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Translating for children with dyslexia: a comparative intralinguistic study of an adapted French tale with English translation and commentary

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TRANSLATING FOR CHILDREN WITH DYSLEXIA:
A COMPARATIVE INTRALINGUISTIC STUDY OF AN ADAPTED FRENCH
TALE WITH ENGLISH TRANSLATION AND COMMENTARY

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ABSTRACT

This thesis looks at how translation can broaden the availability of accessible, engaging literature for children with developmental dyslexia, specifically children aged eight to twelve. The aim of this study is to investigate how translation strategies can be adapted to meet the specific needs of this readership, in a context where dyslexia-friendly books are increasing in both the UK and France, yet few exist as translated works in English. This study examines a classic French fairytale by Pierre Gripari, the tale's *Facile à lire et à comprendre* (FALC) adaptation and a dyslexia-friendly English translation with commentary. Readability was measured quantitatively using sentence length and word complexity, and linguistic features were examined through a multi-level discourse study. Translation strategies were evaluated against guidelines from the British Dyslexia Association and Inclusion Europe. The findings highlight the importance of prioritizing a reader-orientated approach over source-text fidelity, which ensures texts are accessible but still engaging. Key considerations include phonological and morphological transparency, consistent grapheme-to-phoneme correspondences and coherence – moving beyond surface-level simplification. The study also illustrates the importance of understanding how dyslexia presents across languages, which informs lexical and structural choices, and how multimodality can bridge inclusive writing and translation for children. Translating for children with dyslexia advocates for accessibility by using international voices to motivate and support reading. Future research should include empirical studies with young dyslexic readers and translated materials to contribute practical insights into inclusive translation strategies.

Key words: children's literature, decoding, dyslexia-friendly, FALC, multimodality, readability, reader-orientated translation

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INTRODUCTION

Today, our understanding of dyslexia has moved on from the narrow notions of "word blindness"[1] to a more comprehensive account of this complex neurodevelopmental disorder that affects phonological processing, working memory and reading fluency, among other aspects. Dyslexia is now internationally recognized and a disorder under the UK Equality Act 2010, which requires schools and other institutions to make "reasonable adjustments" to ensure that individuals with dyslexia are not placed at a substantial disadvantage. Ten percent of people have some variation of dyslexia – put in the classroom context – typically developing readers will likely know two or three peers who have the condition (Kirby & Snowling, 2022). This creates a pressing need to make sure children with dyslexia continue to have access to engaging literary content adapted to their linguistic needs. This thesis investigates how translation can contribute to the provision of inclusive reading material for children with dyslexia and reflects on the translator's role in adapting texts to suit this readership. While there are government initiatives either side of the Channel and several publishing houses that promote dyslexia-friendly content for children, translated international literature for these readers in the UK is limited. Furthermore, academic research in inclusive translation practices for dyslexic readers remains an underexplored field.

Objectives and research questions

To address this gap, this thesis seeks to bridge translation studies and educational linguistics to contribute practical insights into adapting international literature for struggling young readers. Through a comparative intralinguistic study of an adapted French fairytale and English translation, this study aims to answer two research questions:

1. What are the strategies used to improve readability in intralingual translation?
2. What does the easy-to-read English translation reveal about the role of the translator in adapting texts for children with dyslexia?

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[1] "Word blindness" was a term commonly used by a group of doctors in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, including Samuel Orton, to describe reading difficulties now recognized as dyslexia (Kirby & Snowling, 2022).

Structure of this thesis

The first chapter reviews the literature on developmental dyslexia in children, with a focus on reading ability. The second chapter explores children's literature in translation, with a focus on how and why to translate for children before concluding with the research rationale and scope. Chapter three provides an overview of the current provision of translated and dyslexia-friendly texts for young readers in the UK and France. Chapter four (Methodology) describes the quantitative and qualitative readability assessments used to examine the research questions and explains the rationale for text choice. Chapters five and six discuss the findings of the comparative intralingual study and English translation commentary, respectively. Chapter seven (Discussion) concludes by interpreting the findings, considering the literature and discussing their broader implications for translators.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The subject of this thesis – translating for children with dyslexia – brings together two vast fields of research: dyslexia and translation for young audiences. To explore this intersection, I will attempt to identify, in a systematic manner, the diverse factors that are at play when we talk about the reading ability of children with dyslexia. I will evaluate existing studies on key aspects at the foundation of English- and French-speaking dyslexic children's reading development, as these two languages form the basis of my linguistic study. I will then review children's literature in translation, notably why we translate for children and the strategies used. Reading problems in native speakers of irregular orthographies, such as English and French, differ greatly from those in languages with regular orthographies, such as German and Italian (Zoccolotti et al., 2005, p. 369). How dyslexia manifests in different language systems is an important factor in my research and one that I will discuss in this literature review.

Defining Developmental Dyslexia

Developmental dyslexia affects approximately seven per cent of school-aged children (Goswami, 2011) and is the focus of my thesis, as opposed to "acquired" dyslexia, which is when individuals who have suffered a brain injury can no longer read efficiently (Rayner et al., 2001). While there are many definitions of dyslexia (see also Lyon et al., 2003), the British Rose (2009) working definition is valuable to my research question because of its educational focus. It was commissioned by the UK government to help educators identify and support students with dyslexia and highlights the key challenges faced by individuals with poor literacy, even though dyslexia can vary from person to person (Kirby & Snowling, 2022). In the Rose definition:

> Dyslexia is a learning difficulty that primarily affects the skills involved in accurate and fluent word reading and spelling. Characteristic features of dyslexia are difficulties in phonological awareness, verbal memory and verbal processing speed. Dyslexia occurs across the range of intellectual abilities. It is best thought of as a continuum, not a distinct category, and there are no clear cut-off points. Co-occurring difficulties may be seen in aspects of language, motor co-ordination, mental calculation, concentration and personal organisation, but these are not, by themselves, markers of dyslexia. A good indication of the severity and persistence of dyslexic difficulties can be gained by examining how the individual responds or has responded to wellfounded intervention. (Rose, 2009, p.10)

The British Rose definition is a useful starting point to understand the key aspects of developmental dyslexia that differ from typical reading development in children. For this thesis, I will review existing research on the aspects of developmental dyslexia most relevant to educational linguistics, with a focus on reading difficulties faced by dyslexic children, to understand how dyslexic children process language. I will begin with phonological awareness, since this aspect has been the most extensively researched, certainly up to the early 2000s.

Phonological awareness in children with dyslexia

Phonological awareness is the ability to recognize and manipulate the sound structure of spoken words and is a fundamental skill for reading acquisition (Melby-Lervåg et al., 2012). It helps children to understand the alphabetic principle, where letters correspond to speech sounds and supports decoding – the process of sounding out words (Rayner et al., 2001). A well-established body of research has shown that phonological deficits are a core feature of developmental dyslexia across languages and play a significant role in the reading difficulties associated with the disorder (Snowling & Hulme, 2021). The phonological deficit hypothesis, which was supported by studies from the 1980s through to the early 2000s, suggests that children with dyslexia struggle to represent, store and retrieve phonological information, which makes learning to read difficult (Ramus, 2003; Snowling, 2001). These deficits are evident in tasks that require phoneme segmentation, rhyme identification and nonword reading – all of which are essential for early literacy development (Rayner, 2001). Importantly, phonological weaknesses are detectable before formal reading instruction begins, which supports the view that they are a cause rather than a consequence of poor reading ability (Snowling & Hulme, 2012).

Longitudinal research has shown strong evidence that links phonological deficits to reading difficulties in developmental dyslexia. Melby-Lervåg et al. (2012) conducted a large-scale meta-analysis of 235 studies and found that phonological awareness was the strongest predictor of reading ability. It was also the most reliable discriminator between dyslexic and typically developing readers. These findings show that phonological skills are crucial for reading development and that deficits in these skills significantly impair reading ability. Readers need to have phonological awareness to be able to phonologically decode words, that is, the ability to use letter-to-sound

knowledge to read unfamiliar or non-words. This process is an effective self-teaching mechanism that helps children build their vocabulary and develop fluent reading skills (Ziegler, Zorzi, & Perry, 2014). However, children with dyslexia struggle with phonological decoding because they have difficulty processing phonemes, the smallest units of sound, which leads to poor word recognition and slow reading, among other linguistic disabilities (Hulme & Snowling, 2009).

The language and orthography to which a child is exposed influence the extent to which phonological deficits impact reading ability. I will discuss dyslexia across language systems later in this review, but as Breznitz (2006, p. 43) puts it, "readers depend on orthography for phonology as well as phonology for recognizing orthographic clusters". In other words, readers rely on spelling patterns to determine how to pronounce words, just as they use phonology to identify groups of written letters. In languages with transparent orthographies, such as Italian and Spanish, spelling-to-sound correspondences are more consistent, which may make phonological deficits less detrimental to reading development. However, in deep (irregular) orthographies such as English, where spelling inconsistencies make decoding more complex, phonological deficits have a stronger effect on reading ability (Ziegler & Goswami, 2005). Reading is a complex skill that relies on various cognitive and linguistic abilities. Snowling & Hulme (2012) suggest there is strong evidence that phonological skills can be improved by structured phonic teaching and phonological awareness training. Although it is generally well accepted that phonological processing is vulnerable in dyslexia, a key concern is the relationship between phonological skills and reading – over time, less or infrequent reading can cause poor phonological awareness (Peterson & Pennington, 2015).

Fluent word reading in dyslexic children

Children with dyslexia typically have difficulties in learning to read accurately and with adequate speed (fluency). Several studies highlight the cognitive and linguistic processing deficits in dyslexic child readers that affect reading fluency. Katzir et al. (2006) highlight how initial studies on word reading accuracy in reading disabilities focused on phonological awareness alone, which meant that definitions of fluency concentrated on accurate word-level reading. Since the early 2000s, reading fluency definitions have broadened to include reading accuracy and speed at every level of reading – letter

naming, word recognition and comprehension (Katzir et al., 2006). Although many studies have grouped dyslexia and poor reading comprehension together, this review focuses on dyslexia only. Katzir et al.'s (2006) study suggests that research needs to go beyond phonology-based reading interventions to improve reading fluency, as they found that word reading, rapid naming, orthographic recognition and phonological awareness all contribute to reading development for dyslexic readers at the connected-text level, as opposed to word-level reading. This view has influenced later studies that seek to investigate the complex relationship between phonological and orthographic processing in dyslexic readers.

The classical dual-route model of reading[2] has been instrumental in explaining reading fluency deficits in dyslexic children. Ziegler et al. (2008) looked beyond phonological deficits and found that most dyslexics in their study of French-speaking children had difficulties in more than one aspect of reading. The authors used Coltheart et al.'s (2001) computational Dual Route Cascaded model to simulate different subtypes of dyslexia, including developmental dyslexia. Ziegler et al. (2008) suggest that some dyslexic readers, who struggle with phonology-based word recognition (i.e. decoding words using letter-to-sound correspondences), may develop an increased reliance on orthographic cues as a compensatory strategy. In other words, because they do not process words efficiently through phonology, they might become more sensitive to the visual structure of words to aid recognition. This finding is consistent with a study by Bosse et al. (2007), which also suggests that deficits in parallel processing of letters could be a key component in dyslexia (Ziegler et al., 2008). Put differently, dyslexic children find it difficult to recognize multiple letters at once. As a compensatory mechanism, they may process letters in a more serial manner, which not only slows reading but also makes the process fragmented and laborious.

Lexical complexity is clearly a key factor for readability. Some researchers have identified that each additional letter slows reading fluency (Ziegler et al., 2003; Zoccolotti et al., 2005). However, it's not just word length but also frequency that plays a role, as suggested by van der Kleij et al. (2019), who state that when dyslexic children are confronted with low-frequency and longer words that aren't retrieved directly from

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[2] The classical theoretical dual-route models suggest that typically developing readers recognize familiar words by memory (the lexical route) and sound out unfamiliar words letter by letter, by converting graphemes to phonemes (the sublexical route), as described by Coltheart (1978, 1985) and Coltheart & Rastle (1994).

verbal memory, they rely on semantic processing for word recognition. Again, the concern about this clear deficit in automatic word recognition in dyslexic children is that it leads them to read less and less (see Lyon et al., 2003); however, as Ziegler et al. (2014, p. 8) suggest, once decoding is mastered, "every phonologically decoded word will create an entry in the phonological lexicon … which will be strengthened with every additional encounter of the same word". In other words, each decoded word is stored in the phonological word bank and gets stronger with repeated exposure. Indeed, reading fluency is a skill that develops from the lexical and sublexical levels to the connected-text level, with many elements contributing to each, including phonological, orthographic, semantic, morphological and syntactic processes that must all coordinate for effective reading (O'Brien et al., 2011).

Morphological awareness in children with dyslexia

Since the early 2000s, word recognition research has started to give more attention to the role of morphological information in reading acquisition (Hulme, Snowling & Nation, 2022). Like phonemic awareness, morphemic awareness helps children to learn how to decode written words. Morphemes are the smallest units of meaning, including base words, prefixes and suffixes. For example, "unhappiness" has three morphemes *un-happi-ness*. They function as phonological, orthographic, and semantic/syntactic components, which means they support word recognition and comprehension of words and texts (Carlisle, 2003). Several studies discuss how morphological awareness influences children's word reading. Cole et al. conducted an early study in 1989, albeit on native French speakers of university age, which showed faster lexical decision times for words with high-frequency stems (e.g. *happy* in *unhappy*) and suggested that word recognition relates to morphological structure. Equally, a longitudinal study of 7-to-11-year-old English-speaking Canadians by Deacon & Kirby (2004) compared phonological and morphological awareness in reading and found that the latter has a role in reading development.

However, while the relation between morphology and reading development is well documented, the potential impact of morphological awareness on the reading ability of dyslexic children remains an open and debated question. Elbro & Arnbak (1996) conducted a study on native Danish speakers aged 10 to 12 years. The reason I highlight this study is that, for one, there are not many studies on the morphological knowledge of dyslexic children, and two, because Danish, like English, has a deep orthography, meaning

it has many inconsistent letter-to-sound relationships. The authors of this study propose that dyslexic students read with greater accuracy and efficiency when text is presented in morpheme-sized units rather than syllable-sized units (Elbro & Arnbak, 1996). Later studies on French-speaking dyslexic children by Casalis et al. (2004) and Berthiaume & Daigle (2014) discuss that French is a morphologically rich language in which most words contain more than one morpheme and certain orthographic conventions are influenced by morphological principles. This means the studies' dyslexic subjects struggled to recognize morphologically complex words. These authors were among several in the last two decades to suggest that morphological instruction could benefit dyslexic child readers (see also Goodwin & Ahn, 2010; Nagy et al., 2014).

There is also a growing body of literature in the last two decades that suggests young readers with dyslexia benefit from morpheme-based reading as it increases their reading speed. The difference between morphological instruction and morpheme-based reading is pertinent to my topic because to determine which one (or both) should be employed depends on the language to which the child is exposed. Research has shown that morphological processing changes depending on the degree of morphological transparency and on the orthography of a given language, which means dyslexic readers develop orthography-specific reading strategies (Borleffs et al., 2019; Daniels & Share, 2018). Interestingly, recent research suggests that typical English readers, both children and adults, rely more on morphological structures than in more transparent orthographies, such as French, German and Italian (Mousikou et al., 2020, p. 11). Mousikou et al. suggest that this is because the morphological regularities in the spelling of English offset its inconsistent spelling-sound relationship. As Rastle (2019, p. 51) points out, however, this cross-linguistic difference in morphology use may also be due to the fact that "morphological relationships are highly visible in English spelling". In other words, in English spelling, words that share a common root often look similar. This brings me to the final subtopic of dyslexia: how it manifests across different languages, with a focus on English and French.

Dyslexia across languages and writing systems

Now that I have reviewed the main linguistic challenges of learning to read in English for a dyslexic reader, I will consider the specific challenges posed by the English and French alphabetic writing systems. This is key to understanding what we know

about the complexities of these languages and how to address them when translating for a dyslexic child reader. I have touched on the fact that alphabetic writing systems differ in their consistency of mapping between letters and sounds, sometimes described as orthographic depth. Importantly, of all the alphabetic writing systems, English is the most irregular and its inconsistencies have often been cited as contributing to dyslexia (Kirby & Snowling, 2022). There is not "one rule for all" in terms of how dyslexia presents itself across different languages. Empirical research and theories on reading and dyslexia are narrow in scope and much of the existing evidence is based on studies in children learning to read English. Results have shown that English, as an opaque or deep orthography, is one of the hardest orthographies to grasp (Pugh & Verhoeven, 2018). Consequently, native English-speaking children take longer to learn to read fluently than those learning to read more transparent languages, such as Italian or Finnish (Caravolas, 2022). Interestingly, Ziegler et al. (2003) sought to identify the differences between English and other European orthographies. Their study examined some of the theoretically key aspects of the reading process with German- and English-speaking children. They found that dyslexics in both countries showed a slower reading speed, a greater nonword reading deficit compared to word reading, and a slow, serial phonological decoding process. Therefore, the similarities outweighed the differences.

