

Translating Ghazala's *Al-Mutalazimāt Al-Majāzīyah* into Malay: A Case Study of Naguib Mahfouz's *Aulād Hāratinā*

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ABSTRACT

Literary translation between Arabic and Malay presents unique linguistic and cultural challenges, particularly concerning idiomatic collocations (*al-Mutalazimāt al-Majāzīyah*). This study investigates the translation of figurative expressions in Naguib Mahfouz's allegorical novel *Aulād Hāratinā* (*Children of the Alley*) into Malay. Grounded in Ghazala's (2007) classification of *al-Mutalazimāt al-Majāzīyah* and Newmark's (1988) translation procedures, this qualitative content analysis evaluates five selected samples from the novel. The study reveals that the existing Malay translation frequently employs normalization, free translation, and rhetorical omission, leading to a significant loss of the source text's aesthetic and cultural imagery. By proposing alternative translations utilizing dynamic and semantic equivalence, this paper demonstrates that the rich figurative repertoire of the Malay language can adequately capture Mahfouz's complex idiomatic, proverbs, and similes. The findings emphasize the necessity for literary translators to balance semantic accuracy with cultural resonance to preserve the pragmatic force of the original Arabic text.

Keywords: Translation strategies, Arabic-Malay translation, *al-Mutalazimāt al-Majāzīyah*, collocations, *Aulād Hāratinā*.

INTRODUCTION

The translation of literary texts is a complex cross-cultural endeavor that extends far beyond the mere transfer of lexical meanings. A literary text functions as a dynamic, deeply interconnected aesthetic ecosystem where language, culture, history, and authorial idiosyncrasy intersect. Within this ecosystem, one of the most formidable hurdles for translators is the adequate rendering of idiomatic collocations, which are categorized in Arabic linguistic traditions as *al-Mutalazimāt al-Majāzīyah*. These figurative expressions rely heavily on historical usage, localized cultural contexts, and highly specific linguistic pairings that rarely possess exact, word-for-word equivalents in a target language (Ghazala, 2007). Recent scholarship underscores that translating collocations requires a sophisticated understanding of both the structural restrictions and the pragmatic intent embedded within the source language. As Khalifah & Zibin (2022) observes, the opacity of Arabic figurative expressions often forces translators to grapple with semantic shifts that can dilute the emotional and rhetorical power of the original narrative. This problem is compounded by what translation theorists describe as the structural "engrossing effect" of source text patterns, which introduces severe tension between semantic accuracy and target language naturalness (Alsaadi & Rabab'ah, 2022).

The translation process becomes considerably more challenging when bridging two languages stemming from entirely different language families. Arabic-Malay literary translation is uniquely prone to pragmatic loss because translators often lack the cross-cultural competency to navigate the intricate web of Arabic proverbs, parallelisms, and similes. Consequently, Malay translators frequently lean towards domestication or normalization, replacing vivid Arabic imagery with standard, culturally neutral Malay descriptors (Zainal Abidin et al., 2020). While this ensures basic comprehension, it risks severing the target reader from the authentic aesthetic experience intended by the original author, stripping the text of its foreign charm and ecological nuance.

(Nasimah Abdullah, 2017). Furthermore, recent comparative text analyses show that the structural disparities between Arabic verbal sentence hierarchies and Malay nominal-preferred structures cause translators to struggle with maintaining stylistic parallelism, frequently resulting in an over-reliance on literal translation or rhetorical reduction (Mohammad et al., 2023; Mohd Saad et al., 2015).

To contextualize this phenomenon within modern Arabic literature, the structural asymmetry between Arabic and Malay often forces a choice between formal equivalence, which risks generating alienating, structurally awkward target constructions and dynamic equivalence, which can inadvertently flatten the unique rhetorical contours of the source text. Scholars note that in Arabic-to-Malay translations, culturally bound collocations (*al-mutalazimāt al-lafziyyah wa al-thaqafiyyah*) suffer from systemic semantic depletion because the translator attempts to match the visual and ecological lexicon of a semi-arid, Near Eastern landscape with an Austronesian linguistic repertoire shaped by a tropical, maritime environment (Harun & Ismail, 2021). Consequently, highly evocative Arabic figures of speech are frequently reduced to basic, non-figurative lexical items, a process that robs the target text of its implicit pragmatic force and polysemic density (Sulaiman & Mohd Noor, 2022).

