

*In The Name of the Lord
of
Light & Color*



University of Isfahan
Faculty of Foreign Languages
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M.A. Thesis

**Rainbow of Translation: A Semiotic Approach to Intercultural
Transfer of Colors in Children's Picture Book**

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*That holy child whose throat was
colored by blood*

&

*To his holy sister who embraced a
red beard.*

Abstract

The aim of intercultural translation is to communicate. As a result, Communication should be approved by the audience's satisfaction. As communication is accomplished via verbal as well as visual means, the interaction of verbal and visual means of communication makes a set of complex situations which demand special attention in translation. One context in which the interaction of visual and verbal elements gets prominence is in children's picture books. In ordinary occasions, visual means are interpreted from the culture point of view. Therefore, for the child, with insufficient worldview and a high degree of reliance on visuals to get the meaning, special attentions should be paid in translating cultural-visual aspects of picture book. Color is one visual mode of communication. To interpret symbolic colors, cultural knowledge of the source and the target cultures are demanded. To transfer the cultural meaning of colors and to retain the interrelationship of words and colors, Nida and De Waard's (1986) adaptation theory is utilized to investigate the visual literacy of translators and/or illustrators and their ability to transfer the inferred meaning successfully. The theory is examined on eight children's colored picture books, aimed for school-aged children.

What is understood from the analyzed data is that the model is rarely used by translators and illustrators and, except in one case, the color symbolism is not regarded by them.

On the basis that visuals are inseparable elements of translating picture books, it is suggested that translators/illustrators get more information on visual-cultural aspects of translation as a whole, and on color symbolism as particular.

Keywords: semiotics, symbol, visual semiotics, color, picture books, multimodal communication, visual communication, visual literacy, children's literature, multimodal translation.

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Abbreviations

AC: American Culture

NC: New Zealand Culture

PC: Persian Culture

SI: Source Illustrations

ST: Source text

TI: Target Illustration

TT: Target Text

Chapter One

Introduction

1.1. Overview

Symbolically speaking, the present study, aiming at investigating the colorful world of children's literature, starts with an introduction to the umbrella term of 'sign', its existence, importance and types in the realm of children's literature would come in consequence. The matter of signs' being culture-specific and the matter of interculturally translating them would come in the 'statement of problem' section. To make children visually literate and to force both children and translators or illustrators more visually sensitive are the aims of this study, elaborated in the 'aims of the study' section. What has motivated the researcher to start the study is stated in the form of two research questions in the next section. Finally to give the reader a fresh mind to follow the work, some key terms are defined briefly. For the ease of readers, the rest of the work is sketched as well.

1.2. Introduction

God, the non-visible, exists. How can one claim that? Is the so called creator visible by the physical eye? Islamic theologians have come to prove His existence by referring to the very ordered world as the sign of His being. There are verses in holy Quoran which point to natural things as signs of the existence of the Lord (chapter 16, verses 11, 12, 13, 65, 67, 69; chapter 17, verse 12; chapter 20, verse 22; are some examples, among the others). The world we live in, as a whole, is a sign. Even each event occurring within it can be a sign to forthcoming or already happened events. Cough and sneeze are signs of having a cold. The smoke coming out of a volcano is a clue to a soon eruption. A gifted red rose is a sign of love of the lover for his beloved. The definition Hoopes (1991, p. 141) and Eco (1986, p. 15) give for sign is “a sign is anything that stands for something else—that is, a sign stands for an object or concept” (in Moriarty 2005, p.228). There is always a relationship between the sign and its object. Danesi (1993, in Sebeok, 1994) argues that being potent to conceive the world in sign-like way (to utilize X, e.g. color, vocal sounds, picture, hand gesture, to refer to outer objects) is one specific characteristic of human being. Life starts with signs. Danesi (2004) believes:

The instant children start to interpret the world with signs, they make a vital psychosocial connection between their developing bodies and conscious thoughts to that world. To put it figuratively, signs constitute the “conceptual glue” that interconnects their body, their mind, and the world around them in a holistic fashion (p.17).