The scope of research in dyslexia and reading has broadened in the last ten years to include worldwide studies that give more insight into the effect of dyslexia in different languages. Zorzi et al. (2012) conducted a study to test whether extra-large letter spacing improves reading ability in children with developmental dyslexia. Their sample included 74 dyslexic children aged 8 to 14 years. The dyslexic subjects included 34 native Italian-speaking children and 40 native French-speaking children. By studying two languages, the authors could compare findings across transparent and opaque writing systems. They found that increased letter spacing improved reading in both, which suggests that larger spacing aids dyslexic readers regardless of system transparency (Italian versus French). Daniels & Share (2018) went beyond current dominant theoretical frameworks by looking at non-European and non-alphabetic writing systems. They argued that researchers should look beyond how consistently letters match sounds to include multiple factors that influence reading and dyslexia. While their research is not pertinent to my thesis, it highlights that a more global approach in dyslexia research could offer new insights into dyslexia in all

orthographies.

An interesting cross-linguistic study by Verhoeven & Perfetti (2022) examined the commonalities and unique aspects of learning to read across seventeen different writing systems. They identified important language features and suggestive writing accommodations for each language. Below is the French and English:

Language	Important language features	Writing system accommodation
French	Large number of vowels. Mainly simple open syllables. Rich inflectional morphology often not phonologically expressed at word endings.	Alphabetic orthography has reduced transparency. Spellings carry morphological information not present in speech.
English	A large number of syllables and high phonological complexity. Simple inflectional morphology and morphophonemes favour morpheme spellings.	An alphabet that encodes phonology inconsistently and partly preserves morphology. Too many syllables for a syllabary.[3]

(Verhoeven & Perfetti, 2022, p. 155)

The authors suggest that the way different language levels, such as morphemes, syllables and phonemes, are involved in learning is important. How these levels are engaged depends on the language's structure and how its writing system represents that structure. Both French and English reading rely on morphology because their writing systems lack consistent phonological mapping. French takes this a step further by representing certain inflectional endings in writing that are not pronounced in speech (Verhoeven & Perfetti, 2022).

The final sub-section of my literature review on developmental dyslexia will examine existing research and theories about how to render a text accessible to children with dyslexia. For this overview, it is relevant to note studies in transparent orthographies, as research has shown similarities in decoding phonological deficits

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[3] The Oxford English Dictionary defines a syllabary as "a collection, set, system, list, or table of syllables" (Oxford English Dictionary, 2024).

between transparent and opaque languages (see Ziegler et al., 2003).

Text simplification for children with dyslexia

The lexical quality hypothesis discussed by Perfetti (2007) is pertinent for text simplification. It suggests that a reader's ability to recognize and understand a word depends on how well they know its form, meaning and usage. The theory implies that differences in the quality of lexical representations lead to differences in reading skill. Readers with high-quality form and meaning knowledge have higher word-level processing speeds, while low-quality knowledge can cause word-related comprehension difficulties (Ziegler et al., 2022). For example, if words with poor lexical quality are substituted by words with better lexical quality, processing speed should be improved (Ziegler et al., 2022). Simpler words are usually more frequent and shorter, which, as discussed in the fluent reading review, is why they are easier for dyslexic readers to recognize and process. This finding is echoed in Rello et al.'s (2013) eye-tracking experiment with 23 dyslexic and 23 control Spanish-speaking participants. They compared texts where words were replaced with shorter, more frequent synonyms. Their findings showed that using more frequent words helped dyslexic readers read faster, while shorter words improved their comprehension. Sentence complexity can be simplified by deleting or substituting complex structures, such as relative clauses, subordinate clauses and coordinate clauses (Brouwers et al., 2014). Equally, coreference chains (how pronouns and nouns refer to the same entity) can be simplified to improve reading accessibility, as discussed by Wilkens & Todirascu (2020), who evaluated an automatic text simplification system designed to make discourse easier to understand for dyslexic children. The authors state that replacing a personal pronoun with a noun reduces the level of processing effort required for a reader to connect a reference to its antecedents.

Simplifying texts for children with dyslexia is not new and I will be discussing various publishers' dyslexia-friendly texts in the next section of my thesis; however, my focus here is to review text simplification, not just visual presentation for dyslexic readers. Gala & Ziegler (2016) conducted a pilot study on the effects of text simplification in French-speaking dyslexic children. They suggest that lexical complexity for dyslexic readers in French is found in verbs and nouns that are longer than seven characters, contain visually similar letters, have complex syllables and exhibit irregular grapheme-to-phoneme correspondences. To improve readability, they suggest

substituting words read incorrectly for shorter, more frequent words that have higher grapheme-to-phoneme consistency. I have reached the end of my review of theories and studies in children with dyslexia and the effect on their reading ability. I now turn to my review of existing theories and research regarding children's literature in translation.

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE IN TRANSLATION

I will focus this children's literature review on books written for the age group eight to twelve, where relevant. Children's literature includes readers from infancy to young adults; by age eight, most children in the UK have learnt to read and up to age twelve encompasses a range of reading abilities, which can vary among typically developing and dyslexic readers. This is also a crucial age range to motivate and nurture a love of reading. But first, why should we broaden the conventional narrative on dyslexia in children to include translation?

The international dominance of English-language children's reading material has overloaded the UK market for children's books, leaving little room for translated works written for young readers. Of the few translations that make the cut, the majority are translations from English, rather than into it (Lathey, 2020). Known for its heterogeneity, the field of children's literature can include many formats, from picture books to teenage novels, audiobooks to comics and pop-ups. Then there are various genres, including adventure, science fiction, horror and reference books marketed to the various linguistic capabilities of the genre's audience and adapted to suit the texts' wide-ranging purpose (O'Sullivan, 2019). What follows is an overview of key ideas in the field of translating children's literature, with a focus on why we translate for children and what strategies translators employ to adapt texts for a younger audience. While my primary focus here is on *why* and *how* to translate for dyslexic child readers, I must first consider translation for children more broadly. Every child should be able to experience the pleasure of reading a great story, with or without a reading disability. Children's literary preferences, reading experiences and responses to texts are shaped by factors beyond dyslexia, which is why I will discuss the literature on translation for children in general before addressing the specific needs of dyslexic child readers.

Why translate for children?

Many authors, researchers and translators are in favour of translated children's books because they believe they act as bridges between cultures (O'Sullivan, 2019; van Coillie, 2020). Joels (1999), an expert in global perspectives on acclaimed children's literature, saw translated children's books as a tool to promote international understanding. This view was echoed by Isabel Pascua, a Spanish expert in translating cultural intertextuality, who saw translated children's literature as a means of shaping

"a new educational policy . . . essential for overcoming widespread hostility toward the foreign, the unfamiliar, and 'the other'" (Pascua, 2003, p. 276). Indeed, children's books are translated to broaden the target literature and expose children to diverse cultures (O'Sullivan, 2019; van Coillie, 2020). We may argue that children can find out about foreign culture through other means, such as documentaries, reference books and the internet; however, without the translation of great books, children could miss out on exceptional stories that not only entertain but also enrich their literacy and cultural knowledge (Pullman, 2005; van Coillie, 2020). O'Sullivan (2019, p. 22) highlights the example of German author Cornelia Funke, who was unknown in the English-speaking world until the publisher Barry Cunningham randomly discovered her book *Herr der Diebe.* The title, translated as *The Thief Lord*, won the Batchelder Award[4] and became a *New York Times'* children's bestseller, with Funke described as "Germany's J.K. Rowling". This begs the question: if we do not translate for English-speaking children, how will they be able to access these diverse voices from other cultures? However, many translation scholars continue to question how much unfamiliarity children can and will put up with, which is pertinent to my next question, *how to translate for children,* as it leads to a discussion of the well-documented dichotomies of translation strategy: domestication versus foreignization.

How to translate for children – faithful or free?

The children's translator often faces a choice between two distinct strategies to translate a source text: domestication or foreignization. Venuti (2017, p. xiii) states that "A translation that seeks to register linguistic and cultural differences … is 'foreignizing'", whereas a translation is "domesticating" when the text is adapted to fit the reader's cultural and linguistic context. Translators who erase foreign elements often do so because they assume their young readers do not have the linguistic, literary, or cultural knowledge to understand them. They believe that keeping the foreign elements would reduce their reading experience. As Oittinen (2006, p. 43) puts it, "the child reader may very well be unwilling to read the translated text, finding it too strange". On the other hand, translators who choose to keep foreign elements believe children *can* engage with the new and the strange and relish the challenge it presents.

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[4] The Batchelder Award is a US literary prize given to the publisher of an outstanding children's book originally published in a foreign language and subsequently translated into English (Association for Library Service to Children, 2025).

After all, there is a stark difference between child and adult readers. Children in today's modern world are used to being confronted with new concepts and information and their young, inquisitive minds are arguably capable of embracing the unfamiliar (Lathey, 2016; van Coillie, 2020). The risk for translators and authors is to underestimate children's imagination, intuition and willingness to take on the new and strange that translated stories offer (Stolt, 2006).

Ultimately, translation choices depend on the wider context at the time of translating and the context in which translations are received (Lathey, 2020). Therefore, *how* to translate for children comes down to the translation's situation and purpose and this differs depending on the audience (Oittinen, 2000). According to Oittinen, when translating for a child reader, the translator must strike up an imaginary dialogue with that child. What does this mean in terms of translation strategy? To fine-tune that childlike dialogue, she argues, the translator must draw on their own unique child image, shaped by the translator's view of society. Therefore, translators for children make choices based not only on literary and textual norms but also based on educational and ideological perspectives (van Coillie, 2020). The imaginary dialogue needs to have the "right voice" as described by translator Sarah Ardizzone (quoted in Lathey, 2010, p. 190). The *right* voice is in turn shaped by the child's language proficiency, and cultural and literary awareness. The translator's strategy is therefore to adjust the language, content and structural elements to match the audience's developmental level (in this case, children with developmental dyslexia) while tapping into their childhood image to ascertain (or remember) what their young audience likes (Oittinen, 2000; O'Sullivan, 2019).

How to adjust structural elements when translating for children has been discussed by well-known translation scholars Göte Klingberg, Zohar Shavit and others, but as their work dates from 1978 and 1981 respectively, I feel it's important to review more recent work by Mieke Desmet[5], where she examines how intertextual and intervisual elements in *The Jolly Postman* are adapted in translation from the UK to the Netherlands. Desmet (2001) identifies key translation strategies:

- *literal translation,* a faithful rendering of the source text

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[5] I have not included Desmet's *Babysitting the Reader: Translating English Narrative Fiction for Girls into Dutch (1946–1995)* (2007) directly in my review, as its temporal scope is too dated to be directly relevant to the context of my study.

- *substitution,* to render the text accessible for children by replacing cultural elements with equivalents that resonate with them – what Venuti calls "domestication".
- *compensation or addition*, used when a particular effect in the source text cannot be directly reproduced in the target text. Instead of forcing an unworkable literal translation, the translator creates a similar effect elsewhere in the text, even in a place where the source text has no equivalent reference.
- *deletion*, very occasionally used when content is deemed inappropriate for children, e.g. violence, sexual content, and to make texts easier to understand for children.
- *"explication strategies,* including rewording or paratextual explanations, and *simplification strategies* that, on the macro-structural level, affect genre affiliation, structure and organization in chapters, and on the micro-structural level take the form of using short sentences, substituting concrete for abstract language, weakening ironic elements and so on." (as quoted in O'Sullivan, 2019, p. 20)

I find Desmet's (2001) discussion of the role of the reader in translational approaches pertinent. Translators, as first readers of a source text, adapt their translations based on their own interpretations; they may emphasize certain aspects and overlook others. Such manipulation of the text is inevitable, but what matters, as Desmet writes, is the specific way it happens. Author-illustrator Wanda Gág discussed free translation in the 1930s, but I have excluded her work from my review since Desmet offers a similar and more recent approach. However, Gág proposed an additional strategy to adjust text for children, which was to use dialogue to bring life to dense narrative in texts (in Lathey, 2010). I return to the point that translation strategies for children do not follow a set of rules. The variables at play in this field are manifold: the different views on the purpose of children's literature, and the different linguistic skills and world knowledge of children as readers often mean the translator unavoidably manipulates the content and language of the text when translating for a young audience. However, this "free translation" for child readers is only permitted if the translator adjusts the text in line with two key principles:

1. to make it appropriate and useful for the child in accordance with prevailing societal views on pedagogical content;
2. to modify plot, characterization and language in line with society's perception of a child's reading and comprehension abilities (Shavit, 2006).

These constraints inevitably affect how translators approach texts for a young audience.

Other translation challenges in this field are found in the specific characteristics of books for children, such as the use of wordplay, punning and multimodality. As Verdier (2015, p. 45) notes, "La traduction des jeux de mots pose un problème tout particulier au traducteur et a longtemps été considérée comme quasi-impossible par certains professionnels." Henry (2003), in her study *La traduction des jeux de mots*, identifies two types of wordplay in novels: occasional and structurally integral. She examines how each type demands different translation strategies depending on its role in the narrative's macrostructure. Multimodality, a well-known feature of children's books, presents an added challenge: achieving the right interplay between the visual and the verbal in picture books and illustrated novels requires close collaboration between many actors in the translation process (Derrien & van der Linden, 2008). At the same time, this complexity reflects a key detail about books for children – that children are not the only audience. Translating for children means translating for a dual readership, as children's literature is almost entirely "l'affaire des adultes" (Douglas, 2008, p. 113). Because the child reader is consistently positioned as a novice or dependent figure, the translator often assumes a dominant, authoritative role (Douglas, 2008). Yet this hierarchical stance risks overlooking the child reader altogether. I agree with Oittinen (2000, p. 61) when she writes, "compared to literature written for adults, children's literature tends to be more directed toward its readers." In other words, translating for children should focus on the needs and abilities of the child audience, rather than just the text itself or the acceptability of adult gatekeepers (O'Sullivan, 2019).

Before discussing the research rationale and scope from the two literature reviews, it is necessary to address why *not* to translate for children. Irish translator and publisher Siobhán Parkinson (2013) suggests that while there may be less resistance than there used to be to translated stories from publishers and readers, common arguments against translation are that there are plenty of quality books written in English, the financial cost and high publishing risk of translations, the challenges of sourcing and evaluating suitable titles and translators. Another argument is the notion that readers (or rather the dual audience of children's literature) are reluctant to engage with books by unknown authors whose names they cannot pronounce. I will now briefly illustrate the findings from the two literature reviews on developmental dyslexia and children's literature in translation and discuss the scope of the proposed project.

RESEARCH RATIONALE AND SCOPE

Research shows that phonological deficits are a core feature of dyslexia across languages. Dyslexic children process letters serially and are therefore sensitive to word structure and find shorter, high-frequency words easier to read. Morphology also plays a key role, as dyslexic readers rely on morpheme-sized units to improve fluency. Among alphabetical writing systems, English is particularly difficult to master. Its global dominance has also led to a lack of translated children's literature. In answer to the question, w*hy should we broaden the conventional narrative on dyslexia in children to include translation*? Existing research has identified the importance of fuelling dyslexic children's desire to read. Whether through text simplification, phonological training, or both, a key factor is to maintain exposure to diverse texts that enrich their reading experience. Translation strategies for young audiences depend on the text's purpose and target readers. Dyslexic children struggle with decoding but share the intellectual curiosity of their peers. A foreignizing approach, for example, could provide the right level of challenge to maintain their curiosity. While text simplification aids reading fluency, the content must also inspire, as less reading can lead to greater linguistic deficits. As a recognized disability under the Equality Act 2010, dyslexia presents the need for inclusive literary access as a matter of social justice. Children's fiction should entertain, and this is where the intersection of dyslexia and translation presents an opportunity as an underexplored subfield of translation studies. My thesis proposes to address this gap by offering practical insights into inclusive translation practices for young dyslexic readers. The literature has confirmed the relevance of the following questions, which guide this thesis:

1. What are the strategies used to improve readability in intralingual translation?
2. What does the easy-to-read English translation reveal about the role of the translator in adapting texts for children with dyslexia?

