

Haroun and the Sea of Stories – translation of selected metaphors

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Introduction

Translation is a process involving at least two language systems that differ from one another as they reflect customs and traditions of a particular society. One of the main problems concerning the process in general is translatability, that is the possibility – if there is any – to transfer the meaning expressed in one language into another. Popovič (1971) believes that translational pessimism, which claims that translation is impossible, is opposed by translational optimism, that is, the belief that translation enables communication. One of the main dilemmas in translation seems to be whether it should be free or literal. When translating freely, the translator might not be faithful to the original and when they obey the original completely, they might be considered unfaithful by their audience since the product of the source culture might be unintelligible. There are parts of language that can be translated literally, especially when the target language provides expressions that serve as literal equivalents to the original. Newmark (1991) states that translation is concerned with the truth based on facts as well as morals, and it can only be achieved if the audience understands it, which is also the objective and the intention of translation. Eco (2008, p. 9) remarks that equivalence in meaning does not signify that the translation is correct, as “some people think that meaning is that which remains unchanged in the process of translation”. He concludes that translation requires not only linguistic skills, but extends to psychology, and one’s ability to narrate and discern how texts are related.

This study focuses on translation of selected metaphors from Salman Rushdie’s *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* into Czech and Slovak. Although there are numerous publications and articles on translation of literary works as well as those written for children, there are limited resources regarding *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*. Several book reviews have been published (for example Ahmed, 1998; Baena, 2001; Faux, 2014), however, from accessible sources, only Klementová (2017) analyses the language, namely the translation of proper names and poetry into Czech. In this regard, this study contributes to the research by extending the analysis to metaphorical expressions into both Czech and Slovak. Its main purpose is to identify the methods applied by the translators to the selected metaphorical expressions and examine whether their approach is identical for both languages.

Lea et al. (2014, p. 511) define a metaphor as an expression “used to describe somebody/something else, in a way that is different from its normal use, in order to show that the two things have the same qualities and to make the description more powerful”. Fernández (2011) states that metaphor is a concept, or an idea used in everyday communication rather than a decorative element frequently occurring in literature, which is why it is not purely a linguistic issue, while Lakoff and Johnson (2017) believe that metaphor is a crucial part of a thinking process and cannot be separated from it nor from the language. In terms of their function in the

text, metaphors have been perceived as ornamental elements which appeal to the audience, although they are more difficult to understand than literal expressions (Deignan, 2008). On the other hand, cognitive theory recognises that except for their decorative purposes, metaphors are also used in daily communication, even in scientific texts, and in such cases are translated routinely (Shuttleworth, 2017). Guldin (2018) also agrees that metaphors should not be perceived as decorative elements only, the translation should be considered as a re-creation of the original. Shuttleworth (2017, p. 29) adds that metaphor contains certain “transfer of meaning (some of the others being simile, analogy, synecdoche, metonymy, idiom, parable, irony, indirect speech act, euphemism, model and conceptual blend”. He as well as, for instance, Massey and Ehrensberger-Dow (2017) and Kövecses (2010) state that metaphor refers to human experience and requires mapping of concepts in the source and target domains to be able to comprehend and communicate its meaning.

Translation of any figure of speech means that the translator might take risks, because literal translation may not always convey the message of the original. Lefevere (1992) believes that metaphors encourage flexible thinking to be comprehended, which is the reason why translators should consider the benefits of adaptation or substitution of the original metaphor carefully. On the other hand, Toury (2012) emphasises that metaphors have often been considered the most extreme test for translation. According to Hečko (1991), a metaphor should always be replaced with a metaphor in the target language, otherwise its aesthetic value deteriorates. In addition, Dobrzyńska (1995) and Schäffner (2004) suggest that metaphors are influenced by culture and therefore might be associated with different meanings in different language systems. This aspect may become problematic for the translator who should not translate the metaphor literally, but instead select an appropriate equivalent from the target language, or even paraphrase it. Nevertheless, in some situations, when the purpose of the metaphor is to emphasize the source culture, it is recommended that it is copied and explained using, for example, footnotes. Gromová (2005) states that a translator or an interpreter are perceived as cultural, not only linguistic, mediators, whose role is to diminish cultural barriers by making a foreign culture accessible to the reader. Finally, according to Newmark (1988) and Baker (2018), metaphorical expressions are particularly problematic for translation because, firstly, the translator must identify them within the context, secondly, he or she must understand their frequently hidden meaning and, finally, he or she needs to find a suitable, absolute or partial, equivalent in the target language.

