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TRANSLATING THE VISUAL ECOLOGY: PARATRANSLATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS IN CHILDREN'S BOOKS

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Abstract

Illustrations in children's books offer a multi-sensory learning experience that enhances children's understanding of complex ecological concepts such as climate change, pollution, and biodiversity. By employing visual metaphors, perspectives, and expressive imagery, illustrations turn environmental challenges into tangible and relatable representations. Apart from complementing textual narratives, they can serve as a catalyst for enhancing environmental awareness among children in various ways, such as instilling environmental behaviors or encouraging children to engage in environmental actions. Based on these facts, this study aims to analyze the role of translating illustrations on the environmental awareness of children in relation to Turkish translations of environmental picture books. Applying visual content analysis and multimodal content analysis of the illustrations in the translations, it explores how these translated paratexts represent the agentic relations between humans/non-humans and the environment in order to understand whether they can reveal how the target culture understands, or is supposed to understand, the culturally specific image of the child-environment relations. For the visual content analysis of the illustrations, the concepts of paratranslation and multimodal translation are informed by a post-human and new materialist perspective. The findings demonstrate that translating illustrations in environmental children's books can have a significant impact on children's environmental awareness and engagement, bridging global environmental issues and local concerns.

Keywords: children's books, environmental awareness, illustrations, paratranslation, post-humanism

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Paratexts and environmental awareness

Environmental awareness has become a vital part of early childhood education, and children's books are extensively used to introduce complex and abstract environmental issues in an accessible way. As the most pivotal form of "paratexts" (Genette, 1997) in children's story books, illustrations play a crucial role in this process, turning abstract environmental concepts such as climate change, pollution, and biodiversity loss into concrete images that young minds can grasp. Through different types of relations with the text, illustrations have been found necessary to convey a concrete and complete understanding of the physical and natural environment (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2006, pp. 241-242). Accordingly, illustrated children's books have long been recognized as powerful tools for environmental education, enabling children to connect with nature by fostering a sense of responsibility for the environment from very early ages (Qi, 2021; Sun et al., 2025). They have been found very useful for clarifying vocabulary and ideas (Hansen & Zambo, 2005, p. 40), "enhancing and enlarging the reader's personal interactions with a subject" (Vacca & Vacca, 2005, p. 161), and "strengthening students' understanding of complex concepts" (Massey, 2015, p. 46). Involving environmental elements, through text-image interdependence, these books contribute not only to cognitive growth but also to the development of eco-awareness among children, which is significant for evoking emotional responses and fostering pro-environmental attitudes and behaviors (Gönen & Güler 2011; Yang, 2024).

Although illustrations in literary works were initially defined by Genette as "paratexts", the theoretical development in the field of children's literature has necessitated considering visual and verbal elements on equal terms regarding the construction of meaning (Unsworth & Wheeler, 2022). In other words, in illustrated children's books, meaning is constructed through an interaction of verbal and visual components shaped by the author and illustrators. As Sipe (2008) observes, these books integrate text and picture that work together to provide an aesthetically satisfying experience for children (p. 23). Even though describing the interaction between verbal and visual elements in picture books is still considered a highly complex issue, some approaches are widely used to examine how these books make meaning in both visual and verbal modes (Painter, 2017, p. 420). In "social-semiotic perspective", which is usually adopted in the analysis of picture book narratives, meaning is always made across

multiple modes (verbal, visual, spatial, etc.) and socially constructed with semiotic resources, which are always multimodal (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 84). For this reason, a multimodal analysis of children's story books requires a meticulous investigation of the meaning potential of verbal systems with those of visual ones (Painter et al., 2013). The interaction of the verbal and the visual systems can also be explained through Lewis's (2001) views about the ecology of picture books. Lewis clarifies the relationship of the verbal and the visual through three factors: "interanimation, flexibility, and complexity". Picture books are "interanimated" through the interaction of the verbal and the visual; "flexible" through the changes of interanimation from page to page due to the activity of the author, illustrator, and reader; and complex as books contain diverse words and images (Lewis, 2001, pp. 48-60). This relationship becomes especially significant in environmental children's books, where the visual metaphors and anthropomorphic imagery are frequently used to convey various ecological ideas to children. While the verbal content might carry factual information or moral lessons (e.g., "only 1.5% of Earth's water is drinkable"), illustrations can show the consequences or emotional stakes of those facts (e.g., a sad-looking Earth or thirsty animals by a dried-up water hole). A recent study carried out by Laliena and Sala (2023) considers paratextual elements in children's books as one of the key elements to an effective eco-critical reading. As they observe, illustrations in canonical picture books go beyond the concept of "paratext", playing a crucial role in the representation of meaning about nature and our relationship with it through the visual discourse that potentially triggers emotional responses in the reader (Laliena & Sala, 2023., p. 4).