It also confirms the target audience of my English translation as native English-speaking children aged eight to twelve with developmental dyslexia. In the next chapter, I will first examine the current provision of translated literature for children in general in the UK, followed by a review of initiatives for and publishers of accessible content in the UK and France.

PROVISION OF DYSLEXIA-FRIENDLY TEXTS IN THE UK AND FRANCE

Translated content in the UK

  I will begin by looking at the scope of translated literature for children in the UK. The UK government's Arts Council has funded initiatives such as The Children's Bookshow, a charity that tours the country providing in-school workshops and more to inspire schoolchildren to read. In recent years, the Bookshow has included translated works to emphasize the importance of introducing children to the best international authors and illustrators (The Children's Bookshow, 2025). The UK government also supports the Book Trust project In Other Words, which features sample translations of high-calibre books to UK publishers at the Bologna Children's Book Fair each year (BookTrust, 2025). In 2006, a UK primary school project called Teaching World Literature in the Primary School included translations in response to England's curriculum requirement that children should explore literature from diverse cultures (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 2006). Since then, translator-led initiatives have continued to drive this movement. One notable project is World Kid Lit, a UK-based non-profit organization co-founded in 2016 by Claire Storey and Ruth Ahmedzai Kemp. The initiative has been very influential in promoting access to international children's literature, and in 2025, World Kid Lit will launch a new programme of school events, including assemblies and workshops on global reading and diverse children's books. Writer, editor and translator Daniel Hahn – a long-standing advocate for children's books in translation – has been a major contributor to these efforts (World Kid Lit, n.d.). Hahn has actively participated in the Bologna Children's Book Fair as a speaker in 2024 and previously as a scout for global children's books that might appeal to UK publishers, funded by the Arts Council England (Snaije, 2015). As Hahn puts it, "we need to find ways of getting publishers in the UK to find it easy to buy foreign books" (as cited in Snaije, 2015). More recently, the government's Cultural Education Plan continues this effort by emphasizing the need to provide all young people with access to high-quality cultural education and thus to expose young readers to literature from a variety of traditions and perspectives (Department for Education & Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 2023). Importantly, these initiatives do not include or mention adapted translations for dyslexic readers. The BookTrust's Disability and Books department discusses the importance of finding inclusive stories that feature

"characters" with dyslexia but is not a source for adapted texts for dyslexic readers (BookTrust, 2025).

To contextualize the translation activity of children's literature, the mid-to-late 20th century saw a peak in the publishing of English-language translated works, as publishers and editors worked to introduce young readers to diverse, high-quality international literature. Although this trend slowed in the 1990s, there has been renewed interest in the 21st century to showcase global children's literature, with greater awareness of the role of translation in enabling access to such works (Lathey, 2020). I list below three children's publishers that have established a strong presence in the UK in the last ten years for their focus on translated children's literature:

- Gecko Press (New Zealand, 2005) publishes global children's books in English; *Duck, Death and the Tulip* by Wolf Erlbruch, translated by Catherine Chidgey, won the International Children's and Youth Literature Prize at the 22nd International Literature Festival Berlin in 2022 (Gecko Press, n.d.).
- Pushkin Children's Books (UK, 2013) brings international classics to young English readers; *The Letter for the King* by Tonke Dragt, translated by Laura Watkinson, became a bestseller and a Netflix series in 2020 (Pushkin Press, 2025).
- Tiny Owl Publishing (UK, 2015) focuses on translated picture books; *The Little Black Fish* by Samad Behrangi, illustrated by Farshid Mesghali, is a widely recognized modern classic (Tiny Owl, 2025).

Literary awards for translators of children's writing have played a key role in promoting translated texts for young readers. In 1996, during a lull in translation activity, the Marsh Award for Children's Literature in Translation was established to raise awareness and encourage the publication of translated children's books in Britain. The award appeared to contribute to a gradual increase in such publications, but its overall influence seems to have been limited; in the early 2000s, only around one per cent of British children's books originated from outside the UK (Lathey, 2020). Exact statistics are difficult to obtain, but Lathey (2020) suggests that translated children's books have increased to just two per cent of the UK's annual children's publications. Evidently, some progress has been made over two decades, but translated children's literature continues to represent a small segment of the UK market for children's books. This illustrates the need for continued support from awards, publishers and other

initiatives to increase the availability of translated content.[6] For example, the Batchelder Award in the US continues to recognize the publishers of outstanding translated children's books to encourage US publishers to translate high-quality foreign-language children's books.

Initiatives for more accessible content in the UK

Since the 1970s Plain Language[7] movement, there has been a push for clearer and more inclusive communication. The UK government, through its Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) initiatives, aims to ensure that children with reading disorders receive appropriate support. Although the national curriculum for England does not explicitly mention dyslexic readers, it emphasizes that lessons should be planned to remove barriers so that pupils with special educational needs and disabilities can access the full curriculum wherever possible. The national curriculum for England[8] emphasizes the importance of teaching systematic phonics for developing reading skills (Department for Education, 2013). In the same vein, the UK government introduced the validated systematic synthetic phonics (SSP) programmes, published in 2021, to ensure all children receive high-quality, evidence-based phonics instruction (Department for Education, 2023). SSP supports literacy development for all beginner readers of English, but its focus on phonological awareness and decoding is particularly relevant for addressing the difficulties faced by dyslexic learners. The Department for Education's Reading Framework further recommends strategies for teaching reading, including the use of decodable books and regular progress assessments (Department for Education, 2023). Additionally, many UK schools and libraries now provide dyslexia-friendly book lists and tailored reading support programmes.

The British Dyslexia Association (BDA), established in 1972, provides a style guide for written materials designed to make reading easier for all ages, which will be pertinent as a reference for my translation commentary later in this thesis. One caveat is that the style guide does not specifically mention children but is "for everyone" (BDA, 2023).

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[6] The Marsh Award ran biennially until 2017; I find no official source or explanation for its discontinuation.

[7] The Plain Language movement of the 1970s was set up by the US government with the aim to make administrative documents accessible to all individuals (Adler, 2012).

[8] Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have distinct curricula with comparable inclusion frameworks.

Lastly, the rise in digital formats, such as audiobooks (e.g. Audible and Calibre Audio) and e-books with adjustable settings, such as those on Kindle and Apple Books, which allow text modification (e.g. text size, font and background colour). Nessy Learning in the UK, founded in 1999, provides free educational materials to help support learning at home or at school. They promote the use of online worksheets, flash cards, e-books and teaching videos for dyslexic children and beginner readers (Nessy Learning, 2025). There are also speech-to-text tools, such as Apple Dictation and Windows Voice Access, which can help overcome writing barriers by dictating text.

Publishers of dyslexia-friendly content in the UK

Barrington Stoke is a standout specialist publisher in the field of dyslexia-friendly children's books. Founded in 1998 by dyslexia specialist Patience Thomson and former Bloomsbury sales director Lucy Juckes, it was one of the first UK publishers to focus specifically on accessible literature for reluctant and struggling readers. Their success can be explained by their innovative approach that combines expert text adaptations, dyslexia-friendly formatting and engaging content by well-known authors such as Malorie Blackman and Michael Morpurgo. Perhaps most innovative in their early days was the decision to consult an editorial board of dyslexic children. I like the example of one child's suggestion to change the sentence, "I hate it when girls cry, I find it really embarrassing [sic]" because he said "embarrassing" is a hard word and "it's not a word we use". He preferred "I hate it when girls cry, it makes me want to puke [sic]" (McNeelance, 2022, para. 6). This echoes Oittinen's (2000) childlike dialogue as discussed in my Children's Literature in Translation chapter. This philosophy is also reflected in their website's statement "Unpatronizing content matched to the age of the reader, not their reading level" (Collins, 2025). To this extent, you can browse by interest age (IA) and reading age (RA) when selecting books, meaning you can find age-appropriate content but with a text that is edited to suit a lower reading age of a dyslexic child. Barrington Stoke provides books for reading ages from six to nine and interest ages from five to teen. They also offer support for parents and carers, from book recommendations to themed lists, videos and free guides. They also offer free resources to primary and secondary schools and tips on how to engage reluctant readers and encourage reading for pleasure. To date, their complete collection of 507 books includes just five translations, all from Cornelia Funke as the source author.

Interestingly, of the five books, two have an IA of five and above, two are seven and above, and only one is nine and above, with reading ages consistently one year below. This illustrates a clear gap in translated dyslexia-friendly fiction for readers aged eight to twelve, whose IA would be nine to thirteen. Barrington Stoke has a *Young Editors* Scheme, which invites dyslexic readers to give feedback on pre-publication manuscripts (Barrington Stoke, 2021) – a scheme I will return to in the discussion chapter. In 2023, HarperCollins UK acquired the publisher; they continue to lead the market as a specialist publisher in inclusive and engaging children's literature.

Badger Learning, established in 1989, supplies educational books adapted to various reading levels. Since 2001, they have published high-interest, low-reading-level (hi-lo) books aimed at reluctant readers. While some of their titles have been translated from English into other languages, they do not currently publish translations into English because they do not buy the rights to the titles (Badger Learning, personal correspondence, March 18, 2025). Ransom Publishing similarly produces accessible books for struggling readers of all ages, from children to young adults, but at the time of writing has no translated material (Ransom Publishing, personal correspondence, May 15, 2025). Books on the Hill Press (BOTH Press) has also contributed to the field and is the UK's first dyslexia-only publisher – originally focused on dyslexia-friendly fiction for readers aged 14 and up, they now have a substantial collection for children; however, of their 115 fiction titles, only two are translations[9] (Books on the Hill Press, n.d.). Last year, BOTH Press founder Dr Alistair Sims called on publishers to commit to making at least one per cent of their fiction titles available in a dyslexia-friendly format (Alberge, 2024). Lastly, Dekko Comics is a notable initiative that combines comics with curriculum-based content to engage reluctant readers aged eight to twelve through visual storytelling. They do not currently have any translated literature (Dekko Comics, personal correspondence, May 15, 2025).

Publishers of dyslexia-friendly content in France

While initially slower than the UK in developing dyslexia-friendly content for children, France has made notable progress over the past decade. This shift towards accessible publishing in France may be explained by the following key legal and cultural initiatives that support adapted publishing:

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[9] Of Cornelia Funke's work.

1. *La Loi n° 2005-102 du 11 février 2005 pour l'égalité des droits et des chances, la participation et la citoyenneté des personnes handicapées* established the right to accessible information across sectors, including education and culture (Légifrance, 2005).

2. In 2006, an exception au droit d'auteur (copyright exception) enabled the reproduction of works in accessible formats without prior authorization (Ministère de la Culture, n.d.).

3. In 2013, the Rentrée Littéraire Accessible aimed to make major new literary releases available simultaneously in accessible formats, which marked a cultural shift toward inclusion (Ministère de la Culture, n.d.).

4. In 2018, a national steering committee (COPIL LINA25) was launched to coordinate efforts in accessible publishing (Inclusive Publishing, 2023).

5. In 2023, France transposed the European Accessibility Act (EAA; Directive 2019/882) into law, which reinforced obligations for digital accessibility (European Union, 2019; Légifrance, 2023).

Table 1: *Publishers of dyslexia-friendly content for the eight to twelve age group in France.[10]*

#	Publisher & Collection	Year	Age group	No. of books available
1	Bel et Bien, *Écriture Théâtrales d'Enfance*	2009	from 8	1
2	La Marmite à mots	2014	from 6, 9 and 10	10 (in the 10-year age group)
3	La Plume de l'Argilète, *Dysle+ie*	2015	8 to 12, teen and adult	45
4	Belin Éducation, *Colibri*	2016	four reading levels	27
5	Nathan / MOBiDYS, *Dyscool*	2017	from 8 to 12	23
6	Bayard / MOBiDYS, *J'aime Lire DYS*	2018	from 7	Unclear
7	La Poule qui pond, *Syllabés*	2020	6 to teen, including comics	3 (in the 8 to 12 range)
8	Le Club des DYS (Nathan Editions project)	2020	6 to 9 and 7 to 10	4
9	Hatier, *Ma lecture facile DYS*	2020	7 to 9, 9 to 11	8

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[10] All information has been gathered from the respective publisher websites.

10	Alice Jeunesse, *Salto*	2021	from 7	8
11	Kiléma Éditions	2021	8 to 12, teen and adult	7
12	Les Livres Renard, *DYStoires courtes*	2021	Not specified	7
13	Rageot, *Flash Fiction*	2021	8+, 12+	23
14	Fleurus, *Docu DYS*	2022	6 to 9	8 (all factual)
15	Terres rouges, *FaciliDYS*	2022	from 7, teen and adults	21

Table 1 shows that out of 15 inclusive publishers, the majority (nine) were established recently, between 2020 and 2025. As a point of reference, the *Colibri* collection, by historic educational publisher Belin Éducation, offers books that are specifically designed for readers with dyslexia that adhere to a set of editorial guidelines put together by a team of dyslexia-related research and education specialists. Each book is categorized into one of four difficulty levels that are specific to the *Colibri* collection[11] and based on the complexity of French grapheme-to-phoneme correspondences. Of the 27 *Colibri* titles available, none are translations at the time of writing. The *Dyscool* collection by Nathan Édition currently has 23 fiction books for ages eight to twelve and their collection is tested by language therapists and children with reading difficulties. Syllables for complex words are distinguished. Difficult, lengthy or unfamiliar words are explained or substituted with simpler or shorter alternatives (e.g. *avoir les crocs : avoir très faim*) and a dyslexia-friendly typeface is used (Nathan, n.d.). None of *Dyscool*'s 23 fiction titles are translations. In terms of translated content in the other two larger collections – *Flash Fiction* and *Dysle+ie* – *Flash Fiction* has 23 titles, seven of which are written by English authors and one by German author Cornelia Funke, and *Dysle+ie* has none at the time of writing.

I note with all these publishers that while they may discuss the importance of engaging content for struggling readers, it is not possible to filter books by IA versus RA, as you can on the UK dyslexia-friendly publisher websites. Furthermore, although there are more publishers of DYS-friendly content in France, each collection is smaller in comparison to the collections offered by Barrington Stoke, Badger Learning and BOTH

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[11] These difficulty levels are not a result of the national curriculum. The primary education programme in France is divided into Cycle 2 (ages 6–8) and Cycle 3 (ages 9–11) and does not reference any official reading bands to structure reading progression in comparison with the UK. (Ministère de l'Éducation nationale et de la Jeunesse, n.d.).

Press.

Initiatives for more accessible content in France

In addition to publishers, the French government has played an important role in promoting accessible reading through initiatives such as the Ministry of National Education's *À propos de l'enfant dysphasique et de l'enfant dyslexique*, which offers resources and funding for inclusive books in schools and libraries. Furthermore, the Ministry of Culture in France, for example, makes certain pages of its website available in easy-to-read French language following the *Facile à lire et à comprendre* (FALC) initiative and the association Inclusion Europe.

FALC is a method designed to adapt written, digital or audiovisual standard language into a simplified form for individuals with cognitive disabilities, including dyslexia. As per the UK's BDA Style guide (2023), it does not specifically mention how to adapt content for children with cognitive disabilities. The initiative was developed in 2009 as part of the European project Pathways by eight European countries in collaboration with the association Inclusion Europe. In France, FALC is supported by the Unapei and Nous Aussi associations. Inclusion Europe helps promote the use of the FALC initiative and has an easy-to-read style guideline, *L'information pour tous : Règles européennes pour une information facile à lire et à comprendre*, which is available in 18 European languages (Inclusion Europe, 2009). Another collaboration involving Inclusion Europe is the French-Swiss digital library MonaLira, which provides accessible reading materials for individuals who find it difficult to read standard print due to disabilities. The site was launched in March 2023 by the associations Plein Accès France and Plein Accès Suisse and offers a varied catalogue of over 35,000 titles across different literary genres and languages. On the MonaLira website, users can download books in multiple formats, including audio, digital braille, large print, syllable colouring, FALC versions and filmed sign language (MonaLira, n.d.).

The following methodology chapter outlines methods for assessing readability, justifies the methodological approach used for the comparative intra- and interlingual study and provides the rationale for text choice.

METHODOLOGY

Assessing readability

Readability is a term used to predict how easily a specific group of readers can process and understand a text. Research on readability dates to the 1920s and highlights a widely used quantitative approach across various languages, where readability is assessed through classic mathematical formulas. One of the most well-known metrics is Flesch's Reading Ease formula from 1948, which measures readability by considering sentence length and the average number of syllables per word (Flesch, 1948). Texts are given a score between 0 and 100 – a higher score means a text is easier to read, and a lower score means a text that is difficult to read. The Flesch Reading Ease formula was adapted in the 1970s to indicate a reader's US school grade level, known as the Flesch-Kincaid formula. These readability tests have been a useful tool in the field of education. For example, the Flesch–Kincaid formula makes it easier for teachers, parents, librarians, and others to judge the readability level of different books and texts for children (Flesch, 1948; Dubay, 2004).