1 Methodology and Results

1.1 Materials

Salman Rushdie's *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* was used for this study. The novel is intended primarily for children and its author exploits traditions from India, especially in the choice of themes and characters, and Great Britain in terms of the language (Faux, 2014). From a linguistic point of view, Rushdie uses various devices, such as metaphorical and idiomatic expressions, similes, poems exploiting rhyme and rhythm, combination of formal and informal register, which illustrates the abundance and playfulness of English on the one hand and problematic areas for a translator on the other.

Moreover, translators of children's literature might be expected to be more creative, perhaps more liberal in terms of their choice than they would be if they were translating for the adult audience. Ferenčík (1992) states that when translating literature for children, it is necessary to be more faithful to the target audience rather than to the author of the original. This probably

derives from the fact that a child does not analyse the translation nor the original, he or she usually expects enjoyment from reading. Since this study focuses on metaphorical expressions, it is important to select an appropriate method to translate these to reproduce or maintain the character of the original and also to appeal to the target audience. For instance, using explanations in the form of footnotes instead of providing a meaningful equivalent in the target language might seem disturbing or distracting to a young reader.

For the purpose of this study, the novel in question was examined and over eighty metaphorical and idiomatic expressions were identified which were subjected to further analysis. The ones containing an element of repetition were subsequently selected and divided into two groups, the first containing the word *blinking* and the second references to a human body.

Regarding the translators, Igor Navrátil, whose only Slovak version of the novel was published in 1993, usually translates works for adults, although his translation of *Little Prince* by Saint-Exupéry was released in 2020. Michal Strenk, one of the Czech translators, no longer translates, however, he focused on both literary and non-literary works. On the other hand, Pavel Šrut, who is no longer alive, both wrote and translated various works of prose and poetry for children. Interestingly, while the Slovak version of *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* has only been translated and published once, the Czech one was first published in 1994 and subsequently reprinted in 2013.

1.2 Methods

Historically, several options have been identified to translate metaphors. Firstly, Van den Broeck (1981) promotes three possibilities: (1) using the same metaphor; (2) using a different metaphor; and (3) paraphrasing, that is using a non-metaphorical expression in the target language. Toury (1995) extends the list by adding further three procedures: (4) a metaphorical expression is omitted; (5) a non-metaphorical expression is transformed into metaphorical; and (6) metaphor is added where there is none in the source text.

Secondly, Newmark (1988, p. 105) introduces three aspects of a metaphor: its image, which is “the picture conjured up by the metaphor, which may be *universal* (a ‘glassy’ stare), *cultural* (a ‘beery’ face), or *individual* (a ‘papery’ cheek)”, object, or “what is described or qualified by the metaphor”, and sense, what it means literally. He introduces the following translation procedures: (1) using the same metaphor in the target language; (2) replacing the original metaphor with another; (3) providing the sense or literal meaning of the original; (4) preserving the original metaphor and adding the meaning; (5) transforming the original metaphor into a simile; (6) using a simile to translate the metaphor and adding the meaning; (7) omitting the metaphor completely.

Thirdly, Dobrzyńska (1995) mentions three methods, namely (1) an exact equivalent; (2) a metaphor with a similar meaning; and (3) literal paraphrase of a metaphor which cannot be translated into the target language. Furthermore, Larson (1998, p. 275) suggests that “there are a number of reasons why metaphors are hard to understand and cannot be translated literally”, namely that the “image” in the metaphor might not exist in the target language, the topic of the metaphor is not expressed openly, it is difficult to find the “point of similarity” or it simply does not exist in the target language. Nevertheless, he proposes the following translation strategies: (1) retaining the original metaphor if it is understood in the target language; (2) using a simile; (3) using an identical or similar metaphor; (4) literal translation with explanation; and (5) paraphrase.

Finally, when the target language does not provide any alternatives, the following procedures can be applied: (1) translation using a more general, more neutral or expressive word;

(2) cultural substitution; (3) a loan word which can be explained; (4) paraphrase using either a related or a non-related word; (5) translation by omission or by illustration (Baker, 2018).