To investigate these translational dynamics, this research utilizes Naguib Mahfouz's 1959 allegorical novel, *Aulād Ḥāratinā* (Children of the Alley), as its core text. Specifically, it analyzes the 2020 Malay translation by Adli Yaacob, titled *Aulād Ḥāratinā: Anak-Anak di Lorong Kami* and published by IIUM Press (Yaacob, 2020). As a significant allegorical work, the novel maps the spiritual evolution of mankind onto the micro-setting of a Cairo alleyway. The story is thoroughly woven into the socio-cultural realities of Egyptian street culture, presenting an array of characters that spans tyrannical neighborhood enforcers (*futuwwat*) to downtrodden moral reformers fighting for justice (Mahfouz, 1959). Mahfouz expertly fuses high classical Arabic with the raw, rhythmic vernacular of Cairo. As a result, the source text serves as a dense repository of *al-Mutalazimāt al-Majāzīyah*, packed with evocative similes, culture-specific idioms, and traditional proverbs that articulate deep emotion, societal hostility, and ethical critique.

Translating Mahfouz has always posed a formidable challenge. Alkhawaja (2014) argues that Mahfouz's narrative voice relies explicitly on cultural expressions that serve as vehicles for his allegorical critiques; altering these expressions alters the critique itself. Furthermore, preserving the cultural equivalence of Arabic idioms in Mahfouz's works is essential for maintaining the psychological depth of his characters, particularly when translating idiomatic expressions where direct literal transfer completely erases the unpredictable, underlying conceptual baseline (Alhamshary, 2021). Thus, *Aulād Ḥāratinā* serves as an ideal corpus to study how effectively Arabic figurative collocations can be mapped onto the Malay linguistic landscape without losing their allegorical weight.

Because *al-Mutalazimāt al-Majāzīyah* are deeply embedded in the source culture, they inherently resist literal translation. Translators working between Arabic and Malay are frequently caught in a methodological dilemma: to translate literally and risk confusing the target audience with alien metaphors, or to translate freely and risk erasing the stylistic and rhetorical essence of the original text. In the existing Malay translations of *Aulād Ḥāratinā*, collocations are often subjected to severe reduction, omission, or normalization. This tendency strips the narrative of its literary power, replacing the visceral, visual nature of Mahfouz's Arabic with flat, functional Malay sentences. Such translational choices ultimately deprive the Malay reader of the profound stylistic resonance that defines Mahfouz's prose.

To address the outlined challenges, this study aims to answer the following research questions:

- 1- What types of *al-Mutalazimāt al-Majāzīyah* appear in Naguib Mahfouz's *Aulād Ḥāratinā*?
- 2- What translation strategies have been used to render them into Malay, and how can they be improved to preserve both pragmatic and cultural meaning?

The primary objective of this study is to critically analyze the translation of *al-Mutalazimāt al-Majāzīyah* from Arabic into Malay using *Aulād Ḥāratinā* as a case study. The research will evaluate existing Malay translations, identify instances of semantic and rhetorical loss, and propose contextually and culturally superior alternatives. By doing so, this study contributes to the relatively under-researched niche of Arabic–Malay literary translation.

It provides actionable, theoretically grounded insights for literary translators, emphasizing that the rich idiomatic repertoire of the Malay language, such as its vibrant stock of *simpulan bahasa*, *kiasan*, and *perumpamaan* is fully capable of accommodating the rhetorical weight of classical and modern Arabic literature.

METHODS

This study utilizes a qualitative, descriptive-analytic research design rooted in textual content analysis. The qualitative approach allows for an in-depth examination of the linguistic, semantic, and cultural nuances present in the source text (ST) and the target text (TT).

The primary data source is the Arabic text of Naguib Mahfouz's *Aulād Ḥāratinā*. From this extensive corpus, five specific samples containing distinct *al-Mutalazimāt al-Majāzīyah* were purposively selected. These samples encompass various rhetorical devices such as similes and idiomatic expressions that illustrate high emotional, physical, or dramatic stakes within the narrative. The selection of these five specific samples serves a paradigmatic function rather than a purely statistical one. Given the qualitative, descriptive-analytic nature of this study, these instances act as representative illustrations of the broader, systemic translation tendencies.

Data collection in this study was conducted systematically through textual analysis of the novel *Aulād Ḥāratinā* as the research corpus. The methodology applied data matching and cross-referencing techniques directly from the Source Text (ST) to the Target Text (TT). This approach was executed through a direct comparison between the two language versions to identify the types of the semantic dimensions, and the specific translation strategies utilized by the translator in transferring *al-Mutalazimāt al-Majāzīyah* from the Arabic source to the Malay target text.