Given that a significant volume of children's literature is translated across various languages, translation of paratextual elements becomes very important, especially in countries such as Türkiye, where translation has always had a very formative role in shaping the literary canon of children's literature (Neydim, 2020, p. 864). It is known that these paratextual elements (such as titles, covers, illustrations, and blurbs) are usually subject to shifts when moving from the source system to the target system. Nevertheless, while the analysis of paratextual elements in children's picture books has attracted the attention of researchers for decades, relatively little attention has been paid to the study of their translations (Oittinen, 2001, p. 109). In *Translating Picture Books: Revoicing the Verbal, Visual and the Aural for a Child Audience,* one of the most comprehensive works

on translating picture books, Oittinen et al. (2017) analyze the topic from various theoretical and analytical viewpoints, focusing specifically on the role of illustrations. They examine how visually presented information changes in the translation process, and what strategies translators adopt in order to re-create the word-image relationship in the target text. Throughout the book, they underline the importance of training translators to understand and reinterpret the visual, verbal, and aural information in translating picture books and make a call to all universities to incorporate multimodal education into their translator training curriculum (pp. 21-22).

Conscious of this gap, this study aims to examine the role of paratranslating illustrations on the environmental awareness of children in relation to Turkish translations of environmental picture books. This study also sets out to elucidate the role of paratranslations in representing the agentic relations between humans/non-humans and the environment in order to understand whether they can reveal how the target culture understands, or is supposed to understand, the culturally specific image of child-environment relations. For this purpose, visual content analysis and multimodal content analysis is carried out on the selected corpus, which involves reading the original and translated picture books separately, examining word-image interaction in the representation of the environmental content, comparing the verbal and visual elements of both the source and target texts, identifying paratextual shifts (if any) in the target text, and problematizing the effect of paratranslations of illustrations on eco-awareness of children in the target culture. In order to contribute to the theoretical framework of the field, the following section provides space for the discussion of paratranslating picture books in children's literature.

Paratranslating children's picture books

Although translation of children's literature has usually been undervalued, it is thanks to these translations that children across the world can get in touch with other literatures and cultures. On the contrary, it is necessary to emphasize that the translators of children's picture books are involved in a more challenging process, where they deal not only with words, but also with images considered as part of a creative and synergic whole (Sipe, 2012, p. 4). The importance of this synergy is explained by O'Sullivan as follows:

> The translator's reading of the original picture book is one that takes in the words (A) and the images (B); the reception is of the combined, synergetic effect (C), which is more than the sum of A + B. When faced with the task of translating the verbal text (A), it is not always easy for him or her to disentangle the elements that contributed to the overall reception. (2010, p. 135)

As mentioned above, paratextual elements in picture books are equally significant as the verbal text, which potentially influences children's view of other cultures verbally and visually. On the one hand, they can help translators to better understand the context, the location, the time, cultural references, and the relationships between the characters. In addition, they can create higher translation complexities to the translators, requiring them to have specific skills and abilities, including reading skills of both the verbal and visual elements and possessing good knowledge of their cultural references (González Davies & Oittinen, 2008, p. xiii). In order to uncover how cultural elements and word-image interaction may create problems during the translation process of children's books, Garavini proposes a new communicative model applicable to translating children's picture books with the aim of identifying "the multiple voice-types interacting in the process" (2017, p. 72). Her study shows that the translation act is affected by both the child's image of the translator and the publishing house, which underlines the voice of the translator, the publishing house, and even the illustrator in the final translation (Garavini, 2017, p. 84).