For the research purposes, the above methods have been summarized and numbered as follows:

1. using the identical metaphor
2. using a different metaphor with identical/similar meaning
3. using a metaphor with a different meaning
4. preserving the original metaphor and adding the meaning
5. explaining or paraphrasing the meaning of the original, using a non-metaphorical expression
6. using a different, unrelated non-metaphorical expression
7. using a simile (with or without additional explanation)
8. no translation, i.e., the original metaphor is omitted.

What should be emphasized is the fact that two methods have been excluded: a non-metaphorical expression is transformed into metaphorical and a metaphor is added where there is none in the source text. The reason for the exclusion derives from the fact that the aim of the initial analysis was to identify metaphorical expressions in the source rather than in the target text. The methods mentioned above (numbered 1 – 8) were applied to the selected metaphorical expressions in both Slovak and Czech translations. The literal meaning or its sense is also added both to the original and translated metaphors. Subsequently, a quantitative analysis was conducted to determine the frequency of their occurrence.

In addition, the research questions have been formulated as follows:

1. Which method of translation is the most prevalent?
2. Is there a method which has not been used by neither Czech nor Slovak translators?
3. Are methods used in Czech and Slovak identical for each case?

1.3 Qualitative analysis

The analysis concerns metaphors which contain recurring elements, that is identical or semantically related vocabulary repeated throughout the novel. These are divided into two groups, the first containing the expression *blinking* and the second phrases connected with various body parts. Each example contains the meaning of the original in English as well as literal meaning of Slovak and Czech translations. Subsequently, a method is identified and stated for each translation using numbers corresponding with those introduced above.

1.3.1 Examples containing *blinking*

	English	Slovak	Czech
1.	There's more to you, young Haroun Khalifa, than meets the blinking eye.	Ušlo sa ti viac, mladý Harún Kalifa, ako sa môže na prvý pohľad zdať žmurkajúcemu oku.	V tobě je (toho) víc, mladý Hárúne Chalifo, než se na první pohled zdá.
Meaning/ literal translation	You seem better than I thought/you seem better than I thought at a wink of an eye/for a moment.	You have been gifted more that might seem at first sight of the blinking/winking eye.	There is more in you than seems at first sight.
Method		2, 2/1	3, 2/8

	English	Slovak	Czech
2.	Do we need to go so blinking fast?	Potrebujeme ísť tak šialene rýchlo?	Musíme jet tak zatraceně rychle?
Meaning/ literal translation	Do we need to go so blooming/flaming fast?	Do we need to go so madly fast?	Do we have to go so damn fast?
Method		2	2

	English	Slovak	Czech
3.	You're a blinking good man in a tight spot .	V zložitej situácii si sa prejavil ako náramne dobrý človek.	Ty si dokážeš zatraceně dobře poradit, když se dostaneš do úzkých.
Meaning/ literal translation	You are a bloody good man in a difficult situation.	In a difficult situation, you proved to be a mightily good man.	You can cope really damn well when you get in tight (situations).
Method		5, 7	6, 2

	English	Slovak	Czech
4.	You certainly did make some blinking funny friends .	Vidím, že si skutočne získal niekoľko čertovsky zábavných priateľov.	Ty máš ale zatraceně legrační přátele.
Meaning/ literal translation	... some blooming funny friends.	I see that you truly acquired some devilishly funny friends.	You do have (but) damn funny friends.
Method		2	2

1.3.2 Expressions containing references to body parts

	English	Slovak	Czech
5.	This is an affair of the heart.	Je to srdcová záležitosť.	To jen mému srdci něco chybí.
Meaning/ literal translation	This is a very intimate matter/a personal matter.	It is a heart affair.	It is only that my heart misses something.
Method		1	6

	English	Slovak	Czech
6.	Haroun's heart sank rapidly towards his toes .	Harúnovi spadlo srdce hlboko do nohavíc.	Hárúnovi pokleslo srdce směrem k palcům u nohou.
Meaning/ literal translation	Haroun felt really scared/worried.	Haroun's heart sank deep into his trousers.	Haroun's heart sank towards the toes.