In 1958, Kandel and Moles adapted the Flesch formula to create the first French-language readability formula, which accounted for the fact that French words are, on average, longer than English words (Benoît, 1986). In 1963, G. de Landsheere adapted Flesch's readability formula for French, but unlike Kandel and Moles, he kept Flesch's original metrics. To address differences in average word length between French and English, Landsheere modified the method for counting words and syllables. Landsheere suggested treating certain multi-word expressions (e.g. *j'ai, l'heure, qu'il, SNCF, 1986, garde-côte, Jean-Paul*) as single words, thereby lowering the word count while increasing the syllable count. This adjustment aimed to better reflect the structural characteristics of the French language (Benoît, 1986). Later, in 1975, G. Henry developed readability formulas specifically for French, designed for students beginning and finishing secondary school. I have not provided an extensive list of all the classic readability formulas because there are many, and more importantly, the majority are not designed to analyse children's literature. However, it is pertinent to this thesis to consider the French adaptations of these readability formulas for my textual study, and, as DuBay (2004) states, the formulas can provide an objective estimate of a text's level of difficulty. However, despite the popularity of the Flesch formulas over the last

century, many critics argue that readability formulas are not reliable indicators of how easily readers will process a text.

Readability formulas evaluate text difficulty based on limited surface-level features, such as sentence length (as an indicator of syntactic complexity) and word length (as a measure of lexical difficulty). While these factors are important, particularly for dyslexic readers (Gala & Ziegler, 2016), they do not fully determine how easily a text can be processed. Other linguistic features and theoretical perspectives that influence readability are omitted from these calculations, which limits their validity (Crossley, Greenfield, & McNamara, 2008). DuBay (2004) argues that these readability formulas do not account for the interaction between reader and text. In other words, they ignore how individual readers engage with and interpret texts. Importantly, Dubay argues that these formulas, such as those developed by Flesch, were originally designed for adults and tested using adult materials. In the same vein, Erekson and Benke (2022) suggest that readability formulas are overly simplistic tools that fail to accurately match books to children. The formulas overlook important factors such as a child's background knowledge, personal interests and motivation for reading. Because reading engagement depends on more than just textual complexity, the authors emphasize the need to consider reader choice and interest when selecting books, rather than relying solely on readability scores. Originally, Flesch's formula was meant for explanatory, expository, argumentative, or instructional texts – not for literary ones. The assumption that word length indicates difficulty is problematic here, as children's literary language often incorporates punning and multimodality, which makes such formulas less suitable (Benoît, 1986). Benoît also suggests that Flesch and Henry's formulas focus only on quantitative measures, which ignore the qualitative elements that contribute to text coherence. The classic formulas treat texts as disconnected sentences. If you were to rearrange words or replace them with pseudo-words, it would not affect the readability score, even though the text would become incomprehensible. True text coherence relies on semantic connections, discourse structure and cohesive aspects of language – elements that these formulas fail to capture. Ultimately, the classic readability formulas are used for readers and reading situations that go beyond the formulas' limitations (Crossley, Skalicky, & Dascalu, 2019).

Evidently, classic readability formulas are unreliable when it comes to determining how easy a text is to process, particularly in the field of children's

literature. Nevertheless, "The variables used in the readability formulas show us the skeleton of a text. It is up to us to flesh out that skeleton with tone, content, organization, coherence, and design." (DuBay, 2004, p. 57). Since my research is based on a comparison between two texts, a statistical overview of each would serve as a strong starting point for a more comprehensive textual study. The focus of my textual study will thus be on qualitative linguistic features that more accurately reflect both theoretical and behavioural accounts of the reading process for young dyslexic readers (Crossley, Skalicky, & Dascalu, 2019). Sentence and word length are core components of dyslexia-friendly writing and indicate the level of concision – a key feature noted in style-guide principles that facilitate reading for dyslexic individuals. I will thus gather quantitative data on average sentence length and word complexity as a preliminary measure of concision. I will not use this data to infer the education level required to understand the texts or to determine which text is more readable.

My primary method will be a comparative textual study, which will follow a thematic structure based on French linguist Jean-Michel Adam's (2005) approach to qualitative linguistic analysis. Adam proposes a multi-level study that examines the text at the lexical, syntactic, semantic, pragmatic and discourse levels. The strength of this approach is that it offers a more nuanced study that considers cohesion and coherence in narrative texts.

Table 2*: Study methods for text narratives*

Level of Study	Method
Lexical	Identifying cohesion through repetition, anaphora and lexical patterns.
Collocational	Tracing thematic links via isotopy and semantic fields.
Syntactic	Analysing the structure of propositions, periods and sequences using connectives.
Semantic	Interpreting referential meaning and thematic progression across the text.
Pragmatic	Examining speech acts, illocutionary force and enunciative markers (e.g. modality, deixis).
Discourse	Understanding global text structure, genre and the hierarchy of discourse acts.

Note. Source: Adam (2005)

In addition to Adam's method, I will compare my findings to Inclusion Europe's guidelines for easy-to-read language, hereafter referred to as the FALC (2009) guidelines. Benchmarking the adapted FALC text with these guidelines can help illustrate how dyslexia-friendly language presents itself in the short-story form. When applying FALC principles, it is important to distinguish between fiction and non-fiction, as each presents unique complexities and demands in terms of readability and accessibility. In short, FALC fiction should focus on clarity, a linear structure and reader engagement, while non-fiction prioritizes clarity, logical organization and a pedagogical focus (Publiersonlivre, n.d.). Importantly, the FALC (2009) guidelines are designed for informative content and emphasize the need for writers to thoroughly understand the target audience's needs and profile when creating accessible texts. To complete the comparative study, I will also examine the visual presentation of the FALC text, including the use of dyslexia-friendly fonts, increased letter spacing and illustrations.

Translation into English and commentary

I will provide a commentary on my English translation that follows a different thematic structure from the comparative textual study detailed above. The commentary will begin with a reflection on translator agency and positioning, drawing on translation scholarship discussed in the literature review, such as Oittinen's (2000) reader-orientated approach. I will then explore key translation challenges and strategies, including issues of readability, cultural references and idiomatic phrasing, microstructural decisions, and phonological, morphological and semantic considerations. I will also examine how coherence and narrative flow were maintained for young readers with dyslexia. To contextualize these choices, I will benchmark the translation against the BDA (2023) guidelines and, where relevant, draw comparisons with the *Colibri* editorial guidelines for young dyslexic readers. Finally, I will briefly assess the readability score of my translation and compare it with an earlier English version of Gripari's original story.

Table 3 on the next page presents a comparative snapshot of six inclusive writing guidelines in total from the UK and France, selected for their relevance to this study.

Table 3: *Comparative table of inclusive writing guidelines from the UK and France*

Category	Feature	FALC	BDA	Dementia (DEEP)	Colibri (Belin Éducation)	Plain English	Rédiger clairement
Target Reader	Intended audience	all ages; range of cognitive disabilities	all ages	seniors	dyslexic children	adults	adults
	Intended text type	informative	informative	informative	fiction	informative/ technical	informative/ technical
WORDS	Familiar vocabulary	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
	Simple words	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Use examples to explain	✓		✓			
	Repeat terms	✓			✓		
	No metaphors	✓				✓	✓
	Avoid foreign words	✓					
	Define complex terms	✓	✓				✓
	Use clear pronouns	✓					✓
SENTENCES	Short sentences	✓	✓ 60-70 characters		✓	✓	20 words
	Direct speech	✓					✓
	Positive constructions	✓				✓	
	Active voice	✓	✓			✓	✓
	One idea per sentence	✓					
	New sentence on new line	✓					
	Concise writing		✓	✓			
	Emphasis on clarity	✓		✓	✓		✓
PRESENTATION	Clear, large, consistent font	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	No italics	✓	✓	✓			
	No all-capitals/underlining	✓	✓				
	No footnotes	✓		✓	✓		
	Use images to support meaning	✓	✓	✓			

Importantly, the Belin Éducation *Colibri* editorial guidelines are intended specifically for children with dyslexia. In addition to the recommendations noted in Table 3, *Colibri* incorporates reading support strategies, such as

- repeated use of target grapheme–phoneme correspondences
- present-tense narrative
- activities including warm-up reading exercises, comprehension quizzes and glossaries (Belin Éducation, n.d.).

These features are not common in the other guidelines listed in Table 3, which focus more broadly on accessibility for general or adult audiences.

Text choice

To investigate the research questions:

1. what are the strategies used to improve readability in intralingual translation?
2. what does the easy-to-read English translation reveal about the role of the translator in adapting texts for children with dyslexia?

I will conduct a case study of two versions of a short French story – the original and the FALC version – written for children aged nine and above. After studying the texts comparatively, I will translate a section of the FALC version into English and provide a commentary on my translation choices. By comparing the intralinguistic translation from French to FALC, I will gain insight into the syntactic structures and linguistic strategies employed in writing for young French-speaking dyslexic readers. This analysis will then inform my English translation choices. The accompanying commentary strengthens this two-pronged approach by critically reflecting on the effectiveness of the translation choices, which could contribute to a broader understanding of accessibility in children's literature across languages.

The chosen text is a FALC adaptation of *La Sorcière de la rue Mouffetard* in *La Sorcière de la rue Mouffetard et autres contes de la rue Broca* from the Kiléma Éditions *jeunesse* collection. Kiléma Éditions is a relatively new publisher, founded in 2021 by translator Cécile Arnoult, which specializes in translating known literature into an easy-to-read format using the FALC method. Kiléma's collection includes titles for children, teens and adults and has a theatre collection too. All titles are reformatted to improve

accessibility for readers with cognitive or learning difficulties, including dyslexia and intellectual disabilities (Kiléma Éditions, 2025). As Kiléma expand their *jeunesse* collection, the recent addition of the series *La Sorcière de la rue Mouffetard* is particularly significant. The original *Les Contes de la rue Broca* by Pierre Gripari, which includes *La Sorcière de la rue Mouffetard*, was originally published in 1967 and is considered a modern classic of French children's literature. The tales use a pastiche[12] of traditional fairy tale forms and combine ironic humour with a subtle moral commentary. The tales have been adapted for radio and television and are recommended by the French Ministry of Education (Gripari, 2007).

Kiléma's decision to adapt this well-known collection represents an important effort to make key works of children's literature accessible to readers who might otherwise be excluded. The translator of the FALC version, Maëlle Coudert, discussed adapting to FALC in an interview with Com'access in March 2023, giving her insight into the editorial and linguistic challenges of adapting fiction for dyslexic and neurodiverse readers (see Com'access, 2023). This paperback edition, published in March 2024, is intended for readers aged nine and above. *La Sorcière de la rue Mouffetard*, which follows a witch and her mischievous exploits on the magical and secret rue Broca, is a distinctly French narrative written for the target audience of my research question. As the story mixes humour with macabre content, it also promises to engage a higher interest age for young dyslexic readers.

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[12] Pastiche refers to literary work that deliberately imitates the style or themes of earlier works for comic or nostalgic effect (Baldick, 2015).

COMPARATIVE INTRALINGUISTIC STUDY

Quantitative data

I collected the quantitative data from the full texts of the French (Gripari) and the FALC (Coudert); neither text has any footnotes. I delimited sentences according to punctuation, with a full stop, exclamation or question mark marking the end of a sentence,[13] except when the exclamation or question mark forms part of direct speech. Strictly in terms of punctuation, I classed the following complex declarative sentence from the French as one:

> Sitôt qu'elle fut partie, la sorcière – car c'était elle – se mit à rire en se frottant les mains :
> - Oh ! que je suis maligne ! disait-elle. (Gripari, 2007, p. 18)

Gripari's use of ellipses also required consideration in terms of sentence count. Compare the standard use of an ellipsis in "En ce cas… voici la boîte" with:

> La vieille prit la boite, la paya, puis, au lieu de partir, se mit à la soupeser :
> - Hum ! C'est peut-être un peu lourd… Est-ce que vous ne pourriez pas…
> (Gripari, 2007, p. 21)

In the second example, Gripari uses ellipses to close the speech with a capital letter. In such instances, I counted the ellipses as delimiting the end of a sentence; the second example above is counted as three sentences. I defined complex words based on Gala and Ziegler's (2016) study. To summarize, the authors suggest that lexical complexity for dyslexic readers in French is found in verbs and nouns longer than seven characters that contain visually similar letters, have complex syllables and have irregular grapheme-to-phoneme consistencies. When counting complex words, I included adjectives and adverbs over seven characters in length, in addition to nouns and all inflected verb forms, i.e. counting all content words. Given the genre of the text, I would argue that adjectives and adverbs are essential elements that add colour to children's stories. It is important to examine the use of all content words and how they are rendered in FALC. I excluded simple noun plurals when the singular had already been

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[13] A sentence is "a string of words in speech or writing that conveys a complete idea. In everyday use, it is typically understood as the portion of text between two full stops. Grammatically, it expresses a proposition, question, command or request and usually includes a subject and a predicate, although one or both may be omitted in cases of ellipsis." (Sentence, Oxford English Dictionary, 2024).

counted (e.g. *marchande vs marchandes*) but included irregular or morphologically transformed plurals (e.g. *yeux*). Similarly, once an adjective or participle over seven characters had been counted in its singular form (e.g. *assommée*), plural forms (e.g. *assommées*) were not counted again. I counted the number of sentences and complex words manually to avoid parsing errors that can occur with automated tools. Microsoft Word's automated word count included French spaced punctuation, so I subtracted the number of colons from both texts to correct this. I also ensured that hyphenated words were counted as one. This was more relevant for the French text, which had 30 colons in total versus five in the FALC.

Table 4: *Quantitative data on average sentence length and word complexity*

	French	FALC
Total word count	1,542	1,946
Total no. of sentences	135	214
Average no. of words per sentence	11.42	9.09
Total no. of complex words	82	53
Average no. of complex words per 100 words	5.3	2.7

i.   Sentence length

Table 4 above shows that the average sentence length in the French text is greater than the FALC by approximately two words per sentence (rounded down). There are 404 more words and 79 more sentences than in the French text. The longest sentence in the French has 38 words, compared with 23 words in the FALC, more than double the average sentence length in the FALC. The longest sentences in the French and FALC are shown below:

Nadia vint, comme à l'ordinaire, s'approcha sans méfiance d'un éventaire de légumes pour acheter, cette fois, des haricots verts, et elle allait payer quand la marchande la saisit par le poignet, l'enleva et hop ! l'enferma dans le tiroir-caisse.	J'aimerais que tu prennes une boîte de sauce tomate dans l'épicerie de ton papa et que tu l'apportes chez moi.
(Gripari, 2007, p. 23)	(Coudert, 2024, p. 8)

This demonstrates how the quantitative data only offer a snapshot of the texts' form – a

more thorough syntax study is needed to understand what text adaptations have been made. The greater length of the FALC may well seem counterintuitive in the context of simplification, but it is consistent with what Berman (2000, p. 290) identifies as one of translation's "deforming tendencies": "Every translation tends to be longer than the original."

The French text uses more internal punctuation than the FALC, namely in the use of colons to introduce direct speech. I will compare two passages:

	Nadia achète du pain à la boulangerie et rentre à l'épicerie-buvette de son papa.
Une fois rentrée chez elle avec le pain, Nadia prit sur le rayonnage une boîte de sauce tomate, et elle se disposait à repartir, lorsque son papa l'arrêta : - Et où vas-tu, comme ça ?	Dans le magasin de papa Saïd, Nadia attrape une boîte de sauce tomate. Nadia va pour sortir du magasin mais son papa l'arrête. PAPA SAÏD — Où vas-tu, comme ça ?
(Gripari, 2007, p. 20)	(Coudert, 2024, p. 9)

Both the French and the FALC text layouts are presented above as they appear in the books. While the presentation of the French text renders it clear to read and implies two sentences, using more internal punctuation (four commas, one colon) creates a longer sentence – 47 words – than is needed for clarity. In contrast, the FALC text contains just five colons in total, three of which are also used to introduce direct speech. However, the FALC equivalent does not use colons; the author uses four sentences and 45 words to convey the same storytelling compared with one sentence in the French, which follows point 19 in the FALC (2009, p. 19) guidelines "écrire une seule idée par phrase".