Accordingly, the role of the paratexts in translating children's picture books has attracted the attention of some scholars around the world. As one of the early researchers in this field, Riitta Oittinen (2011) foregrounds the significance of the relationship between verbal and visual elements in relation to translating picture books for children. Defining picture books as iconotexts, Oittinen (2011) discusses the translation of illustrations within the wider framework of hermeneutics and semiotics, using Peirce's triadic sign model (p.190). Considering the translation of the visual as a semiotic process is also supported by other researchers (Mahasneh & Abdelal, 2022). They underline the pedagogical importance of illustrations in translated and non-translated children's literature from an intersemiotic perspective. For instance, the study titled "Resemiotization of Illustrations in Children's Picture books between English and Arabic" explores whether illustrations in children's picture books translated / resemiotized from English into Arabic (Mahasneh & Abdelal, 2022, p. 2). Analyzing illustrations and their Arabic translations from the *Diary of*

a Wimpy Kid series, it concludes that the illustrations in children's picture books are translatable to a great extent, which goes through resemiotization processes (Mahasneh & Abdelal, 2022, p. 12). Another study examines the covers and illustrations of twelve Australian children's novels translated into German (Gerber, 2012). This analysis demonstrates that the use of paratextual material in German translations of Australian children's literature reflects a constrained inclination to present these texts in alignment with pre-established perceptions of Australia (Gerber, 2012, p. 59). In a similar study, different covers of the children's novel *Keeperen og havet* (*The Goalkeeper and the Sea*) by Parr are examined in order to understand how the child-environment relations or assemblages are represented on the source cover and its various translations (Goga & Pujol-Valls, 2024). The findings of this study show that the child-environment relations on the various covers display diverse agentic relations. As the authors have claimed, it is not always easy to determine whether the different agentic relations reflect the target culture's stereotypical view of the source culture, or whether they result from the target culture's own needs to reassure, support, or challenge its readers (Goga & Pujol-Valls, 2024, p. 406). Therefore, more comprehensive research is needed to understand how each target culture may have shaped the representations found on the cover.

Apart from covers, titles have also attracted the attention of researchers studying the translation of paratextual elements in children's literature. In this context, as the creator of the notion of "paratranslation", José Yuste Frías (2012) highlights "orthotypography" as a central paratextual element in the transmission of meaning in translation (p. 117). It offers a detailed analysis of the typographical design of the title letters on the covers of *Dans ma maison, il y a…* and *Dans ma forêt, il y a…*, two children's books published by the French publisher Mila. Through close examination of the typographical format, the analysis demonstrates how the symbolic use of playful stripes contributes to shaping children's imaginative worlds. This study also indicates how this paratextual dimension has been overlooked by the Spanish publisher, emphasizing the urgent need for ongoing collaboration between translators and editors to ensure that no translation is produced without its corresponding paratranslation. On the other hand, Mary Louise Wardle (2012), questions Genette's classification of translation as a paratextual element, arguing that such a view reduces translation to a subsidiary position in relation to the source text. She demonstrates, however, that in certain cases the hierarchy can be

reversed, with the original text functioning as a paratext to the translation. Wardle illustrates this through the example of Aldo Busi's controversial 1988 Italian version of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, where Busi's public persona—shaped by his reputation, scandals, and media presence—effectively became a paratext to his own translation (pp. 27-42). These studies are significant as they all show that translating children's literature is not just about words — it is about translating the whole book as an object (its visuals, design, marketing, and cultural framing). This makes paratranslation research central to understanding how stories travel across cultures for young readers.

Theoretical framework

This study draws on the concepts of "paratranslation" (Yuste Frías, 2012) and "multimodal translation" (Elleström, 2010) within a post-humanist and new materialist framework (Bennett, 2010). Accordingly, this study stands at the intersection of translation studies, multimodality, and post-humanism/new materialism. Within translation studies, the concept of "paratranslation" provides a methodological framework to examine "all the possible productions that surround, wrap, accompany, extend, introduce, and present a translation" (Yuste Frías, 2012, p. 118). Multimodal translation, on the other hand, provides a useful framework to understand how different modes of communication (verbal, visual, auditory, etc.) work together in media, and by extension, how meaning can be translated across modes (Elleström, 2010, pp. 28-29). This perspective allows for a nuanced analysis of how textual and pictorial elements co-construct meaning, particularly in children's literature, where images often serve as critical mediators of environmental and ecological concepts. In addition, in order to describe the role of illustrations on eco-awareness of children and understand the agentic relations between humans/non-humans and the environment, a post-humanist and new materialist (Bennett, 2010) perspective is adopted, which enables to study the effect of both humans and non-humans in the co-construction of meaning, emphasizing interdependence, interconnectness and the agency of the matter.