Method		2	1
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	English	Slovak	Czech
7.	As Haroun passed through the huge doors..., his heart sank.	Keď Harún prechádzal obrovskými dverami ..., neboli by ste sa v ňom krvi dorezali.	Když Hárún prošel obrovskými dveřmi..., srdce se mu sevřelo úzkostí.
Meaning/ literal translation	... he felt sad / he lost his courage.	... you would not have been able to cut blood in him.	... his heart was seized with anxiety.
Method		2	2

	English	Slovak	Czech
8.	...he understood with a sinking heart.	... pochopil so zomierajúcim srdcom.	... pochopil a přepadla ho úzkost.
Meaning/ literal translation	... he understood with a disheartening/sad feeling.	... he understood with a dying heart.	... he understood and anxiety seized him.
Method		3	2

	English	Slovak	Czech
9.	Haroun's heart gave a great leap of joy.	Harúnovi srdce prudko poskočilo od radosti.	Hárúnovi poskočilo srdce radostí.
Meaning/ literal translation	Haroun felt really happy and excited.	Haroun's heart sharply jumped from joy.	Haroun's heart leaped with joy.
Method		2	2

	English	Slovak	Czech
10.	No shortage of long faces there.	Aj tam je zachmúrených tvárí neúrekom.	O protáhlé obličejě tam není nouze.
Meaning/ literal translation	No deficiency of unhappy faces / people there.	And there is an abundance of frowning / grumpy faces there.	No shortage of long faces there.
Method		2, 2	1, 2

	English	Slovak	Czech
11.	Hey, you, long-face ...	Hej, ty zachmúrenec ...	Poslyš, ty kakabusi ...
Meaning/ literal translation	Hey, you unhappy (person).	Hey, you grump / gloomy face.	Listen, you grump.
Method		2	2

	English	Slovak	Czech
12.	... he's got his head stuck in the air and his feet off the ground.	Hlavu má zavesenú niekde vo vzduchu a nohami nestojí pevne na zemi.	Věčně se někde vznáší a vůbec nestojí na pevné zemi.
Meaning/ literal translation	... he is always dreaming and his attitude to life is not realistic.	His head is hanging somewhere in the air and he is not standing firmly on the ground with his feet.	He is continuously floating somewhere and is not standing firmly on the ground at all.
Method		3, 2	2, 2

	English	Slovak	Czech
13.	It was Oneeta Sengupta who put her finger on the trouble.	Tohto problému sa chopila práve Oneeta Senguptová.	Hárúnovu problému přišla na kloub Oníta Senguptová.
Meaning/ literal translation	... who identified the problem.	This problem was grasped by ...	It was Onita who got to the joint of Haroun's problem.
Method		2	2

	English	Slovak	Czech
14.	Haroun's eyes almost fell out of his head.	Harúnovi oči takmer vyskočili z jamôk.	Hárúnovi málem vypadly oči z důlků.
Meaning/ literal translation	Haroun was very surprised.	Haroun's eyes almost popped out of their sockets.	Haroun's eyes almost fell out of their sockets.
Method		2	2

	English	Slovak	Czech
15.	Haroun felt his blood run cold.	Harún zacítil, ako mu v žilách tuhne krv.	Hárún cítil, jak mu v žilách stydne krev.
Meaning/ literal translation	Haroun felt really frightened.	Haroun felt his blood thicken in his veins.	Haroun felt his blood turn cold in his veins.
Method		2	1

	English	Slovak	Czech
16.	People in Gup City laugh at us to our faces, to say nothing of behind our backs.	Ľudia v Gup City sa nám smejú do tváre, nehovoriac o tom, čo si rozprávajú za naším chrbtom.	Lidé ve městě Plku se nám smějí do očí, nemluvě o tom, co asi dělají, když jsme k nim zády.
Meaning/ literal	They ridicule us openly, not even mentioning	They laugh to (our) face, not even mentioning what	They laugh to (our) eyes, not even saying what they

translation	without our knowledge / presence..	they are saying behind our back.	do when we turn our backs on them.
Method		1, 1	2, 3

	English	Slovak	Czech
17.	... people ... laughing their heads off.	... sa idú popučit' od smiechu.	... se válejí smíchy.
Meaning/ literal translation	... laughing loudly for a long time.	... are going to squeeze themselves from laughter.	... are lying around from laughing.
Method		2	2

1.4 Quantitative analysis

The purpose of the quantitative analysis was to determine and illustrate the frequency of each translation method used in Slovak and Czech translations. Figure 1 shows the frequency of methods employed by the Slovak translator. It is evident that five methods in total were applied: a metaphorical expression with the same or similar meaning (15 instances), using identical metaphorical expression (4 instances), a metaphorical expression with a (slightly) different meaning (2 instances), paraphrasing the original metaphor (1 instance), and using a simile without additional explanation (1 instance). The translator did not use the following three methods: using the original metaphor and adding the meaning, different non-metaphorical expression, and omitting the original metaphor (no translation).