The FALC guidelines do not specify a sentence length, only that sentences be short. Of note are the European Commission's *Rédiger clairement*[14] guidelines that serve as a plain-language guide for French institutions. *Rédiger clairement* recommends an average of 20 words per sentence (European Commission, 2015); the BDA (2023)

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[14] The French version of the European Commission's *How to Write Clearly* booklet, first published in 2010 as part of the "Fight the Fog" initiative, has since been translated into 24 official EU languages (European Commission, n.d.).

recommends 60 to 70 characters per sentence. Importantly, the FALC (2009) guidelines state that if you must write a sentence over two lines, cut the sentence at the point where you would naturally make a pause for clarity. This shows that average sentence length becomes irrelevant in this context – short sentences do not guarantee readability, just as long sentences are not necessarily difficult to follow. We must consider presentation, not just through syntax, but through layout. The FALC example from page nine above shows how Coudert cuts the sentences into digestible parts to facilitate reading. Thus, assessing sentence length purely in quantitative terms risks oversimplifying in this context.

ii.   Word complexity

Although the FALC is 404 words longer, the French text contains nearly twice as many complex words per 100 words, especially in nouns over seven characters. French is known to favour nominal and hypotactic structures, which use subordinate clauses to create layered, more complex sentence constructions. For example, Gripari (2007, p. 23) wrote, "C'est surement la sorcière qui l'a prise, il faut que j'aille la délivrer." In contrast, the FALC (2009) guidelines promote active sentences that are shorter and follow a clear subject-verb-object (SVO) order, which supports readers with processing difficulties. An important element of lexical complexity is word frequency. As discussed, longer words are not necessarily complex for dyslexic readers if they are familiar.
To check the frequency of complex words, I used a grade-level French lexical database, Manulex, which lists word frequencies from school textbooks (48,886 entries, including 23,812 lemmas[15]). Indeed, several psycholinguistic studies have shown a link between word length, frequency and lexical recognition in French (New et al., 2001). High-frequency words average four to five characters, while the Manulex database average is 7.7 characters for lemmas and 7.9 for verbs (Lété et al., 2004). These findings support the threshold of over seven characters to define complex words. Manulex provides frequency scores based on three indices: global frequency (GL), frequency per million words (Freq/M), and frequency adjusted by grade level (G1 to G5), all drawn from real classroom texts. These scores reflect how often a word appears and the age at which children are most likely to encounter it (Lété et al., 2004). For example, "*temps*"

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[15] In linguistic terms, lemma refers to the base form of a word. For example, *danser* is the lemma for "*danse*", "*dansent*" and "*dansais*".

(1,106.31) is far more common in school texts than "*heureusement*" (62.91), making "temps" more easily recognized by young readers. This supports age-appropriate lexical study and helps justify the inclusion of longer but frequent words as less complex. I used the full Manulex age range (six to eleven) to capture both word frequency from early readers through to the first year of secondary school in France (age eleven), and my target reader age. Below are some examples of complex words found in the FALC text:

histoire (800.89)	faux (136.89)	troisième (73.67)
personne (285.69)	temps (1,106.31)	lendemain (144.25)
beaucoup (574.70)	plusieurs (275.95)	heureusement (62.91)
deuxième (96.96)	nouvelle (138.63)	chercher (280.90)

These high-frequency terms for six- to eleven-year-olds are more likely to be read with ease by dyslexic readers. As with sentence length, this demonstrates that assessing word complexity by word length and syllabic complexity alone does not reliably reflect readability.

Table 5 on the following page shows the complex words found in the French and FALC texts, based on the complex word definition provided in this quantitative data section.

Table 5: *Complex words in French and FALC texts: quantitative data*

Content Words	French, Gripari (2007)	FALC, Coudert (2024)
Longer than seven characters	**NOUNS (25):** Mouffetard*, quartier, Gobelins, sorcière, épicerie-buvette, boulanger, rayonnage, lendemain, épicerie, monsieur, spaghetti, domicile, marchande, bouchère, volaille, méfiance, éventaire, musicien, boutique, évanouissement, contraire, récompense, équilibre, cervelle, tiroir-caisse **VERBS (25):** commencer, connaissez, apporter, chercher, disposait, repartir, soupeser, déguiserai, attraperai, réfléchit, approcha, délivrer, continuait, entendant, assomma, rendormit, réveillant, travaillait, descendait, échapper, embrassa, remercia, retournèrent, ramassait, demandée **ADV. (10):** affreusement, aujourd'hui, obligatoirement, justement, exactement, heureusement, surement, egalement, cependant, doucement **ADJ. (10):** obéissante, rougissante, nouvelle, ordinaire, assommée, fracassé, enfermée, appliqué, courageux. **ORDINAL ADJ/DET:** troisième	**NOUNS (16):** Mouffetard, histoire, sorcière, quartier, publicité, épicerie-buvette, boulangerie, monsieur, spaghetti, confiance, personne, musicien, lendemain, marchande, solution, tiroir-caisse **VERBS (17):** commencer, déguiser, rencontre, apportes, chercher, cuisiner, réfléchit, attrapera, retourne, retrouver, continue, rendorment, travaille, approche, embrasse, remercie, repartent **ADV (3):** beaucoup, aujourd'hui, heureusement. **ADJ (11):** fatiguée, gentille, contente, nouvelle, courageux, assommée, endormies, réveillées, enfermée. **ORDINAL ADJ/DET:** deuxième, troisième **DETERMINER (1):** plusieurs
Presenting letters with similar equivalents	**NOUNS (3):** aveugle, communiqué, prénom **ADJ (2):** pauvre, nouveau	**NOUNS (2):** aveugle, prénom **ADJ (1):** pauvre
With complex syllables	**ADJ (4):** maligne, rampant, faux, beau	**ADJ (1):** faux
With irregular grapheme-to-phoneme consistency	**NOUNS (2):** temps, yeux **ADJ (1):** ouvert	**NOUNS (2):** temps, yeux

*Words in blue font appear in both texts, sometimes in different forms (e.g. verb conjugations)

Quantitative data review

The quantitative data gives insight into the surface-level complexity of the two texts, but to understand the deeper adaptations at the lexical, syntactical and semantic levels requires a more thorough study and in-context approach. The following passage from the FALC illustrates how quantitative readability measures do not reveal the whole picture: "Elle réfléchit alors à une nouvelle idée. La sorcière décide de se déguiser en marchande de viande rouge et d'aller rue Mouffetard, le lendemain." (Coudert, 2024, p. 12). In this short, 24-word passage, there are five complex words: "réfléchit", "nouvelle", "déguiser", "marchande" and "lendemain". From a quantitative approach, the passage could be determined as relatively difficult to read with one complex word on each line. However, a qualitative approach that considers the context and readers' knowledge would reveal the following:

1. "réfléchit"/ "reflechir" – has a relatively high frequency score of 36[16]/37 and is frequently used in everyday language.
2. "nouvelle" – high-frequency word (139)
3. "déguiser" – low-frequency word (5) but widely used by children. Could be out of context for school textbook vocabulary.
4. "marchande" – frequency score of 11, but the masculine *marchand* has 71, and the word is repeated 25 more times in the text after this occurrence.
5. "lendemain" – high frequency (144)

Quantitative measures alone do not capture these nuances. I will now evaluate the FALC adaptation using an in-depth qualitative approach that also considers frequency, context and reader expectations.

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[16] Scores have been rounded up in points 1 to 5.

Lexical simplification

The FALC guidelines recommend using familiar words that the target audience can relate to. The first sentences of the two texts provide a good example of the lexical simplifications made from beginning to end of the story.

Il y avait une fois, dans le quartier des Gobelins, à Paris, une vieille sorcière, affreusement vieille, et laide	C'est l'histoire d'une sorcière très vieille et très moche. Elle vit dans un quartier du centre de Paris.
(Gripari, 2007, p. 17)	(Coudert, 2024, p. 7)

The French opens with a literary, fixed storytelling structure that is not everyday language. In contrast, "c'est l'histoire de" is a high-frequency, more conversational construction. The adverb "affreusement" in the French is not only morphologically complex and long, but it also has a low-frequency Manulex score (1.80). Coudert prioritizes high-frequency, short words as substitutions, such as "très" (1,709.90 in Manulex), while arguably maintaining sentence content. The invariant adjective "moche" to replace "laide" is an example of a low-frequency lexical replacement[17] but one likely chosen for its familiarity and playful tone. "Laide"– as an adjective with gendered forms – adds decoding complexity for dyslexic readers and could be considered more formal in tone and therefore less familiar to children. "Centre de Paris" is more concrete and easier to visualize than "Gobelins", a proper noun with orthographic and phonological complexity. The FALC text has several examples where Coudert replaces complex or low-frequency words with simpler, higher-frequency equivalents, including:

obligatoirement (3.04) > **doit** (290.14)	boutique (33.77) > **magasin** (89.26)
cerner (0.76) > **attraper** (72.53)	bouchère (0.46) > **viande rouge** (74.75/386.56)
aperçut (65.28) > **voit** (274.68)	volaille (4.50) > **poulet** (28.10)
brigand (12.76) > **voleur** (76.72)	communiqué (0.73) > **annonce** (28.51)

The FALC (2009) guidelines state that if difficult words must be used, they should be explained clearly. In the FALC text, difficult words appear in bold and are defined directly

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[17] "Moche" scores 2.48 in Manulex; "laide" is not found in Manulex.

below in grey, lighter font (see "*ramper*" below). I will discuss the advantages of this layout in the text presentation section. Importantly, difficult words remain in bold throughout the text. This repeated highlighting helps readers by reinforcing phonological representations in the lexicon, which strengthen with repeated exposure (Ziegler et al., 2014). Seven words are classed as difficult in the FALC text: "*annonce*", "*épicerie-buvette*", "*se méfie*", "*tiroir-caisse*", "*assommée*", "*rampant*" (where the verb "*ramper*" is defined) and "*marin*". Most have low frequency (below 5.00 in Manulex). The words are used and defined as per FALC guidelines:

> 6.   Utilisez ... des mots que les gens connaissent bien.
>
> 7.   N'utilisez pas de mots difficiles. Si vous devez utiliser des mots difficiles, il faut les expliquer clairement.
>
> 8.   Utilisez des exemples pour expliquer les choses. Essayez d'utiliser des exemples de la vie de tous les jours que les gens comprennent facilement.
>
> 9.   Utilisez le même mot pour parler de la même chose dans tout le document.
>
> (Inclusion Europe*,* 2009, p. 10)

An example of this in the FALC:

> et **rampent** sans bruit vers Bachir pour l'attraper.
> Ramper veut dire avancer allongé au sol,
> comme un serpent. (Coudert, 2024, p. 20)

Coudert defines the verb using familiar language with examples that her young audience can relate to. All words classed as difficult are listed alphabetically in a glossary at the back of the text. Additionally, whether a word is ordinary or complex, Coudert uses it consistently, which is in line with point nine of the FALC guidelines. In contrast, the French text uses the noun "*poulet*", then switches to its hypernym "*volaille*" twice, while the FALC text consistently uses "poulet" for all five occurrences. Similarly, "*attraper*" appears six times in the FALC. The French, in contrast, uses "attraper" two of those six times, otherwise choosing "*prendre*" (twice), "*saisir*" and "*cerner*". The French language is known to use elegant variation – replacing next occurrences of a word with synonyms to avoid repetition – but this is not recommended in FALC writing, as repeated synonyms can disrupt decoding and the flow of reading.

      Lastly, when I compare lexical simplification choices for dyslexic readers with

translation strategies for children's literature, Desmet's (2001) microstructural explication strategies offer a useful parallel. These include simplifying sentence structure, using concrete over abstract language and softening irony (as quoted in O'Sullivan, 2019, p. 20). For example, Gripari's (2007, p. 18) *"Nadia, qui avait bon cœur"* is metaphorically abstract, which is not recommended in FALC writing. Coudert adapts this to *"Nadia est une petite fille gentille"* (2024, p. 8), which, while still abstract, is expressed in simple, familiar language tied to more observable behaviour and is thus arguably more accessible to dyslexic readers.

Syntactic simplification

In French, when you replace a word, it often affects the form or structure of the whole sentence. Translators may therefore need to modify the syntax to keep grammar and meaning intact (Gala & Ziegler, 2016). Compare:

l'attrapa par un pied et se mit à glapir	lui attrape le pied. La marchande de légumes se met à crier.
(Gripari, 2007, p. 27)	(Coudert, 2024, p. 22)

The morpho-syntactic structure changes from a noun phrase with the preposition ("par un pied") to a possessive pronoun and direct object ("lui attrape le pied"). This creates a more familiar construction and simplifies parsing for the reader.

Similarly, the FALC (2009, p. 12) guidelines prioritize clarity and recommend using short sentences and "des phrases actives plutôt que des phrases passives". French, like English, follows a canonical SVO sentence order; however, Gripari occasionally departs from canonical order, perhaps to maintain the text's narrative rhythm and fairytale register. The FALC text thus changes sentence order, where necessary, to render sentences active. Compare:

Mais le lendemain, en faisant les courses, elle fut, pour la seconde fois, arrêtée par la vieille	Le lendemain, Nadia fait les courses. Elle rencontre une nouvelle fois la sorcière déguisée en vieille dame. La sorcière l'arrête.
(Gripari, 2007, p. 20)	(Coudert, 2024, p. 9)

Coudert's use of the active voice and SVO order results in short, syntactically consistent sentences, in contrast to Gripari's more complex, passive construction. The FALC structure also reinforces the character agency and makes actions easier to follow, particularly for dyslexic readers with processing difficulties. In contrast, the French sentence uses the passive voice, "elle fut … arrêtée", which delays the agent, ("par la vieille"), and introduces additional information via a participial clause, ("en faisant les courses"), which increases syntactic complexity.

Another example of FALC active voice use is in the alphabetical glossary at the back of the book. Coudert follows FALC (2009, p. 11) guidelines: "Parlez directement aux gens. Utilisez des mots comme « vous »." However, since she is addressing a young audience, she uses "*tu*", as per FALC (2009) guidelines to use appropriate language for the intended readership.

Here is the glossary example:

> **assommé** *adjective*
> Tu es assommé quand tu reçois un coup sur la tête
> et que tu es comme endormi. (Coudert, 2024, p. 176)

Tense usage also differentiates the two texts. The FALC consistently uses the present tense, which is familiar to children as an everyday register and is in line with *Colibri*'s guidelines. The French text, by contrast, mostly uses the past historic, a common tense in French literary writing. While the FALC guidelines do not explicitly mention tense, they recommend using everyday language, which includes present-tense forms.

As noted in the literature review, French and English languages lack consistent phonological mapping; to compensate for this, readers rely on morphology. French further complicates decoding by encoding some inflectional endings in writing that are not pronounced in speech (Verhoeven & Perfetti, 2022). This is relevant in the French text's use of the past historic, such as "*demandèrent*", "*sautèrent*", "*tombèrent*", "*crièrent*" and "*retournèrent*". The FALC avoids subject-verb inversion by explicitly naming the speaker each time there is direct speech. For example:

Moins fort ! Moins fort ! crièrent les 267 marchandes.	LES 267 MARCHANDES Chante moins fort, Bachir !
(Gripari, 2007, p. 24)	(Coudert, 2024, p.17)

While the FALC verbs "*sautent*", "*tombent*" and "*repartent*" still have silent inflections, they are shorter and more common in spoken French, which makes them more accessible. Lastly, at the sentence level, the FALC (2009) guidelines recommend writing one idea per sentence. Coudert achieves this by splitting sentences to clarify meaning, as per the following example:

Bachir souleva le tiroir-caisse, et allait le passer au marin, quand la marchande de légumes, qui s'était approchée tout doucement, l'attrapa par un pied et se mit à glapir	Bachir prend le tiroir-caisse pour le donner au **marin.** Mais la sorcière déguisée en marchande de légumes s'approche de Bachir et lui attrape le pied. La marchande de légumes se met à crier.
(Gripari, 2007, p. 27)	(Coudert, 2024, p. 22)

By restating "la sorcière", Coudert clarifies the subject and simplifies sentence structure, making it easier for struggling readers to follow.