Paratranslation: Translation beyond the text

"Paratranslation" is a relatively new concept in Translation Studies, which was coined by the Translation and Paratranslation (T & P) research group at the University of Vigo with the aim of "approaching and analyzing the impact of the aesthetic, political,

ideological, cultural and social manipulations at play in all the paratextual productions situated in and out of the margins of any translation" (Yuste Frias, 2010, p. 118). In other words, this concept was created to underscore the fundamental role of paratextual elements, together with text, in the construction and representation of meaning in the published works. In this sense, it was used to analyze how much time and space are required in translating paratextual materials that enclose, support, expand, or present the translated text to "ensure the translated text's existence, reception and consumption in the publishing world". Conscious of the significance of the paratextual elements in the production, distribution, and reception of the translated texts in the receiving culture, Yuste Frias defines "paratranslation" as "what translates appear as a complete translation in the publishing world (Yuste Frias, 2010)

However, it should be emphasized that the notion of paratranslation extends beyond the mere rendering of paratextual elements, encompassing a broader and more intricate conceptual framework. According to Yuste Frias, one of the purposes of paratranslation is to serve as a symbolic reference to the "physical and virtual space occupied by all the productions that surround, wrap, accompany, extend, introduce and present a translation" (2010, p. 119). Crucially, paratranslation also signifies the professional domain inhabited by translators themselves, situated within the dynamics of the everyday translation market. In this sense, the concept of paratranslation captures the uncertain and transitional spatiotemporal space that translators occupy when confronted with a task whose quality relies on their decisions regarding both texts and paratexts. On the other hand, paratranslation highlights the visibility of translators within published works, foregrounding their role as active agents (Venuti, 1995). It also emphasizes the inherently ethical, political, ideological, social, and cultural dimensions of translation, framing it as a practice that is never neutral. By engaging with what lies adjacent to or at the threshold of translation, paratranslation underscores the vitality that permeates every translated text. In this way, translators—positioned as the first paratranslating agents—are called to read, interpret, and paratranslate any kind of semiotic codes that accompany the texts to be translated (Yuste Frias, 2010, p. 119).

Even though the concept of "paratranslation" has been regarded as a pratical term to analyze the verbal and non-verbal elements surrounding a translation, Christiane Nord (2012) raises some methodological and conceptual criticisim against it, claiming that this area of research is not a new discovery of the "Vigo school," since earlier translation studies had already examined the interaction between texts and their surrounding

elements (p.8). In addition, Nord emphasizes that new theoretical concepts should be historically grounded and clearly defined in relation to existing frameworks, noting that the idea that translation involves more than a simple linguistic transfer had already been articulated in functionalist approaches. She also raises a terminological objection, arguing that if paratranslation refers to the environment of a translation, it denotes an object of study rather than a professional activity, making the term "paratranslator" conceptually inappropriate (Nord, 2012, pp. 8-9).

Despite these criticisms, the concept of paratranslation is adopted as the conceptual framework of this study due to its explanatory and comprehensive capacity to analyze, compare, and interpret the role of paratextual elements in the representation of environmental knowledge in the source and target texts. Even though the selected corpus covers various paratextual elements that contribute to the meaning-making process (cover design, fonts, series branding, names of the characters, illustrations, etc.), this study focuses specifically on the role of paratranslating illustrations on the eco-awareness of children, questioning whether and/how the function of the source text illustration is reflected in the target text.

Post-humanist and new materialist perspective: The co-agency of humans and non-humans

In recent years, post-humanism and new-materialism(s) have been used as umbrella terms to explain some evolving set of theories and projects that propose a non-dualistic understanding of nature and culture (Coole & Frost, 2010), which no longer takes human exceptionalism as a point of departure (Braidotti, 2013). Post-humanism is often defined as a post-humanism, a post-dualism, and a post-anthropocentrism, which criticizes the traditional human-centric perspectives and seeks to eliminate binaries separating human vs. non-human and culture vs. nature (Braidotti, 2013, pp. 37-38). New materialism, in turn, insists on the agency of the matter and the non-living, assuming that all "things" have the capacity to act to a certain extent as forces and agents with propensities (Bennett, 2010, p. viii). Accordingly, agency is no longer an exclusive property of human subjects; it is an emergent property of all things, substances, and forces in the environment. Jane Bennett, one of the lead thinkers of the new materialism, introduces the concept of "thing-power" to describe "the agency of material objects to act

and impact other materials" (Bennett, 2010, p. 2). She also underlines the interconnectness and interdependence of humans and non-humans in a "knotted world of vibrant matter" (Bennett, 2010, p. 62). These perspectives open up new possibilities for revisiting the notion of subject-object relations with a more-than-human world where humans are considered one member of a broader community of life and matter (Malone, 2016, p. 3). In the humanities and social sciences, they are offering new paradigms that oppose the emphasis on language and discourse characteristics of poststructuralism, focusing on a more material(ist) understanding of social and cultural life (Coole & Frost, 2010, p. 3).