The theoretical framework utilized to identify the types of *al-Mutalazimāt al-Majāzīyah* is based on Ghazala (2007). To analyze the translation strategies, the study relies on Newmark's (1988) translation procedures. The analysis technique involves a comparative equivalence analysis, identifying instances of rhetorical omission, mistranslation, and semantic shifts. Following the critique, the study proposes contextually superior Malay translations justified Nida's (1964) principle of dynamic equivalence and Newmark's (1988) semantic translation.

Analysis

The textual analysis yielded five distinct instances of *al-Mutalazimāt al-Majāzīyah*. The following section presents the Arabic source text, the existing Malay translation, and the critically proposed Malay translation for each sample, followed by a detailed interpretation.

Sample 1

جميلة كالقمر (Beautiful like the moon)
ST Context: ثم زارتنى مرةً أخرى ومعها ابنتها عيشة، بنت جميلة كالقمر.
Malay Translation: "Dia memperkenalkan kepadaku anak perempuannya yang cantik, Aisya..." (Yaacob, 2020).
Proposed Translation: "Dia memperkenalkan anak perempuannya kepadaku, Aisya, seorang gadis rupawan bak bulan purnama..."

The proposed translation draws on a Malay indigenous repertoire of *peribahasa* (proverbial/idiomatic expressions) "*cantik bagaikan purnama*" to describe ideal beauty. The existing translation omitted this figurative collocation entirely, reducing it to the normalized adjective "*cantik*" (beautiful). This is a clear instance of omission that strips the text of its literary aesthetic. The proposed translation restores the deeply rooted Malay cultural equivalent "*cantik bagaikan purnama*" (beautiful like the full moon), which captures both the literal meaning and the poetic aesthetic intended by the source text. The erasure of the lunar imagery exemplifies a broader methodological dilemma in Arabic-Malay translation, where translators frequently lean toward

domestication or normalization to avoid confusing the target audience. By stripping away this hyperbole, the translation severs the Malay reader from the authentic aesthetic experience and the specific "foreign charm" intended by the original author. This choice highlights a failure to recognize that the Malay language's indigenous repertoire is fully capable of accommodating classical Arabic rhetorical weight without resorting to culturally neutral descriptors.

Sample 2

فبدا كالثلمل (Appeared like a drunkard)
ST Context: تفجر الغضب في باطن إدريس، فبدا كالثلمل من شدة مقاومته.
Malay Translation: "Idris berasa sangat marah seolah-olah dia penuh dengan perasaan benci dan memberontak." (Yaacob, 2020).
Proposed Translation: "Kemarahan meledak di dalam batin Idris, lalu dia menggeletar ibarat orang mabuk akibat terlalu kuat menahan amarahnya."

The original text explicitly relies on the visual simile of intoxication (كالثلمل) to convey the character Idris's loss of physical and mental balance due to overwhelming rage. The existing TT applies a free translation strategy that conveys only the underlying emotion (anger/hatred) while totally losing the author's intended physical imagery. The proposed text restores the kinetic visualization by translating the phrase as "terhuyung-hayang ibarat orang mabuk" (staggering like a drunkard), effectively maintaining the ST's physical and psychological impact. The abstraction of the physical kinetic energy into a purely internal emotion directly undermines Mahfouz's intricate world-building and characterization. *Aulād Hāratinā* maps complex societal themes onto the raw, rhythmic vernacular of Cairo's streets, heavily featuring the socio-cultural realities of tyrannical neighborhood enforcers (futuwwat). These specific cultural collocations is essential for maintaining the psychological depth of Mahfouz's characters. By prioritizing a basic communicative approach over stylistic form, the translator flattens the text and fails to capture the visceral, physical hostility central to the author's portrayal of these alleyway antagonists.

Sample 3

لسانه كالنافورة (His tongue is like a fountain)
ST Context: ثم ينطلق لسانه كالنافورة بأسرار أسرته وأعاجيبها.
Malay Translation: "Kemudian mulutnya akan bercerita tentang keburukan keluarganya dan juga tentang rahsia keluarganya." (Yaacob, 2020).
Proposed Translation: "Kemudian lidahnya rancak berkata-kata seperti mulut tempayan, membocorkan rahsia-rahsia keluarganya..."