Semantic simplification

Most plain writing guidelines recommend short, clear and active sentences. While translators into easy-to-read language aim for more concise phrasing, they must also be sure to use simpler semantic equivalents that keep the original meaning without altering the intended message. The following is an example of how the FALC text translates semantic content from abstract language to a more concrete and accessible structure:

Et qu'est-ce que j'aurai, comme récompense ?	Et tu me donnes quoi en échange ?
(Gripari, 2007, p. 27)	(Coudert, 2024, p. 22)

Firstly, by restructuring the verb "j'aurai" to "tu me donnes", Coudert shifts the semantics from a future-tense form with abstract nuance to a direct, present-tense action that is easier to process. Secondly, Coudert replaces the abstract and formal "recompense" with the simpler and more concrete "en échange", which brings the sentence closer to natural speech for children. Other examples of simplified verb

substitutions in the FALC are "*délivrer*" for "*libérer*" and, again, "*délivre-moi*" for "*libère-moi*":

"il faut que j'aille la délivrer" (p. 23)	"Il décide d'aller rue Mouffetard pour retrouver sa sœur" (p. 16)
"Bachir, Bachir, délivre-moi" (p. 26)	"Bachir, Bachir, libère-moi" (p. 19)
(Gripari, 2007)	(Coudert, 2024)

"Délivrer" has a low frequency score (7.32) in Manulex, while "retrouver" ranks much higher (118.84). "Libérer" also has a moderate frequency (19.94). Semantically, "retrouver" conveys a neutral sense of finding or meeting someone. It suggests a reunion rather than a rescue. In contrast, "délivrer" ("to rescue" or "to free") implies that the subject (Bachir) must intervene to liberate his sister from a threat, which introduces higher drama and narrative tension. However, "délivrer" carries metaphorical weight, which FALC guidelines recommend avoiding, and may be less transparent to readers with linguistic challenges. "Retrouver" is more concrete and familiar. The FALC's semantic shift arguably retains the essential meaning while favouring clarity and simplicity. In the second example, "libère-moi" is less emotionally charged than "délivre-moi", but the verb "libérer" is morphologically and phonologically more transparent, which reduces demands on working memory and decoding for young dyslexic readers. A recent study of the difficulties faced by nine- to eleven-year-olds in learning specialized vocabulary notes that children may already recognize specialized terms like "libérer" through familiar sociocultural contexts such as video games (Gala, Roubaud, & Javourey-Drevet, 2024, para. 11). Thus, lexical choices for dyslexic readers prioritize phonological and morphological transparency but are also context-dependent, with familiar words aiding reading speed and fluency.

The FALC (2009) guidelines, like many plain writing styles, favour positive constructions over negative ones. Negative constructions add words and can introduce syntactic complexity, which may make it harder for struggling readers to decode the meaning quickly. In storytelling, some negatives are unavoidable when stating facts; for example, in both texts, "mon papa n'a pas voulu" and "nous n'apportons pas" express essential information.

However, the FALC text rephrases several constructions in the positive, as seen below:

n'avez qu'à la laisser ! (p. 21)	laissez-la (p. 12)
elle n'a qu'à venir elle-même (p. 20)	elle peut venir elle-même (p. 9)
il n'y avait plus de doute (p. 26)	c'est sûr (p. 19)
(Gripari, 2007)	(Coudert, 2024)

The FALC's positive equivalents are easier on the eye, more concise and express the semantic content more clearly.

Pragmatic simplification

In the FALC text, speech acts[18] are expressed more explicitly and with simpler syntax. For example, the witch is clearly identified and says, "Peux-tu m'aider ?" (Coudert, 2024, p. 8) – a direct, polite request. In comparison, the French, "Veux-tu me rendre un service ?" (Gripari, 2024, p. 18), is more idiomatic and culturally embedded. Similarly, compare the commissive speech act in the FALC (2024, p.10), "je viendrai la chercher moi-même", to the more elliptical and context-dependent "c'est bon, j'irai" (Gripari, 2007, p. 20). Adam (1990) illustrates the role of contextual understanding in reading comprehension:

> Débordant la question de la compétence textuelle, ceci débouche sur le fait que la sélection et le classement hiérarchique de l'information propositionnelle dépend largement des capacités (savoirs encyclopédiques, degré de familiarité avec le type de texte ou de discours) mais aussi des buts du lecteur. (Adam, 1990, p. 109)

In other words, understanding and prioritizing information depends not just on reading skills but also on the reader's background knowledge, familiarity with the text type and reading goals. The FALC text therefore ensures that the speaker's intention –the illocutionary force – is explicit for readers who may struggle with inference.

Similarly, the FALC explains new referents, such as complex or unfamiliar terms, for clarity. For example, Coudert (2024, p. 16), "Un tiroir-caisse est une grande boîte où on range l'argent" and "Ramper veut dire avancer allongé au sol, comme un serpent" (p. 20). From a pragmatic level, this reduces the inferential burden on the reader and

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[18] Speech act theory (see Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969) treats language as action. Utterances can perform functions (e.g. requests, promises) and carry illocutionary force beyond their literal meaning (Baldick, 2015).

increases accessibility. By comparison, the French leans on shared cultural knowledge and familiarity with fairy tale narrative conventions. It often uses metaphorical phrases that enrich the story but assume more of the reader. For example: "se mit à rire en se frottant les mains" (Gripari, 2007, p. 18) becomes "elle est très contente de son idée. Elle se met à rire" (Coudert, 2024, p. 9).

The narrative structure also reflects pragmatic simplification. The FALC has a linear, didactic format with clear demarcation between the beginning, middle and end of the story. The opening line, "C'est l'histoire d'une sorcière très vieille et très moche" (Coudert, 2024, p. 7), replaces the more literary "Il y avait une fois" in the French. The witch's plan and Bachir's bravery unfold in a clear and logically structured way. In contrast, the French uses a richer rhetoric with some comic irony and more elaborate narrative flourishes. For example:

Eh bien, puisque c'est comme ça, demain matin, je deviendrai, à moi toute seule, TOUTES les marchandes de la rue Mouffetard !	Comme la sorcière a des pouvoirs magiques, elle peut être plusieurs personnes en même temps.
(Gripari, 2007, p. 23)	(Coudert, 2024, p. 14)

The FALC guides the reader by adding an explicative phrase that clarifies this plot development, which aids processing for dyslexic readers.

Discursive simplification

Both texts follow a classic narrative arc – introduction, complication and resolution, though they differ in how this structure is achieved. The FALC narrative is composed of shorter and more coherent sequences than the French, making it more accessible to readers with processing difficulties. Adam (2020) describes sequences as the basic compositional units of a text and classifies them into five types: descriptive, narrative, argumentative[19], explicative and dialogic. Each type serves a specific communicative function and contributes to the text's progression. In this context, the FALC adaptation relies primarily on simplified narrative and explicative sequences to aid readability and understanding. It also uses clear, adapted descriptive sequences,

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[19] Argumentative sequences are not relevant to the genre of children's literature; I will not address these sequences here.

which contribute to coherence by presenting one idea at a time. This helps reduce processing effort for readers. For example, Coudert (2024):

> "C'est l'histoire d'une sorcière très vieille et très moche. Elle vit dans un quartier du centre de Paris. Cette sorcière voudrait être la plus belle fille du monde." (p. 7)
> "C'est une rue du centre de Paris où il y a beaucoup de magasins." (p. 12).

Coudert's (2024) narrative sequences, "un jour, la vieille sorcière lit une annonce" (p. 7), lead logically to "elle décide de se déguiser" (p. 8) and later, "elle est déçue car son idée n'a pas marché" (p. 12). The narrative presents a coherent temporal and causal chain. Equally, in the following temporal phrase, Coudert (2024, p. 9) chooses the simpler "elle va pour sortir" to translate Gripari's (2007, p. 20) "elle se disposait a repartir", placing the action in the present and using simpler language for coherence. There are many explicative sequences in the FALC. In addition to defining difficult words within the text, characters and key concepts are explained at the beginning and end of the book.

The FALC text makes frequent use of direct dialogue to structure the narrative. I refer to Gág's translational strategy to adjust texts for children, which is to use dialogue to bring life to dense narrative (in Lathey, 2010). For example, the FALC's addition of direct speech when Nadia obeys her father's instructions – "D'accord papa. Je reste à la maison" (Coudert, 2024, p. 9) – compared to the French narration, "Nadia, qui était très obéissante, n'insista pas" (Gripari, 2007, p. 20). Coudert uses explicit, familiar dialogue to reduce the need for inferencing from dense narrative.

In terms of cohesion, the FALC text uses consistent referents and repetition; the witch is almost always referred to as "la sorcière" or "la sorcière déguisée en vieille dame". Nadia is almost always named explicitly, which minimizes ambiguity. Once referents are established, the FALC uses simple anaphoric pronouns: "La sorcière rentre chez elle. Elle est très contente de son idée. Elle se met à rire" (Coudert, 2024, p. 9). Events are linked in the FALC by temporal and additive connectives, which support cohesion, for example, "*le lendemain*", "*mais*", and "*et*". To illustrate this, take the use of "mais" in the FALC, which Coudert uses nine times to begin a new sentence as a phatic marker that signals a shift in the narrative and helps segment the discourse. As Adam (1990, p. 197) notes, "un MAIS « phatique » qui signale un changement de point de vue … Le connecteur MAIS signale une rupture [de l'enchaînement]."

For example, "Mais elle ne sort pas de l'épicerie-buvette" and "Mais, heureusement, Bachir voit" both function as cues, using the high-frequency word "mais", that reorient the reader's focus and signal a narrative turn – a useful strategy in simplified language contexts.

Text presentation

Coudert's text follows the FALC (2009) presentation guidelines. The layout is deliberately clear – with generous line spacing, short text segments and a consistent paragraph structure. Coudert keeps to the rule of one idea per line, which helps reduce processing load. Punctuation is simple to maintain readability. Typography follows FALC guidelines, using size 14 Arial or Tahoma, with wide letter spacing to help dyslexic readers distinguish individual characters.

There are no italics, as their use can distort letter shapes for struggling readers. Similarly, Coudert omits the French use of full-word capitalization.

There are no footnotes in the FALC, in line with guidelines. Instead, clear and concise explanations are given directly within the narrative. This approach is supported by Kiefé (2008, p. 37), who notes that for children *"Pour éviter la lourdeur pédagogique de la note, le traducteur rajoute parfois en incise une petite précision qui éclaire, mine de rien, tel ou tel détail culturel."* While Kiefé refers to cultural references, the same principle can be applied to define complex vocabulary for dyslexic readers; information is integrated into the flow of the text rather than separated into marginal or footnotes.

Finally, dialogue presentation is adapted to enhance clarity. Each speaker is clearly identified before their direct speech and characters are colour-coded to visually differentiate voices. Although the use of colour is generally discouraged in accessibility guidelines – particularly for colour-blind readers – here it is used functionally rather than decoratively. Colour-coding contributes to the visual organisation of the dialogue, which helps struggling readers track character interactions more easily. The complex word definitions are also presented in grey font, so as not to disrupt the narrative flow. In terms of illustrations, the French includes just one full-page illustration of the witch with Nadia. The FALC includes four full-page illustrations, in line with FALC (2009) recommendations to use imagery to support comprehension. The four illustrations depict the witch with Nadia, rue Mouffetard, Bachir trying to open the money box, and Bachir and Nadia reunited.

In conversation with FALC author Maëlle Coudert

To conclude this chapter, while linguistic-level studies are important for examining simplification strategies, it is also crucial to consider these translational choices in FALC as part of a broader workflow involving multiple agents and not just in isolation. As Nord's functionalist approach illustrates, the translator must negotiate each assignment with their client to ensure the translation fulfils its intended function (Nord, 2013). Similarly, Holz-Mänttäri's translational action model emphasizes the collaborative, purpose-driven nature of translation (Holz-Mänttäri, 1984). In this context, FALC translator Maëlle Coudert is not the sole decision-maker but operates within a chain of responsibilities that include institutional guidelines, editorial oversight with Kiléma Editions and feedback from the target audience. The following conversation with Maëlle provides insight into how translational decisions are made in practice.

Table 6: *Q&A with FALC author Maëlle Coudert*

Questions	Answers
1. L'usage du présent à la place du passé simple – s'agit-il d'une recommandation spécifique du FALC ou d'un choix personnel en tant qu'autrice ? De même, l'usage de la construction aller + infinitif au lieu du futur simple – est-ce une recommandation FALC ou un moyen d'éviter les formes verbales conjuguées plus complexes ?	L'utilisation du présent est plus que recommandée pour le FALC.
2. La version FALC omet certains adjectifs et adverbes présents dans l'original. Est-ce également une recommandation FALC ?	Oui, le but étant de simplifier au maximum, donc d'utiliser un vocabulaire simple.
3. Quelles règles suivez-vous pour identifier les mots difficiles qui nécessitent une explication pour les lecteurs dyslexiques ? Par exemple, j'ai cité une étude de Gala et Ziegler (2016) qui suggère que la complexité lexicale en français pour les lecteurs dyslexiques se retrouve souvent dans les noms et verbes de plus de sept caractères, contenant des lettres visuellement similaires, des structures syllabiques complexes et une relation phonème-graphème irrégulière.	Tous les textes traduits chez Kiléma sont vérifiés par le public cible. Mais à force de traduire, je sais à peu près ce qui va être compliqué.
4. Tenez-vous compte de la fréquence lexicale lors du choix des mots pour une traduction FALC ?	Non, c'est pareil que pour la question 3. L'expérience et la vérification par le public cible est un guide.
5. Utilisez-vous une base de données lexicale pour consulter la fréquence des mots ?	Non.
6. Il y a quelques ajouts dans la version FALC qui ne figurent pas dans le texte original — des phrases de mise en contexte ou descriptives, comme : – « La boîte de sauce tomate n'est pas lourde. Pourquoi a-t-elle besoin de Nadia ? » – « La sorcière est déçue. » avant « Zut ! » – « Comme la sorcière a des pouvoirs magiques… » – « C'est une rue du centre de Paris où il y a beaucoup de magasins. » Selon quels critères décidez-vous d'ajouter ce type de phrases dans le texte FALC ?	L'expérience, le besoin de clarifier des choses qui sont complexes et la vérification/relecture par le public cible.
7. Quelle a été la motivation pour adapter la scène finale où Gripari écrit : « le crâne fracassé, ouvert, avec toute la cervelle qui sortait », remplacée dans la version FALC par : « Le tiroir-caisse lui écrase la tête » ? Était-ce lié à l'âge du public cible ?	Oui, et la difficulté aussi de compréhension du mot fracassé et cervelle.
8. Pour ce conte, est-ce que le public cible incluait des enfants avec divers troubles d'apprentissage ou uniquement des enfants dyslexiques ?	Le public cible des lecteurs de ce livre est large, et le FALC est particulièrement adapté aux personnes avec des troubles cognitifs. Sans distinction.

(Coudert, personal correspondence, May 3, 2025)

ENGLISH TRANSLATION AND COMMENTARY

What follows is a commentary on my English easy-to-read translation of the FALC *La Sorcière de la rue Mouffetard*. My goal was to translate into accessible and engaging English language that reflects the reading needs of children with dyslexia, particularly in terms of phonological transparency, morphological clarity and semantic predictability, as informed by my literature review. In contrast to the comparative intralinguistic study, which focuses on the linguistic results of simplification (lexical, syntactic, semantic, pragmatic and discourse), this commentary discusses the translation process itself. I will consider the rationale behind specific choices, how accessibility can be balanced with the narrative voice and any challenges encountered when translating for a young dyslexic audience.

Translator agency & positioning

To translate the FALC text effectively, I positioned myself as an advocate for the dyslexic reader and therefore used translational strategies that aimed to meet their linguistic needs. My focus was thus to shift from source-text fidelity toward a more reader-orientated approach, where readability guided my decisions. Following the framework of Oittinen (2000) in translating for children, I considered the dyslexic child reader an active participant in constructing the meaning of the text. This advocacy extended beyond ensuring clarity and accessibility to also maintaining the reader's engagement. The translation choices I made, the reasoning behind them and how I adapted the target text – known as translator agency – had to respond to the specific challenges faced by dyslexic readers, such as difficulties with phonological decoding, working memory and abstract vocabulary. For example, in the FALC (2024), the witch exclaims, "Oh ! Mon idée est géniale !" (p. 9), which I translated as "Oh! My plan is so clever!" At first glance, this short phrase does not appear to present any translational dilemmas; however, it illustrates the important dyslexia-related choices to be made even at the shorter, seemingly simpler syntax level. I substituted "idea" for "plan" because "idea" has a more abstract and ambiguous meaning and an inconsistent grapheme-to-phoneme mapping of "ea" (e.g. /i/ in *bead* vs /ɛ/ in *head*; Brysbaert, 2021). For "géniale", I ruled out "great" for the same grapheme issue. While I considered "brilliant", I settled on "clever" for its shorter length, regular letter-to-sound correspondence and its compromise between the cunning undertone of "*maligne*" from

the original French and the simplicity of the FALC. These choices illustrate how I considered decoding ease over literal translation, with the target reader's processing experience at the heart of my translation strategy.