The interactions among humans, non-humans, and matter have also been extensively examined within the field of children's literature studies (García González & Deszcz-Tryhubczak, 2020, p. 47). Post-humanism and new materialism(s) provide a useful framework to understand how children's books represent the relationship between children, non-humans, and nature. Adopting these perspectives, this study explores how the illustrations in the source and target texts represent the relationship between humans/non-humans and the environment. It also questions how these illustrations portray the agency of humans, non-humans, and the matter, and whether they illustrate the interconnectness and interdependence among all entities in the texts in order to understand the effect of illustrations on the eco-awareness of children in the target culture.

Data collection and methodology

The corpus of the study consists of Lisa Bullard's *Planet Protectors* series[1] (part of Cloverleaf Books collections), a set of illustrated children's books that encourage young readers to adopt environmentally friendly behaviors alongside two child protagonists, Trina and Tyler. Illustrated by Xiao Xin and Wes Thomas, each book in the series addresses various environmental issues – from littering and recycling to water conservation and energy use – framing the Earth as a patient in need of urgent help. For instance, the book titled *Earth Day Every Day* opens with the line, "On Earth Day, we find ways to help the Earth", and shows Trina planting trees and forming an Earth Day club.

[1] Although the author of this article previously examined this series in terms of content within the scope of a project funded by TÜBİTAK 2219 – International Postdoctoral Research Fellowship Program for Turkish Citizens, this article complements the project by specifically focusing on non-verbal elements in the series.

The recurring motif in the series is that "Earth has a problem" (whether a litter problem, water problem, pollution problem, or trash problem), and that children can be "planet protectors" by taking actions, which is presented through verbal and visual content. As illustrations play a very significant role in the representation of environmental messages and implicitly raise questions about the agency of non-human entities – animals, plants, objects, ecosystems, and technologies – throughout the series, this corpus provides a representative and comprehensive case study to examine the role of illustrations on eco-awareness among children. All titles were translated into Turkish by Nimet Bihter Özcan, who specializes in translating children's books, and published in 2017 by Teleskop Popüler Bilim as part of a seven-book set called *Gezegen Koruyucusu*.

This study carries out a qualitative visual content analysis of the illustrations in the selected corpus and compares their paratranslations in the target texts to understand the role of paratranslating illustrations on eco-awareness of children. For this purpose, how the visual and verbal elements complement each other in conveying environmental concepts/messages/information is systematically examined from a post-humanist and new-materialistic perspective. During the analysis of illustrations, special attention is directed towards characters and their expression (e.g., how humans and non-humans are drawn), use of visual metaphors or symbols (e.g., using concrete examples), perspective and composition (e.g., child's relationship with nature; agency of humans and non-humans), color and mood (e.g., bright vs. dark imagery). The analysis of the illustrations in the source texts is followed by their paratranslated versions in the target texts in order to identify paratextual shifts (if any) in the translations.

Findings

Combining literature-based insights with close visual and multimodal content analysis, the findings suggest that paratranslating illustrations shape environmental narratives across cultures and affect the eco-awareness of children in the target culture by both reinforcing intra-textual information and functioning as the primary source for communicating information on various ecological issues. Accordingly, it has been found that paratranslated illustrations have a significant role in rendering ecological content by

using visual metaphors, showing sample behaviors/actions, depicting child-environment relations, reflecting the emotions of the characters, and foregrounding the agency of humans and non-humans. In addition, it has been seen that some of the paratranslated illustrations serve as a form of independent narrative texts, capable of conveying information, emotion, and moral lessons.

As the findings reveal, throughout the series, the illustrations make abstract and large-scale environmental issues relatable to children. For instance, in *Power Up to Fight Pollution*, the illustrations displaying smoggy skies, trash on water, dirty soil, cars emitting exhaust gas, etc., enable children to understand how pollution spreads on the Earth, while *Look out for Litter* uses illustrations to show the negative impact of the plastic problem on animals. The illustrations in *Rally for Recycling* visualize the whole process of "recycling", translating an abstract environmental system into a sequence of clear and child-friendly images. The illustration in Figure 1 presents the complex environmental concept of "recycling" into a continuous visual story, where everyday materials (plastic, paper, metal) become recycled products, enabling children to understand an abstract concept in an accessible manner.