The Arabic text uses the simile of a fountain (كالنافورة) to indicate a sarcastic, unstoppable, and rapid flow of words. The existing translation suffers from severe normalization, neutralizing the metaphor into the basic verb "bercerita" (to tell a story). The revision preserves the sarcastic and relentless nature of the character's speech by utilizing "lidahnya rancak berkata-kata ibarat air pancut," ensuring the pragmatic force of the ST collocation is transferred. The neutralization of the fountain metaphor demonstrates the severe pragmatic loss that occurs when bridging the Afroasiatic and Austronesian language families. Ghazala (2007) strictly asserts that such idiomatic collocations are not merely decorative flourishes, but vital pragmatic tools utilized for establishing tone and narrative voice. The flattening of this intense, continuous Arabic hyperbole into standard Malay descriptive prose reveals a lack of cross-cultural competency, ultimately sacrificing the semantic richness and the sarcastic bite that defines Mahfouz's socio-ethical critiques.

Sample 4

كالثور الهائج (Like a raging bull)
ST Context: انقضَّ على الموكب كالثور الهائج.
Malay Translation: "Kegilaan Idris dalam majlis itu seperti kerbau gila." (Yaacob, 2020).
Proposed Translation: "Lalu dia merempuh perarakan itu bagaikan lembu jantan yang mengamuk." (Alternative dynamic equivalence: mengamuk bagai gajah turun minyak).

This phrase depicts Idris's uncontrollable, violent rampage through a wedding procession. The existing TT attempts dynamic equivalence with "kerbau gila" (crazy buffalo), which sounds stylistically awkward in a standard Malay literary context. Maintaining the semantic integrity of the Arabic الثور (bull) via "lembu jantan yang mengamuk" perfectly fits the physical action of the character without jarring the reader. Alternatively, the classical Malay idiom "gajah turun minyak" provides an excellent dynamic equivalence that natively expresses a destructive rampage. The stylistic awkwardness introduced underscores the complexities of navigating Nida's principles of dynamic equivalence across vastly different ecological and cultural landscapes. Finding true cultural equivalence goes beyond merely matching animalistic aggressiveness; it requires triggering the exact same emotional and visual response in the target reader as experienced by the source reader. The proposed alternative, "gajah turun minyak," proves that achieving optimal literary translation depends on the translator's ability to seamlessly map Arabic similes onto deeply resonant, native Malay expressions without violating target language norms.

Sample 5

بصوت كالرعد (With a voice like thunder)
ST Context: وصاح زقلط بصوت كالرعد: كل واحد يلزم بيته.
Malay Translation: "Zuqlut berkata dengan suara yang kuat seperti guruh 'tidak akan ada seorang pun yang akan selamat di lorong ini'." (Yaacob, 2020).
Proposed Translation: "Zuqlut menjerit dengan suara lantang bak guruh: 'Semua orang mesti duduk di dalam rumah masing-masing!'"

While the simile كالرعد (like thunder) was successfully transferred in the existing TT, a critical mistranslation occurred in the subsequent clause. The phrase كل واحد يلزم بيته (everyone must stay in their house) was erroneously translated as a death threat ("no one will be safe"), completely altering the narrative logic of the gang leader Zuqlut imposing a strict curfew. The proposed translation corrects the contextual error while keeping the rhetorical power of the voice "ibarat guruh". The severe contextual mistranslation serves as a critical warning regarding the fragility of allegorical narratives. Mahfouz's narrative voice relies explicitly on these expressions as vehicles for his deeper allegorical critiques of mankind's spiritual evolution; therefore, altering these expressions fundamentally alters the critique itself. This instance goes beyond mere aesthetic loss; by transforming an authoritative curfew into an irrational threat of mass murder, the translator inadvertently rewrites the political dynamics of the alleyway, proving that a lack of contextual awareness can destroy the author's intended plot.

DISCUSSION

The comparative analysis of the five paradigmatic samples highlights a distinct pattern in the translation of *al-Mutalazimāt al-Majāzīyah* from Arabic to Malay. The predominant strategies utilized in the existing Malay translation are omission, normalization, and free translation. From a linguistic perspective, translators often resort to normalization when they fear the target audience will not grasp a culturally distant idiom. Culturally, the Arabic tendency to use intense hyperbole and vivid physical metaphors (such as visual imagery of

intoxication or a rapid fountain flow) may seem unfamiliar when placed against standard Malay descriptive prose. As a result, the translator prioritized the baseline communicative intent (e.g., internal anger, beauty, or chattiness) over stylistic form, leading to a flatter, less evocative target text.