Translation challenges and strategies

    i.   Readability

In line with research, I aimed to maintain readability by looking beyond phonological processing to consider the macrostructure of the text; this involved coordinating phonological, orthographic, semantic, morphological and syntactic processes in one (O'Brien et al., 2011). I thus opted for short, simple words and sentences and used high-frequency, familiar vocabulary. For example, in the passage from the "*Journal des Sorcières*" I simplified the sentence structure further in English to: "You are old and ugly. Want to be young and pretty? Then eat a girl with tomato sauce!" I removed the connective "mais vous allez devenir" and the conditional clause "pour cela", which simplified the syntax but kept the meaning. My lexical choices shaped syntax and meaning; for example, "Papa Saïd se méfie" was translated as "Papa Sayeed feels something is wrong", rather than "is suspicious", which is abstract and polysyllabic, among other complexities. Although longer at the syntactic level, this translation choice clarifies intent while reducing processing load. Other examples include deciding between "again" and "once more" to render "*une nouvelle fois*", "*de nouveau*" and "*encore*". What would normally be straightforward in terms of translation choice here raises questions of sound clarity, meaning and structural transparency. While "again" is phonetically inconsistent, it is a high-frequency word acquired at an early age in spoken language. In contrast, "once more", though made up of two free morphemes with transparent individual meanings, is less familiar, more formal and syntactically heavier. The translation could also retain "again" while highlighting it as a complex word in its written form, rather than replacing a word that is already familiar in a child's spoken lexicon.

A final note on readability is the FALC's use of a cleft sentence: "Bachir est sûr que c'est la sorcière qui a attrapé Nadia" (2024, p. 16), which could be considered harder to parse for dyslexic readers. Cleft sentences interrupt SVO order, which requires the reader to use more working memory to process and therefore increases processing effort. I removed the cleft to keep a clear, linear structure: "Bachir is sure

that the witch has snatched Nadia."

ii.   Cultural references and idiomatic phrasing

In terms of translating cultural references and idiomatic phrases, one challenge was how to render "épicerie-buvette", a culturally specific noun, which I believe has no direct equivalent in English. While the original English translation[20] uses "café-grocers", in my view this compound is not familiar and is potentially unclear for children. I alternated between "grocery" and "shop" as per the FALC's "épicerie-buvette" and "magasin", as both English options are familiar, high-frequency words in English. Although this choice inevitably domesticates the French term, I had to balance cultural fidelity with the specific needs of my readership. As Pascua-Febles (2006, p. 111) notes, a translator must often navigate between conflicting demands – such as the desire to foreignize and "to meet the needs and demands of different readers who are often hidden". In this context, clarity and familiarity took precedence over keeping the foreign cultural element to support readability for dyslexic children. Similarly, I kept "Papa" in my translation, as it is widely recognized across languages and registers as a child-friendly word for father. For the surname, I used "Sayeed", a standard English transliteration of the same name that follows more regular grapheme-to-phoneme rules, making it easier to decode and pronounce and keeping the character's cultural identity. While "Saïd" reflects the French transliteration of the Arabic name, the diaeresis (ï) and letter combination may be visually and phonologically challenging for dyslexic readers unfamiliar with non-English diacritics.

One strategy to preserve meaning that might be lost through textual simplification – especially culturally specific elements like "épicerie-buvette" – is the use of multimodality (i.e. images). While some references are explicitly cultural, others are about narrative clarity. For example, my translation of "marchande de poulet" as "butcher selling chicken" introduces a distinction not typically made in English between red- and white-meat butchers. An illustration can help clarify which disguise is being used, compensating for any loss of nuance in the simplified text.

Tense choice can highlight linguistic differences at the syntactic level between French and English. French often uses the simple future where English would opt for

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[20] *The Witch of Rue Mouffetard* translated by Sophie Lewis (2015), published by Pushkin Children's Books.

the present continuous. For example, "elle va m'apporter" could become "she is bringing me" for a more fluid structure that is familiar to early English readers. However, the FALC's future construction – aller + infinitive – supports accessibility because it is simpler than the more grammatically dense inflected form "elle m'apportera". I concluded that a literal translation was therefore more appropriate in these instances of tense usage, as the English present continuous with a morphological suffix (-ing) could be visually and phonetically more complex for dyslexic readers. Lastly, I mirrored the FALC's consistent and informal tone throughout the English translation. For example, "j'aimerais que tu prennes" is rendered "can you please" rather than the more formal and grammatically complex "could you", which adds conditional mood and greater phonological processing for struggling readers.

iii.   Translation strategy at the microstructure level

At times, my strategy changed from literal translation to omitting words to maintain idiomatic expression in English. Compare the FALC (2024, p. 12) "La sorcière sort de l'épicerie-buvette avec sa boîte de sauce tomate et s'en va", with my rendering, "The witch walks out of the grocery with her tin of tomato sauce." I chose a familiar phrasal verb "walks out" instead of two separate verbs ("sort" and "s'en va") to reduce syntactic complexity and avoid redundancy. While the FALC repeats verbs to reinforce meaning and signal a change of scene, I would argue that "walks out' conveys both physical movement and narrative transition. This simplification helps syntactic processing, which consequently aids reading fluency at the connected-text level. Omitting "s'en va" is an example of pragmatic equivalence, as the non-literal English preserves the intended meaning and communicative effect, which aids idiomatic flow in the target language (Baker, 2011). Another example of omission for clarity in English is "j'ai déjà Nadia" translated simply as "I have Nadia". In this case, "already" has greater orthographic and phonological complexity compared to the more transparent French "déjà". Omitting non-essential complex words, where possible, can support readability for dyslexic readers without disrupting comprehension and narrative flow.

iv. Phonological, morphological and semantic considerations

Whenever feasible, I selected terms with consistent grapheme-to-phoneme

correspondences (GPCs) to adapt my translation strategy for children with dyslexia. For example, to avoid complicated spelling, I used "part of Paris" instead of "neighbourhood". To maintain consistency with "shop" and "shopkeeper", I also chose "shopping" over "groceries". I initially considered "heads towards" but replaced it with "walks towards", since the verb "head" is polysemous and less visually tied to movement for young readers. While I prioritized regular, short words, I chose "wallop" over "hit" for the narrative colour it adds for the young target audience. Although "wallop" is morphologically more complex than "hit", it could be presented with a larger font and increased letter spacing to aid decoding. This GPC strategy follows Ziegler et al.'s (2001) findings that large body neighbourhoods[21] help dyslexic readers process words that share familiar orthographic rimes (e.g. -at, -ight, -atch), because these patterns are easier to recognize. For example, I use the word "right" six times in total for the following translations to help reading fluency:

Coudert, 2024	EN translation
Elle accepte tout de suite (p. 8)	She agrees right then
Nadia passe tout près d'elle. (p. 14)	Nadia comes right by her.
Tout à coup, une petite voix répond. (p. 18)	Right then, a soft voice replies.

Repeating the GPC of "-ight", also adheres to the *Colibri* editorial recommendations for dyslexic children (see p. 39). Similarly, I chose "snatch" over the simpler "nab" for the reasons mentioned above, but also because its complexity is appropriate for eight- to twelve-year-old dyslexic readers. This avoids unnecessary simplification, helping to keep the story linguistically challenging and engaging. I avoided irregular or opaque inflections such as "bought" in favour of more phonologically transparent alternatives such as "paid". In English, inflections, derivations and compounds often produce morphologically complex words (Carlisle, 2003). The irregular inflected "bought", as the past tense of "buy", has no clear connection to its base word, whereas regular -ed inflections (e.g. "trapped") are kept simple and used only when required for tense or number.

Translating into easy-to-read language requires the use of words with more distinct

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[21] Large body neighbourhoods are groups of many words that share the same rime (i.e. body), which makes them easier to recognize and decode (Ziegler et al., 2003).

patterns. As Ziegler & Goswami (2005) explain, words that lack orthographic neighbours have irregular patterns and must be learnt by dyslexic readers (e.g. yacht, choir). I compared using "rescue", a moderately distinct word, to "save", which, despite its polysemy and inconsistent GPC (e.g. have), is familiar and phonetically straightforward. However, I chose "free", which diverges from the FALC's "retrouver" but is a literal translation of the French version's "délivrer". "Free" is familiar, simple and heightens the urgency of Bachir's attempt to rescue his sister. These examples illustrate how lexical choice is based on language-specific phonology.

The rhythm and structure of spoken language influence how children's phonological systems develop in their native language. As a result, French-speaking children tend to be sensitive to syllables because French is a syllable-timed language, while English is stress-timed (Ecalle and Magnan, 2007). These prosodic differences have clear implications for translation. Words like "shopping" and "wallop" have a strong-weak (trochaic) stress pattern, which supports phonological decoding in native English speakers. In contrast, the FALC text favours evenly timed, phonetically regular words that reflect French's syllable-timed rhythm, for example, "elle est très vieille et très moche", where each syllable has near-equal duration, making it easier to decode for native French readers. This contrast illustrates how phonological structure shapes lexical and accessibility choices.

In my translation, words such as "advert", "lure", "sailor" and "knocked out" are either complex for young readers or unfamiliar but may be added to the child's mental lexicon to increase vocabulary if introduced with context, explanation or repetition. I mirrored the FALC's approach by including concise in-text definitions. Other words, such as "grocery", "request" and "disguise", are listed as glossary terms at the end of the story.

   v. **Coherence and flow for young readers with dyslexia**

Like the FALC, my English translation aims to emphasize coherence, clarity and flow to develop the discourse in a logical and manageable manner. Using organized sequencing and explicit referents was a crucial tactic, particularly in cases where the FALC depends on implicit linkages. For example, the FALC (2024, p. 12), "La sorcière décide de se déguiser en marchande de viande rouge et d'aller rue Mouffetard, le lendemain" is restructured explicitly in English as "The next day, the witch will dress as a butcher and go to rue Mouffetard." The temporal marker "the next day" is fronted to

clarify the sequence of events and maintains the extradiegetic narration used throughout the FALC, in contrast to the intradiegetic narration present in the witch's thoughts in the French. The English then flows from "rue Mouffetard" into the following sentence, "It's a street", which improves discourse coherence. This also highlights the role of deixis, particularly temporal, in guiding the young reader's orientation. Clarifying such referents supports readability for dyslexic readers and avoids ambiguity between intradiegetic and extradiegetic narration.

I used the active voice as much as possible to improve readability and flow. For example, the explicative FALC (2024, p. 18), "à cause du coup qu'elles ont reçu sur la tête" is restructured as "The wallop to the head knocked them out", which removes the passive voice and more explicitly conveys the causal link in English. I rephrased negative constructions to positive ones where possible; for example, "la sorcière n'est pas assommée" becomes positive and emphatic as "the witch is more than knocked out", a shift that keeps the meaning and follows dyslexia-friendly guidelines to use positive constructions where possible, as they are easier to process. There is little change in punctuation between the FALC and the English translation. I used em dashes in "the witch – in her disguise – returns to rue Mouffetard" to add natural spoken pauses and visually break the sentence into manageable units. I aimed to structure the narrative throughout to match the FALC while reflecting spoken English prosody. I used sentences with logical, canonical word order, active voice verbs and clear transitions to keep semantic continuity across the text. As examples, to render the FALC's transitional "Ça tombe bien" becomes "What luck!" – an exclamation that emphasizes the coincidental discovery of Nadia and aims to maintain narrative flow. Also, "Bachir works out that his sister is trapped in the money box" – for the FALC (2024, p. 20), "Bachir comprend que sa sœur" – the verb "works out" is an active, problem-solving verb that attempts to make the cause and effect clear in English.

vi.   Reader engagement

A final translational challenge involved considering whether, and when, it was necessary to revisit the original French text to maintain narrative engagement in the English translation. One of the reasons I chose the story was for its humour and dark undertones – both notably diluted in the FALC, mainly because it is intended for children with a wide range of cognitive disabilities, not just those with dyslexia. The following three examples illustrate times where I attempted to reintroduce tone, wit or

tension that are softened in the FALC:

mais qui aurait bien voulu passer pour la plus belle fille du monde !	Cette sorcière voudrait être la plus belle fille du monde.	This witch had just one wish – to be the most beautiful girl in the world!
(Gripari, 2007, p. 17)	(Coudert, 2024, p. 7)	Plaisted, 2025

In the above, the FALC flattens the exaggerated vanity in Gripari's original. The English attempts to restore the absurdity of the witch's vanity by adding an exaggerated wishful tone. Example two:

c'est pour Nadia…	c'est pour manger Nadia	it's for…Nadia
(Gripari, 2007, p. 21)	(Coudert, 2024, p. 11)	Plaisted, 2025

Gripari's darkly comic double meaning – is Nadia going to eat or be eaten? – is lost in the FALC version, which removes the ambiguity and comic tension. The English restores the double entendre, keeping a comic-macabre tone that may appeal to young readers with a higher interest age. Example three:

de ce coup-là, les 267 marchandes eurent, toutes en même temps, le crâne fracassé, ouvert, avec toute la cervelle qui sortait. Cette fois, la sorcière était morte, et bien morte.	Le tiroir-caisse lui écrase la tête. Cette fois, la sorcière n'est pas assommée, elle est morte. Et les 266 autres marchandes meurent en même temps qu'elle.	The money box crushes the heads of all 267 shopkeepers at the same time and their brains spill out. This time, the witch is more than knocked out – she's dead, really dead.
(Gripari, 2007, p. 27)	(Coudert, 2024, p. 22)	Plaisted, 2025

The final scene exemplifies Gripari's macabre comic style. The FALC significantly dilutes the violent detail, which renders the passage more restrained. I have reintroduced the dark humour of the original in the English to restore dramatic punch, often central to a story's appeal and reader engagement.

BDA guidelines and translation comparison

My dyslexia-friendly translation meets the BDA guidelines. It is concise, uses plain language, includes definitions of complex or unfamiliar words, uses the active voice where possible and has minimal negative constructions. In terms of sentence length, there is one sentence with 80 characters in total (including em dashes), ten over the recommended 60 to 70 characters: "The money box crushes the heads of all 267 shopkeepers at the same time and their brains spill out." I could rewrite as two sentences, "The money box crushes the heads of all 267 shopkeepers at the same time. All 267 shopkeepers' brains spill out." However, I concluded that despite its length, the sentence uses a straightforward compound structure of SVO and subject plus verb. It uses a clear referent, "their brains", and most importantly, if the sentence is visually chunked over three lines, it reduces working memory load and makes the long sentence more digestible. The alternative strategy of breaking it into two sentences with repeated nouns would, I feel, introduce unnecessary lexical repetition and disrupt the dramatic flow of the event.

I compared my version's readability score with that of the original English translation *The Witch from rue Mouffetard*, translated by Sophie Lewis in 2015[22], using the Hemingway Editor's Flesch-Kincaid Readability Test and Calculator. This tool applies the Flesch-Kincaid algorithm, which is widely used to evaluate the readability of English texts based on sentence length and word complexity. The results in Table 7 show that the easy-to-read translation scores higher than the original English and is rated as suitable for 10- to 11-year-olds (5th grade in the US).

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[22] The original English version of *Tales of the Rue Broca*, published by Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc. in 1969, was translated by Doriane Grutman. However, this version does not include the tale of the witch of rue Mouffetard.

Table 7: *Readability score for original English vs easy-to-read English translation*

	Original EN	Easy-to-read EN
Flesch Reading Ease Score	83	93
Reading Level	6th grade[23] (easy to read)	5th grade (very easy to read)
Average Words per sentence	9	8
Sentences	143	213
Words	1,605	1,850

I also used the Hemingway Editor, another online readability tool that provides qualitative feedback by highlighting stylistic issues within a text, such as passive voice use and complex sentences. Here are the Hemingway Editor results:

Original EN	Easy-to-read EN
7/143 sentences are very hard to read	0/213 sentences are very hard to read
11/143 sentences are hard to read	0/213 sentences are hard to read
8 words with simpler alternatives[24]	0 words with simpler alternatives
Grade 2 - Good	Grade 0 - Good

Interestingly, Hemingway Editor states that the highest grade (grade nine) represents the adult average and that lower levels reflect clarity and accessibility, not a lack of sophistication (Hemingway Editor, 2025).

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[23] This represents US school grades, where 6th grade includes 11- to 12-year-olds.
[24] The eight words are six instances of "shall" and one instance of "as to" and "of all".

<div align="center">**DISCUSSION**</div>

This chapter discusses the findings of the comparative intralingual study and dyslexia-friendly English translation in relation to the two research questions guiding the project:

1. What are the strategies used to improve readability in intralingual translation?
2. What does the easy-to-read English translation reveal about the role of the translator in adapting texts for children with dyslexia?