Figure 1

Illustrations showing the recycling process.

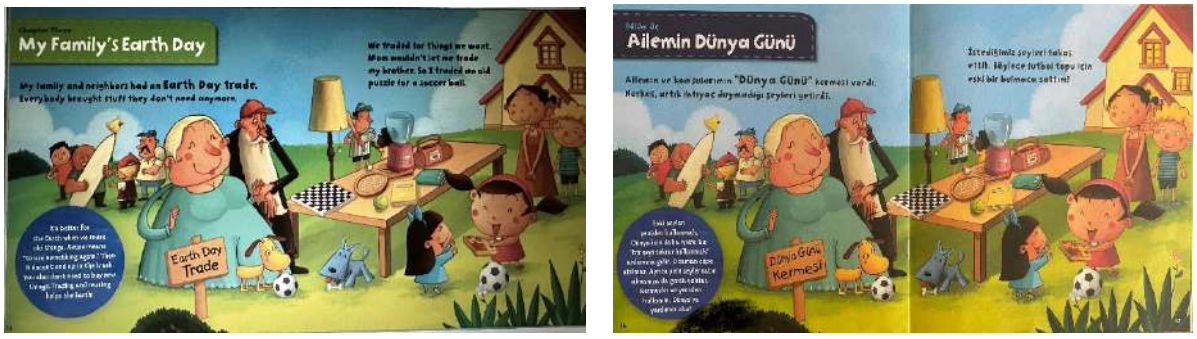
The Turkish translation paratranslates the illustration by preserving the image intact in the target text, which may result in new interpretations among the target readers. Considering the time period when the book was translated into Turkish, it is possible to say that for many Turkish children, recycling is a school-led or community-driven activity, while the illustration in Figure 1 portrays Tyler as a role model among a group of people working in a factory and shifts the focus from community to personal initiative.

The findings also suggest that the illustrations in the series have a significant role in visualizing sample environmental behaviors and actions by modelling positive actions sequentially, connecting their small actions to visible environmental changes, linking such personal behaviors/actions to community action, and a familiar setting. For example, in *Rally for Recycling*, the illustrations depict what and how one can get involved in recycling, while the illustrations in *Choose to Reuse* show different scenes where the characters are reusing various objects. In *Power Up to Fight Pollution,* Tyler is portrayed taking environmental actions (turning off electricity, trading, and collecting litter) in order to fight pollution. The illustrations in *Looking out for Litter* visualize some solutions to minimize the litter problem. With these illustrations, abstract ideas (like energy saving, water conservation, etc.) are translated into visual stories that children can follow step by step.

The findings imply that paratranslating these illustrations has a crucial role in filling up knowledge in the target culture, as they portray unknown or little-known environmental behaviors/actions. Figure 2 depicts a scene from *Earth Day Every Day*, where the readers are made familiar with the concept of "Earth Day Trade". The following illustration visualizes this concept, showing neighbours of all ages coming together to exchange items they no longer need.

Figure 2

Illustrations visualizing "Earth Day Trade".



In the Turkish translation, the text on the sign is paratranslated as "Dünya Günü Kermesi", which means "Earth Day Fair" or "Bazaar" in the target language. As is clear, the translator chooses to render "trade" as "kermes", a widely understood concept in the target culture for a community charity sale. This shift in paratranslation can enable children to align what they see in the pictures (friendly local exchange) with what they

know culturally, helping them understand and internalize the value of exchange and reuse in their own cultural terms. This domestication also anchors a global environmental idea (recycling through trade) in a local cultural practice (community charity fairs).