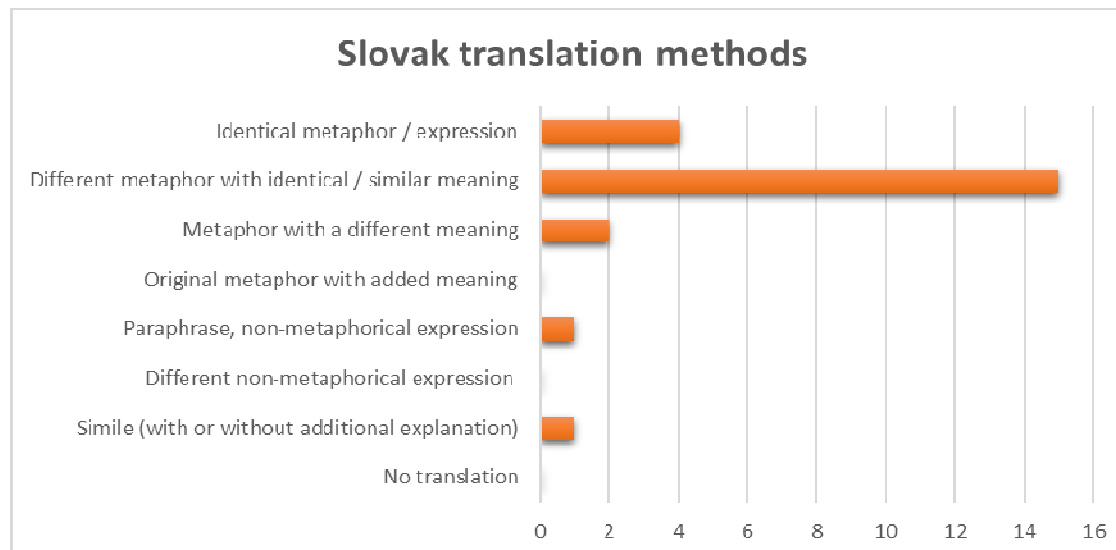


Figure 1 Translation into Slovak – occurrence of each method

Figure 2 below shows the frequency of methods applied in the Czech translation. As can be seen, the translators employed five methods: using a different metaphor with the same or similar meaning (15 instances), identical metaphorical expression (3 instances), a metaphorical expression with a (slightly) different meaning (2 instances), a different non-metaphorical expression (2 instances). In one case, the original metaphor was omitted. They did not translate any metaphor using the exact expression with additional meaning, a simile, and a paraphrase.