These operational choices result in a severe loss of pragmatic and aesthetic meaning across the text. For instance, reducing *jamīlah ka-al-qamar* (beautiful as the moon) to the simple adjective "*cantik*" (beautiful) strips the text of its literary aesthetic. This reduction represents a missed opportunity, as the Malay language possesses an exact, highly poetic cultural equivalent in "*cantik bagaikan purnama*". Similarly, the translation of *fa-badā ka-al-thamil* represents a complete semantic shift; by flattening the explicit physical imagery of a staggering drunkard into an abstract emotion, the translator fails to capture the visceral manifestation of Idris's rage a central thematic element in Mahfouz's characterization of the alleyway antagonists. Furthermore, Sample 5 demonstrates an even more dangerous interpretive pitfall. While the environmental simile *ka-al-ra'd* (like thunder) was successfully retained, a severe contextual mistranslation of the adjoining clause completely distorted the narrative plot. Translating the authoritative, structural curfew *kull wāḥid yalzam baytah* ("everyone must stay in their house") as an irrational death threat ("*tidak akan ada seorang pun yang akan selamat di lorong ini*") fundamentally rewrites the socio-political dynamics established by Mahfouz.

Conversely, successful equivalence is achieved when the translator leverages the target language's own idiomatic wealth while respecting the source text's imagery. As demonstrated in the proposed translations, maintaining the semantic integrity of the Arabic *al-thawr al-hā'ij* via "*lembu jantan yang mengamuk*" perfectly fits the physical action without jarring the reader. Alternatively, applying the classical Malay idiom "*gajah turun minyak*" provides an excellent dynamic equivalence that natively captures the destructive kinetic energy of the source text without violating target language norms.

These findings align closely with Ghazala's (2007) assertions regarding the stylistic indispensability of *al-Mutalazimāt al-Majāzīyah*. Mahfouz's collocations are not merely decorative flourishes; they serve as vital pragmatic tools for characterization, world-building, and allegorical tone. By analyzing the text through Newmark's (1988) translation procedures, it becomes evident that the existing translator skewed too heavily toward a basic communicative approach, sacrificing the semantic richness of the original. To achieve optimal literary translation, as Nida (1964) suggests through the principle of dynamic equivalence, the translator must trigger the same emotional and visual response in the Malay reader as the Arabic reader experiences. The proposed translations demonstrate that the Malay language possesses the lexical and cultural capacity to mirror Arabic figurative collocations directly without resorting to omission or normalization.

For literary translators working between Arabic and Malay, this study underscores the absolute necessity of a meticulous approach to figurative expressions. Translators must resist the urge to normalize descriptive similes and idioms out of a misplaced fear of confusing the reader. Instead, they should actively seek out equivalent expressions within the classical Malay corpus such as *simpulan bahasa* or *perumpamaan* that share the same rhetorical weight as the Arabic *al-Mutalazimāt*. Furthermore, translators must maintain keen contextual awareness to avoid semantic shifts that can inadvertently alter the narrative plot.

This study is limited by its sample size, focusing on five highly specific instances of *al-Mutalazimāt al-Majāzīyah* from a single novel. While *Aulād Ḥāratinā* is remarkably rich in idiomatic expressions, the findings may not represent the entirety of strategies used across the complete translated text or in other translated works of modern Arabic literature. Future research should expand the corpus to include a quantitative analysis of collocations across the entire novel to identify broader statistical trends in translation strategies. Additionally, a reader-response study could be conducted to evaluate how native Malay readers perceive the emotional impact of normalized translations versus the proposed dynamically equivalent translations. Comparing the Malay translation of *Aulād Ḥāratinā* with its English counter-translations could also yield valuable comparative insights into how different target cultures process Arabic idiomatic expressions.

CONCLUSION

The translation of *al-Mutalazimāt al-Majāzīyah* in Naguib Mahfouz's *Aulād Ḥāratinā* presents a profound test of a translator's ability to mediate between a rich, metaphor-laden Arabic source text and the cultural and

linguistic frameworks of the Malay language. This study concludes that the existing Malay translation of the novel suffers from an over-reliance on omission, normalization, and free translation. While these strategies succeed in conveying basic narrative facts, they systematically strip away the vivid imagery, physical intensity, and cultural specificity that define Mahfouz's prose style. The proposed alternative translations demonstrate that the Malay language is neither stylistically deficient nor culturally incompatible with Arabic rhetorical devices. By carefully applying Nida's (1964) dynamic equivalence and Newmark's (1988) semantic translation methods, translators can successfully map complex Arabic similes and culturally bound expressions onto corresponding, highly resonant Malay expressions. Ultimately, preserving *al-Mutalazimāt al-Majāzīyah* is not merely an exercise in linguistic accuracy; it is a vital act of preserving the author's voice, the characters' psychological depth, and the allegorical texture of the original work. Translators must therefore strive for a delicate equilibrium, ensuring that the target text breathes with the same stylistic and pragmatic vitality as the Arabic original.

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