In line with post-humanist and new-materialist perspectives, the analysis provides evidence that the illustrations emphasize the agency of both humans and non-humans, foregrounding the connection and interdependence among all living forms on the Earth. A post-humanist and new-materialist reading of the illustrations provides an insight into the representation of object, waste, and material agency as well as technology and tools, as part of a more-than-human story. In this regard, it has been seen that the illustrations consistently depict children as active agents in protecting the environment. In each book, the child protagonist (either Trina or Tyler) is drawn at the center of the action, visually emphasizing the theme that kids can and do make a difference. However, it is obvious that the illustrators often depict the child characters and the environment in the same frame, emphasizing their relationship and interdependence. In other words, it has been found that the illustrations have a significant role in representing child-nature relations, giving nature small moments of vibrancy and response (e.g., the sadness of the bird, the contentment of the crab, the plant's growth). This eco-centric representation fosters what ecocritics call an ethic of care, emphasizing that nature has its own character that reacts and reciprocates. Figure 3 shows a scene from *Look Out for Litter*, where the illustrator visualizes the response of the birds to the plastic pollution in the sea.

Figure 3

Illustrations visualizing the emotional response of birds.

Moreover, some illustrations in the series foreground the agency of animals both as victims and protectors of the environmental crisis. The illustration in *Watch Out Water*

visualizes the emotion of fish in reaction to water pollution, while another illustration in *Rally for Recycling* shows the contribution of a dog in the recycling process. A similar message is given in Figure 4, where the animals are represented as the protectors of water. In this way, the illustration influences the ecological narrative, aligning with the post-humanist aim of fostering empathy, responsibility, and interconnectedness between humans and non-humans. The target text paratranslates the illustration by preserving the original image.

Figure 4

Illustrations representing the protectors of water.

On the other hand, it has been clear that the plants, especially trees, are given a more explicit positive agency in the illustrations, underlining their agentic capacity and active collaboration to make a change on the planet. *Power up to Fight Pollution* and *Earth Day Every Day* complements the verbal messages with tree illustrations, positioning the simple act of planting as the beginning of a larger story of Earth healing in which plants are agents of change.

Apart from humans and animals, the clearest representation of non-human agency in the series comes from the way inanimate objects and waste are portrayed in the illustrations. In line with new materialist approaches (Bennett, 2010), the illustrations provide significant insights into understanding the dynamic and active role of objects in climate crisis discourse. In *Choose to Reuse*, the illustrations visualize various reused objects, clothes, borrowed books, and repaired bicycles as potential ways of protecting the planet. In other words, they are empowered as agents of change. On the other hand, the illustrations show how plastic objects can travel very long distances and pollute oceans and harm animals in the sea, which implies the probable effects of objects that can

escape human control and intention. Figure 6 portrays a similar scene from *Rally for Recycling,* where the dead objects display their own agency, which has become uncontrollable by humans.

Figure 5

Illustrations showing the agency of objects.

Finally, the findings indicate that the tone of the illustrations supports the theme of hope and empowerment, which will help buffer eco-anxiety among children both in the source and target cultures. An analysis of the facial expressions and body language of Trina and Tyler throughout the series reveals that they are mostly depicted as confident, cheerful, and determined when dealing with environmental issues. Compared to the general negative tone observed in environmental children's books written in Turkish during 2014-2023, translating the illustrations in the series by preserving the tone of the source text illustrations contributes to decreasing eco-anxiety among children in Türkiye.

Discussion and conclusion

This study demonstrates that paratranslations—particularly in the form of illustrated elements— do not only complement textual narratives in children's environmental literature, but they also act as vital meaning-making agents mediate cultural, ecological, and ideological dimensions of environmental awareness. The visual and multimodal content analysis of the illustrations in the *Planet Protectors* series and its Turkish translations reveals that paratranslating illustrations in environmental children's books can have a significant impact on children's environmental awareness and engagement, bridging global environmental issues and local concerns. The findings

also underline the role of paratranslations in representing the agentic relations between humans/non-humans and the environment, enabling us to understand how the target culture understands, or is supposed to understand, the culturally specific image of child-environment relations. As the translators preserve almost all the source text illustrations in the translations, it is possible to conclude that paratranslations preserve the function of the source text illustrations in the target texts.

From a post-humanist and new materialist perspective, the findings underscore how illustrations construct a more-than-human narrative ecology where human, non-human, and material agencies coexist. The visual strategies in both the source and translated texts highlight how children's environmental consciousness is shaped not only through human protagonism but also through the affective vitality of non-human entities—animals, plants, and even waste materials. This perspective foregrounds the significance of paratranslations in rendering global environmental narratives across cultures and generations. In addition, it can enable to describe paratranslatios as cultural ecosystems, where meaning, matter, and agency intersect. By attending paratranslations as active participants in these ecosystems, scholars and practitioners can better understand how visual ecologies can shape the environmental discourses in children's books.

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