These questions stem from a broader concern for inclusion and accessibility in literature for children with dyslexia, particularly given the phonological and morphological decoding challenges dyslexia presents.

Observations of dyslexia-friendly language use

In response to the first research question, the FALC translator of *La Sorcière de la rue Mouffetard* simplified syntax, vocabulary and narrative structure, while maintaining a coherent storyline and recognizable characters. The findings of the study show that explicit speaker attribution, consistent sentence patterns, concrete language and the removal of abstract or figurative expressions significantly increased readability. Syntactic adaptations in the French–FALC comparison demonstrated the importance of reducing sentence complexity by using shorter, parallel SVO structures, breaking up multi-clause sentences, using familiar phatic markers (such as "mais") and avoiding the passive voice. For example, a segment of the French hypotactic sentence structure, "la saisit par le poignet", is simplified in the FALC to the verb-driven construction, "lui attrape le poignet", which guides young dyslexic readers by using predictable grammatical patterns. Illustrations and layout choices, such as spacing and font, also help reduce the processing effort for struggling readers. By following the FALC (2009) guidelines, Coudert keeps the original tale's cultural and moral value and illustrates a practical approach to achieving inclusive intralingual translation. However, the FALC text makes a significant narrative compromise: it loses Gripari's irony and fairytale pastiche. Comedic undertones and subtle narrative cues are softened during simplification. For example, in the satirical newspaper advertisement:

MADAME	
Vous qui êtes VIEILLE et LAIDE	Madame !
Vous deviendrez JEUNE et JOILE !	Vous êtes vieille et moche,
Et pour cela :	mais vous allez devenir jeune et jolie.
MANGEZ UNE PETITE FILLE	Pour cela, vous devez manger
A la sauce tomate !	une petite fille à la source tomate !
(Gripari, 2007, p. 17)	(Coudert, 2024, p. 7)

The playful mimicry of advertising language is reduced in the FALC to more literal, explanatory prose. The comedic contrast between the ad's tone and the creepy content is gone. Also, here:

	LA SORCIÈRE
Oh ! que je suis maligne ! disait-elle. La petite Nadia va m'apporter elle-même la sauce pour la manger !	- Oh ! Mon idée est géniale ! Je vais cuisiner Nadia avec la sauce tomate qu'elle va m'apporter !
(Gripari, 2007, p. 18)	(Coudert, 2024, p. 9)

The French shows dark humour as the witch congratulates herself compared with the straightforward explanatory statement in the FALC. Inevitably, to render a text accessible requires content to be altered or omitted; however, it highlights the important question of *what* is lost when stories are simplified for clarity and what that loss means for the target readership.

In response to the second research question, a key finding in the English translation commentary is the importance of translator agency and reader-orientated advocacy. The easy-to-read translation aimed to preserve semantics while making adjustments that render the text authentic and that follow the BDA (2023) Style guide. Translatorial choices were guided by the need to reduce processing effort for dyslexic readers. This included simplifying syntax into shorter SVO constructions, using high-frequency vocabulary and choosing phonologically regular words.

Importantly, phonological awareness is shaped by a child's native language. French promotes syllabic sensitivity because it is syllable-timed, while English, as a stress-timed language, encourages greater awareness of stress patterns (Ecalle &

Magnan, 2007). These differences affect how children decode words and should inform translation choices (e.g. "wallop" and "shopping"). I chose complex words where useful for vocabulary development and supported them with in-text definitions (e.g. "lure"). I also clarified deixis and referents – particularly important when managing shifts between intra- and extradiegetic narration. For example, I retained the extradiegetic narration of the FALC with "The next day, the witch will dress as", rather than translate the French intradiegetic construction "The witch thinks to herself: 'Tomorrow, I'll dress as'". Switching between narrator and character voice can put extra cognitive strain on dyslexic readers, who struggle with working memory.

Cultural expressions and syntactic shifts presented challenges, which I addressed through functional and adaptive strategies, for example, simplifying "épicerie-buvette" to "grocery" and combining "sort" and "s'en va" into the single, idiomatic verb phrase "walks out". Cultural references and idiomatic phrases were domesticated where necessary to maintain readability in the context of a dyslexic readership. While cultural references in this story were limited, this trade-off still highlights a broader issue: by adopting a domesticating strategy for readability, I have arguably limited the dyslexic reader's opportunity to engage with cultural difference – one of the key reasons for translating children's literature in the first place (O'Sullivan, 2019; Van Coillie, 2020). This illustrates the translator's wider challenge of balancing accessibility with exposure to foreignness, especially in texts aimed at young dyslexic readers. As with the French-FALC adaptation, compromises were necessary in the English translation. Dyslexia-friendly structures often overruled stylistic preferences. For example, "suspicious" was replaced with the more explicit "feels something is wrong", a choice that felt counterintuitive given that English translations often condense rather than expand.

The findings clearly respond to both research questions. Syntactic and lexical simplifications reduce processing demands for dyslexic readers, in line with research on phonological decoding and working memory (Snowling & Hulme, 2012; Rose, 2009). These adaptations represent more than stylistic preference; they are based on the processing abilities of young dyslexic readers and remind us of the translator's role not just as a linguistic mediator but as an advocate for accessibility. The English translation demonstrates how a translator can remain faithful to meaning while making strategic departures from the source to support decoding. For example, the use of

morphologically transparent words (e.g. "free") and those from large body neighbourhoods (e.g. "right") reflects Ziegler et al.'s (2008) research on orthographic compensation strategies used by young dyslexic readers. Additionally, decisions to clarify deixis and simplify cultural references reflect a reader-orientated approach that acknowledges the intersection of linguistic processing and narrative engagement. The study illustrates how translatorial agency can be exercised through functional and adaptive translation strategies (e.g. domesticating, simplifying or softening irony) to produce easy-to-read texts that uphold the narrative value. The mentioned trade-off between source-text fidelity and dyslexia-friendly adaptation resonates with the wider debate in translation studies about domestication versus foreignization. Literature suggests that functional and adaptive strategies are justified when they improve readability and engagement for the intended child audience (Desmet, 2001; Oittinen, 2000; O'Sullivan, 2019). Together, these findings suggest that dyslexia-friendly translation is not only a linguistic task but an educational act for children with dyslexia – one that calls for awareness of linguistic processing deficits, developmental needs and inclusive presentation principles.

Implications of findings

The findings of the study echo Ziegler et al.'s (2022) conclusion that simpler words are indeed more regular and shorter. Furthermore, omission and substitution strategies to render complex structures into easy-to-read language are in line with research by Brouwers et al. (2014) and Desmet's (2001) translation strategies. Explicit speaker attribution also follows Wilkens & Todirascu's research (2020) that replacing a personal pronoun with a noun reduces the level of processing effort required for a reader to connect a reference to its antecedents. However, what matters is finding the appropriate definition of simplicity that matches the abilities or characteristics of the target readership. In other words, what is simple for children with poor vision will not necessarily be simple for children with dyslexia. Similarly, Ziegler et al. (2022) note researchers in text simplification recognize that replacing words may diminish source-text authenticity. The importance of "retaining the original information and meaning" (Siddharthan, 2014, p. 259) outweighs the preservation of source style. Ziegler et al. argue that synonyms seldom convey the same meaning; therefore, by replacing complex words with simpler ones, we risk losing subtle semantic nuances.

Here, the FALC's loss of irony and therefore authenticity of the French is notable, as it potentially dilutes imagination and engagement that is key in children's literature. This loss illustrates the need to balance clarity with creativity in accessible storytelling. Similarly, regarding the earlier discussion of cultural losses, a possible compensatory strategy, as outlined by Desmet (2001), could be to reintroduce some sense of foreignness elsewhere in the text. For example, replacing "spaghetti with tomato sauce" with a well-known French dish such as "beef bourguignon" could maintain the food-related theme while nodding to the story's cultural setting. In this context, the FALC's softening of irony and macabre content is justified, as the text is intended for a broad audience with a wide range of cognitive disabilities, not solely children with dyslexia. The softening may reflect age appropriateness more than cognitive ability. The FALC *La Sorcière de la rue Mouffetard* is translated for ages nine to twelve, and importantly, Kiléma does not categorize books by interest age in the same way as publishers such as Barrington Stoke. Perhaps if the story had been aimed at teenagers, its irony and macabre elements might have been kept. This illustrates a broader issue that when adults serve as gatekeepers of children's literature, the translator's "child image" – their perception of children and what they like – can vary significantly (van Coillie, 2020). Thus, translators' views on age-appropriate irony are highly subjective.

However, translatorial choices often follow guidelines, whether editorial or disability-focused, as discussed with FALC author Maëlle Coudert. The FALC (2009) guidelines specifically advise writers to always use appropriate language for the target reader. In contrast, the BDA guidelines are intended "for everyone" (BDA, 2023, n.p), but as Douglas (2008) notes, writing for young audiences requires a specific kind of language, not necessarily simpler, but suited to a child's perspective; therefore, more playful and imaginative. This illustrates the need for distinct guidelines when writing for children. Importantly, only the FALC (2009) guidelines have an official final validation step. Age-appropriate individuals with learning disabilities must assess whether a document is easy to read and understand. The FALC logo is awarded only once they have approved, which ensures that the target audience directly influences the accessibility of the final text. Similarly, Barrington Stoke's *Young Editors* Scheme invites dyslexic readers to give feedback on pre-publication manuscripts (Barrington Stoke, 2021). As noted by BookTrust, this scheme allows young readers to become editorial consultants, which deepens engagement. The scheme is voluntary and not a formal requirement, but it

illustrates the value of involving the target audience in the editorial process.
The *Colibri* and *Dyscool* collections also test their material on young dyslexic readers.
In contrast, the BDA and the Plain English Campaign's guidelines provide best practices
for clarity and readability but do not mention target audience testing pre-publication. In
the same vein, it would be beneficial to review post-publication reader responses to the
FALC *La Sorciere de la rue Mouffetard*, but unfortunately, as the series was published
recently in 2024, such data is not yet available.

Beyond validation, reader responses also shape the translation strategies used to
achieve accessibility. This study highlighted how multimodal approaches can help
address cultural references in texts for dyslexic readers. This illustrates the importance of
considering a text's macrostructure, including tone, narrative motivation and familiarity –
not just syntactic simplification. It also demonstrates the intersection of norms from
children's literature and dyslexia-friendly publishing, where both fields prioritize reader
engagement through multimodal storytelling. Both the FALC (2009) and BDA (2023)
guidelines recommend the use of images to support comprehension. An excellent example
of how visual language can support neurodiverse readers is the successful Swiss artist,
author and screenwriter Martin Panchaud. Panchaud is a dyslexic author who combines
his distinctive infographics with storytelling. His graphic novel, *La Couleur des choses*, has
received public and critical acclaim, winning the *Fauve d'Or* at the 2023 Angoulême
International Comics Festival. It has been translated into German and an English
translation is underway (Panchaud, 2020).

Implications for translators

Kiefé (2008), among others, argues that translated literature plays a key role in
children's education. If children are exposed to international stories from an early age,
their curiosity for different languages and cultures from the wider world will surely grow.
From this perspective, translators may broaden their skill set to include dyslexia-friendly
translation, which requires a more adaptive, reader-focused strategy. Translating into
easy-to-read language certainly presents its own challenges. I agree with Vassallo (1997,
p. 33) when she notes, "traduire du simple n'a rien de simple". Vassallo (1997) explains
that the meanings of simple terms are often harder to align between languages than
complex ones. Simpler statements often carry more layered meanings, which the
translator must simplify without reducing the essence of those meanings, which

complicates the translation process. Furthermore, while a complex statement provides clear guidance for the translator, a simple one leaves room for interpretation. Therefore, translating simple content is not always as straightforward as it might seem. Easy-to-read translation can be seen as a specialized field with its own norms, constraints and objectives which prioritize processing ease, emotional engagement and narrative coherence – principles grounded in psycholinguistic research. In fact, some universities are already on board with easy-to-read translation practices; for example, the University of Burgundy has a recent master's programme in *Traduction et Accessibilité Multimédia*, which includes modules on inter- and intralingual FALC translation (Université de Bourgogne, n.d.). In the UK, while there are courses on how to understand and support the needs of dyslexic learners, there is no equivalent course on easy-to-read translation.

Limitations

Evidently, the findings of this case study cannot be generalized to the same extent as with findings from a larger corpus. As a native English speaker and French language student, my interest focused on the scope of translated children's literature for children with dyslexia in the UK and France, and thus the study is limited to these two languages. The results are therefore English and French language specific.

From the literature review through to study results, I have concentrated on reading fluency, as opposed to reading comprehension or spelling difficulties that are also associated with dyslexia. As Peterson and Pennington (2015) state, dyslexia is a complex phenomenon that incorporates many aspects, such as neuropsychology, pathophysiology (how brain structure and function differ) and aetiology (the cause or origin of the disorder). Future research should focus on a different aspects of dyslexia that affect children's reading experience.

The guidelines used in the study are broad. The FALC (2009) guidelines are intended for a range of intellectual disabilities, including individuals on the autistic spectrum; the BDA (2023) guidelines are for all dyslexic individuals. While some UK and French publishers have brief, easy-to-read guidelines for writing or presenting information for young dyslexic readers, there is scope for the BDA and Inclusion Europe to add specific recommendations for children with dyslexia, particularly in view of the statistic that dyslexia affects approximately seven per cent of school-aged children

(Goswami, 2011).[25]

The study identified that readability tools were insufficient when used in isolation to gauge reader experience. Empirical data from young dyslexic readers would provide insightful qualitative data for results purposes.

Avenues for future research

While several empirical studies have explored dyslexic readers' responses to text simplification, there is a need for empirical research that investigates dyslexic children's engagement with translated texts. Research could group children with different phonological abilities to get a better understanding of the appropriate levels of simplicity or complexity required, and participants could be presented with texts that have differing levels of cultural content to compare reader reactions to foreignization vs domestication among young dyslexic readers. Such studies require appropriate ethics approval, for example, from CUREG[26] at the University of Geneva (UNIGE), to ensure the protection and informed consent of all participants.

The study focused on one genre (the fairytale) and one target age group (eight to twelve-year-olds). Future research could add genres, age groups and language combinations. Collaborative work by translators, educators and accessibility experts presents an opportunity to further study the intersection of translation approaches and dyslexia-friendly strategies.

Lastly, van Coillie (2020) discusses the increasing popularity of digital content in children's literature. The interactive nature of digital stories with sound effects, moving images and in-story games leads me to think that dyslexia-friendly translated digital stories for children could be another avenue. Particularly since van Coillie (2020) notes that available story applications are predominantly English. Given that multimodality is a strong feature in children's literature and literature for young dyslexic readers, this strikes me as an appropriate channel to motivate struggling readers by providing engaging, culturally rich, adapted content that is interactive and visual.

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[25] Dyslexia is statistically more common than autism, as an example. More than one in 100 people are autistic in the UK (National Autistic Society, 2025) compared to one in ten people with dyslexia (Kirby & Snowling, 2022).

[26] CUREG (Commission universitaire de recherche éthique de Genève) is the ethics committee responsible for evaluating research involving human subjects at the University of Geneva.

CONCLUSION

There is currently limited provision of translated literature for children with dyslexia in the UK. While dyslexia-friendly publishing efforts have increased in recent years, most material lacks international scope. This thesis has attempted to bridge this gap by exploring how translation strategies can support inclusive and engaging literature for dyslexic readers.

The study demonstrates that, in addition to standard simplification guidelines – such as shorter sentences and familiar vocabulary – the use of semantic and morphological transparency, explicit reader attribution, consistent grammatical patterns and reader-orientated rather than literal strategies, among others, all support readability without compromising narrative coherence. However, the FALC and easy-to-read translations highlight that these simplification strategies can come at a cost to stylistic nuance. In this case, the sense of irony and fairytale pastiche is softened or omitted entirely – and for good reason – but this illustrates the importance of reader engagement for young dyslexic children, underpinning the purpose of this project. The key point here is to motivate struggling readers; therefore, it is vital to adapt and categorize content according to reading ability and interest age to keep this readership picking up books. As advocates for children with dyslexia, translators are well placed to satisfy their hunger for the new and the strange by providing linguistically accessible literature from international voices.

Future research should explore dyslexic reader reactions across age groups to different types of translated texts, particularly in digital and multimodal formats, which continue to evolve. The challenge is not just to reduce textual complexity but to provide imaginative, cross-cultural content that maintains the joy of reading.

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