Signs are guides for the immature human being to lead him into his wholeness. Signs, of every type (iconic, indexical and symbolic), are rampant in the world of children, from their language learning to the written and illustrated materials provided for them. Signs are not confined to nature, rather there are some signs made by man to shorten his way through his worldly journey. He uses them as an abbreviation of some of his concepts. These are called ‘symbols’, within which exists a conventional relatedness between the sign and their objects.

Whether visually or verbally, symbols have also entered into the world of children’s literature: animal symbolism, color symbolism, and so on. Symbols get national and cultural identities through time. Accordingly, for symbols to sound meaningful, one should learn them. Children may encounter them through their socialization process. As there are various types of literature imported for children from other nations with different cultures and identities, special attention is needed in translating symbols as culture-specific part of the text. This attention gets more prominence when the symbols appear in the visual aspects of the literature. Although the most important means of meaning making is considered to be linguistic and through written and verbal media, visual communication has been the main tool of interaction from the times of the first men, evident in the cave walls. Visuals are provided culturally to benefit a specific group of people, acting in a shared culture. While there are lots and lots written on translating verbals, translating visuals is a matter being left out of sight of Iranian translators and interpreters of children’s literature. The matter of translating visual symbols is what this study aims at, centering on ‘color’ as a visual aspect of communication in children’s picture books.

1.3. Statement of problem

Literature is a vehicle to transfer ideas and culture of a nation through translation. One important part of the literature is literature made for children. Children's literature may be a good means of transferring ideas, for children have fresher minds to grasp what is new in comparison with adults who have fostered what they believe.

Children's literature consists of both the literature originally written for them and also the literature translated from other cultures, regardless of it being originally written for children. Nowadays through the rapid-progressing media, the borders between cultures are being broken and culture-specific notions permeate through borders. Children are also among others, affected by this process. The translated literature for them is another medium assisting here too, as Vandergrift (2009) puts it: "The translation of children's books from other languages increases the number of truly excellent literary works available to young people, introduces them to segments of life in other cultures, and fosters an international outlook and an understanding of both the uniqueness and the universality of human experience". Translating for children demands a specific attention as their knowledge and world view are not perfect and also they have special needs to be fulfilled by the translated text. Translation usually is perceived as transferring any linguistic or extralinguistic (not visually seen in the text) aspects of the SL into the TL through words. However, especially in children's literature, not everything intended by the author of the SL is always conveyed in words or through words. There are so many dimensions in a source text other than the linguistic signs which contribute in conveying the message. For example, the typeface the texts are printed in, the paper they are printed on, the actual print, the shape and style of letters and headings, and the books entire layout and of course the

illustrations, are considered as visual aspects of children's books by Oittinen (2000, p.101). She (2001) considers the texts not as closed entities but as open and unfinalized whole, in which the parts and the whole influence each other. Hence, supposing the bilateral effect of the parts on the whole and the other way round, one should be wary about considering the effect of them on the content of a text, which is to be translated. Illustrations in children's books may be the most salient type of visuals used in this kind of literature, which are the repetition of the words or in other cases they add to the content, revealed through the words. As children have not gained a matured view toward world and also their mental lexicon and linguistic knowledge are not perfect yet, illustrations are useful instruments to help them get a larger amount of the intended meaning. In addition, illustrations are aid to enhance the visual learning of children which, in turn, may equip them with visual literacy.

Oittinen (2000) emphasizes that the visual elements should be translated and puts a special attention on translating illustrations in children's literature. She believes that 'excitement of the reading experience' is enhanced by illustrations and they guide the reader towards the forthcoming happenings of the text. She continues that, by stressing on a character or scene, illustrators are able to lead the story through a new direction. Illustrations in children's book act differently for especial purposes. Specialists differentiate illustrated books from picture books (the focus of this study) in the realm of children's literature (the difference will be explored in the second chapter). Nodelman (2005, p. 113), considers picture books as 'signs' which communicate within a network of conventions about visual and verbal representations and about the real objects they represent. Actually picture books are multimodal texts as Kress and Van leeuwen (2006, p.178) term it: "Any text whose meanings