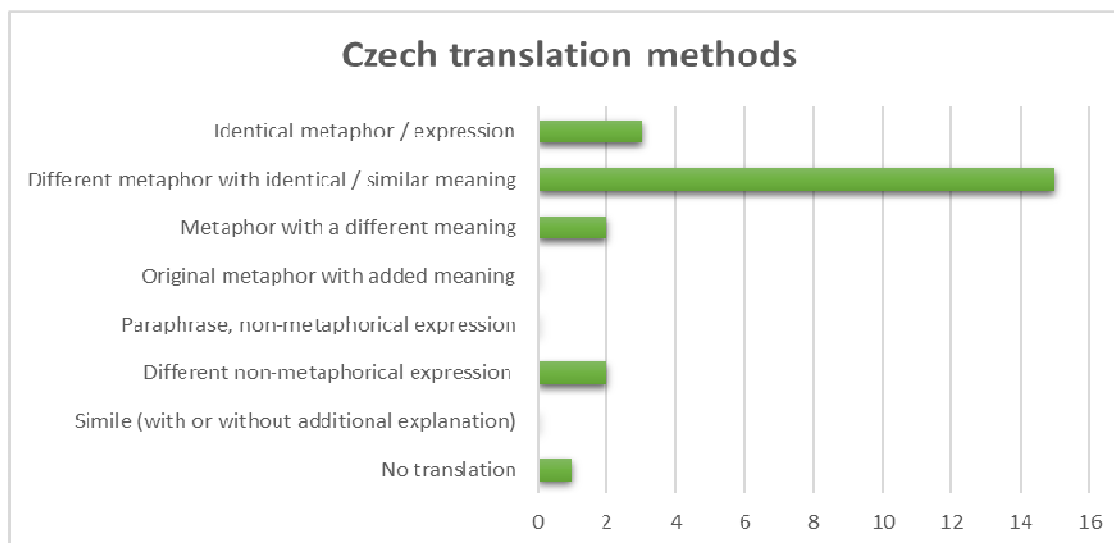


Figure 2 Translation into Czech – occurrence of each method

Conclusion

This study examines methods employed to translate selected metaphorical expressions from Salman Rushdie's *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* into Slovak and Czech.

What can be concluded regarding the three research questions formulated above is that the most frequently employed method to translate the selected metaphors in both Slovak and Czech translation is using a metaphorical expression with an identical or similar meaning. This implies certain closeness with English, especially geographical, but also cultural, which might be a result of globalisation and the role of English in everyday life.

Furthermore, there are three methods not used in neither the Slovak nor the Czech translation. Firstly, the reason for not using the original metaphor and adding the meaning in either of the target texts might derive from the fact that the novel is intended for children who might consider this approach distracting while reading the story.

In the Slovak translation, a non-metaphorical expression with a different meaning and omission of the original metaphor were not necessary, while neither a simile nor a paraphrase was employed by the Czech translators. These methods were probably not applied because the translators selected different options to translate the original metaphorical expressions, which shows their flexibility and problem-solving skills as well. However, on one occasion, the Czech translators omitted the original metaphor.

With regard to the last research question, the translators applied the same method in Slovak and Czech translations in the following cases: partly in examples 1, 10 and 12, and fully in examples 2, 4, 7, 9, 11, 13, 14, and 17. In all the instances, the method was translating the original metaphor using a similar metaphorical expression. This might be the result of relative cultural, thus also linguistic, closeness between Slovak and Czech. Although some differences in the vocabulary used in the translated items are apparent, examples 1, 9, 12, 14 and 15 are practically identical with the same sense, which confirms the close relationship between the languages.

However, cultural and linguistic differences are apparent in the examples containing the word *blinking*, for which there is no direct equivalent in Slovak and Czech, except for example 1,

where the Slovak translator selected a literal translation. In the remaining examples, he uses a different expression in each case, while the Czech translators use the same expression in all the instances, except for 1, where *blinking* is completely omitted. The word *blinking* used by Rushdie in various contexts has both positive and negative connotations. The latter can be perceived as a mild swear word, which might be problematic for some cultures. Both Slovak and Czech translations sound natural and express the meaning of the original, although Czech is slightly closer in that the word the translators use is a mild swear word, just like the original, whereas the Slovak expression is more neutral, perhaps because the translator took into consideration the young audience and wanted to avoid being offensive.

Overall, the closeness of Czech and Slovak in this analysis reveals numerous options when translating the selected metaphors. The choice depends on the translators' intentions, their knowledge of the audience as well as the source and target languages, although it might also be influenced by the time available to them to conduct proper linguistic research to create, or rather re-create, an intelligible and appealing work of literature.

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Summary

Haroun and the Sea of Stories – translation of selected metaphors

One of the main problems concerning translation is translatability, which is evident particularly with metaphorical expressions. When translating any figure of speech, the translator might sometimes need to take risks since literal translation may not always convey the message of the original. Historically, numerous methods have been developed and employed to assist translators in the process. For the purpose of this study, methods proposed by various authors have been summarised and applied to Slovak and Czech translations of selected metaphorical expressions retrieved from Salman Rushdie's *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*. The main purpose of the study is to identify the strategies implemented by the translators and examine whether their approach is identical. The results demonstrate that the most frequent method applied by the Slovak and Czech translators of the novel is using a different metaphor with the same or similar meaning to the original. Although several lexical differences in the translated metaphors are apparent, a considerable proportion of these convey practically identical meaning, which implies a close relationship between the target languages.