though the image or symbol that is used in both proverbs is different, they have a similar meaning that equal to each other.

Table 8. Translation of sample data 8

Source Text	أَنَّ لِكُلِّ كَلِمَةٍ جَوَابًا
Target Text	Setiap kata ada jawapan juga (Sitti Hadijah 2017: 159).

This *mathal* is translated as 'setiap kata ada jawapan juga'. The translator reproduced the same image in the target language by using literal strategy. This translation remained faithful to the source language and appropriate. Translator maintained the source language image in the target language. This translation can be understood by readers. However, to help the target readers comprehend the meaning, this *mathal* can be replaced with another standard target language image. The searching of equivalent Malay proverb in *KIPM* found an equivalent match to convey the intended meaning in the target language. Malay proverb that is equal to represent this Arab proverb is 'menganga baru meludah' which means 'berfikir masak-masak sebelum berkata-kata yang pedas' (Hussain, 1975). Both of these proverbs suggest someone to watch his or her words when speaking with others. Even though the image or symbol that is used in both proverbs is different, they have a similar meaning that equal to each other.

Table 9. Translation of sample data 9

Source Text	كَمَا تَدِينُ تُدَانُ
Target Text	Bagaimana kau mengkritik begitulah kau akan dikritik (Sitti Hadijah 2017: 259).

This *mathal* is translated as 'bagaimana kau mengkritik begitulah kau akan dikritik'. The translator reproduced the same image in the target language by using literal strategy. This translation remained faithful to the source language and appropriate. Translator maintained the source language image in the target language. This translation can be understood by readers. However, to help the target readers comprehend the meaning, this *mathal* can be replaced with another standard target language image. The searching of equivalent Malay proverb in *KIPM* found an equivalent match to convey the intended meaning in the target language. Malay proverb that is equal to represent this Arab proverb is 'ada ubi ada talas, ada budi ada balas' which means 'berbuat baik dibalas

baik, berbuat jahat dibalas jahat; tiap-tiap aksi ada reaksinya' (Hussain, 1975). Both of these proverbs conceptualize the effect of good deeds and evil deeds to someone. Even though the image or symbol that is used in both proverbs is different, they have a similar meaning that equal to each other.

CONCLUSION

The study found that the translator tends to use the first strategy; reproducing the same image in the target language by using literal strategy in translating *mathal*. The implementation of literal translation is appropriate and acceptable in transferring messages from the source language to target language. However, replacing the image in source language with an image commonly used in target language by using replacement strategy may benefit the target readers in understanding the meaning of *mathal* in *Kalilah wa Dimnah*. Therefore, the study suggested to provide equal proverb with similar meaning in Malay using the second strategy of Newmark's metaphor strategies (1988). From these findings, it can be concluded that the replacement strategy can be used as an alternative by providing proverb-based meaning besides the literal meaning. This strategy helps to preserve the underlying meaning of figurative language. Translators need to know the similarities and differences between the source language and target language. This is very crucial to maintain intended meaning in the translation of figurative language.

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