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Domestication and Foreignization in Translations of Children's Literature

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Studies Department in Partial
Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Masters of Art in
English Translation Studies

Advisor: Dr. Gholam-Reza Tajvidi

Reader: Dr. Salar Manafi

By: Katayoon Pakattchi

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Abstract

This descriptive study intended to investigate the degree and tendency of foreignization and domestication in translations of children's literature in the field of fantasies and its relationship with the passing of time.

Four original classic English and American fantasy stories were manually analyzed and compared with their two translations from cultural elements point of view; one translated in 1950s-1960s for the first time ever into Persian, and the other translated in 1995 onwards. Based on the findings, it may be claimed that translations of children's literature are a combination of domestication and foreignization. Also it seems that the child image has changed in the eyes of adults and that children's understanding (as the readers) is not underestimated any longer, a situation which explains why translations are not abridged and why annotations and explanations about unknown features of other cultures are provided to them in footnotes. It can be further concluded that nowadays the purpose of translating for children (at least at the level of books) is to familiarize them with other cultures rather than keep them away from finding out about unfamiliar cultures.

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Chapter One

Introduction to the Study

1.1 Introduction

Children's literature is a new genre, since previous works for grown-ups were adapted for children, so is the case for its translations. Thus this is a field with potential areas to be investigated. On this area there is the possibility of more domestication in translation. However due to the increase in the knowledge of our people about western cultures more than before, it may be assumed that there is no need to decrease the degree of foreignness of the elements which are absent in our culture due to the information which is accessible even to children through internet, movies or cartoons. Furthermore, due to the changes made in the educational system it may be considered as an educational purpose to familiarize children with other cultures.

The aim of this study was to investigate the degree of domestication and foreignization in the translations of children's literature. Fantasies are selected as the corpus of this study. The study was hoped to show the relationship between the period of time in which translations were done and

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the tendency to domesticate or foreignize or a combination of both in the works which are specifically translated for children and juvenile.

1.2 Background

Some researches were carried out about children's literature in Iran, but rare are the studies done in the field of translation for children. As for researches in the field of domestication and foreignization in translations for children's literature in Iran I found two articles in Motarjem magazine by Ahsani Ghahraman and Javaherian. The former scrutinized the culture specific items like Brandy, Christmas, tea-time, cherry-tart, custard and other food terms and names in different translations of 'Alice in Wonderland' using the translation strategies of cultural elements proposed by Vladimir Ivir (1987) and the latter examines one of the translations of 'Alice in Wonderland'. None of them use the terms "domestication" or "foreignization" and their studies are very limited.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Since children are less familiar with other cultures in comparison with grown-ups, when translating the works which are originally written for them the question which tends to prevail is to what extent the foreign elements should be represented to the children. As Jane Whitehead (cited in

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Tabbert 2002:314) puts it "the younger the child the more changes will be made in the target text". She even mentions the case of changing the titles, settings, character names, spelling, vocabulary, idioms and culturally specific allusions in the publication of British children's books in America which may be thought as two similar cultures. Hence when in two cultures which may be regarded as similar, domestication of children's literature is significant this situation becomes an interesting field to be investigated in two cultures of the Persian and English languages which are far away different from each other.

1.4 Purpose of the Study

The findings of this research can shed light on some dark aspects which are relevant in the translation of children's literature for translators and make them aware of the characteristics and requirements of this kind of translations.

1.5 Research Questions

1) Are translations of children's literature more domesticated or more foreignized?

2) Is period of time when the translation was done a determining factor in this respect?

1.6 Hypotheses

1) Translations of children's literature are more domesticated than foreignized.

2) At present time translations of children's literature tend to be more foreignized than before.

1.7 Theoretical Framework

Venuti`s theory of domesticating or foreignizing translation can function as the framework of this study. Domestication he says is, "an ethnocentric reduction of the foreign text to target-language cultural values" to minimize the foreignness of the target text. He describes foreignization as, "choosing foreign text and developing a translation method along lines which are excluded by dominant cultural values in the target language" (Munday 2001:146-147).

1.8 Delineation of the Research Problem

The limitation of this study was that it covers just fantasies not scientific-fictions or other kinds and genres of children's literature. Also it focused on some of the English and American fantasies of nineteenth and twentieth century. Another limitation was that since in translated books the edition of the source text is not written it is not clear which edition was the source text for the translator. Also I deal with children's books as part of children's literature with movies and school books excluded from the scope of this study.

Chapter Two

Review of the Literature

2.1 Introduction

According to Vermeer (1989) every text should be translated in correspondence with its skopos set by the commissioner(s). Usually the publisher is the commissioner in the translations of children's books not children themselves. Therefore in translating for children the skopos of translation for a specific reader (children) can determine the translation strategies (domestication or foreignization). And a text can be translated at different times based on different skopos and consequently with different strategies. As Oittinen (2000) puts it in order to translate for children the translator should have the reader in mind at the time of translating, so the translator should have an understanding of children (not in a specialist way) and their literature, which in turn includes the importance of the surrounding of the reader, society, culture and time. In different times the norms of translation in different societies vary. Furthermore as Steffensen (2003:106) suggests a translation should be a literature in its own language, thus we should know what children's literature is that the translation should

not deviate from that. Therefore I deemed it important to furnish some information about the definition of children's literature in general and Persian children's literature in particular and the situation prevailing in the area of translation of children's literature in Iran plus some information about fantasy which is the literary genre used as the material of this research for analyzing. Following these topics domestication and foreignization will be discussed and some of the works done similar to the work I've done will be presented. Also due to the importance of reader (children in this study), part of this chapter was dedicated to the concept of childhood at different times which is a determining factor in the formation of children's literature at different times and consequently in the strategies the translators use.

2.2 Children's Literature

As Hejazi (1995:23-24) mentions "since there was a mother who would sing cradlesong to her baby a kind of children's literature was created" (my translation); children's oral literature. The other kind of children's oral literature is tale. Tales and folk stories are transferred from one generation to another and sometimes they were transferred to other places by storytellers who traveled and new elements would be added to them each time they were told making it hard to recognize them from each other. At

the time of oral literature, children like adults would benefit from oral literature. Epic tales were told to upper class and tales about poor people, farmers and millers were told to middle class (Ghezel Ayagh 2004). As Norton (2003:53-54) puts it in every continent, people produced folk stories using the moral realities of life and tried to explain the source of the universe and natural phenomena. The hunters would talk about the events they have experienced and these heroic activities would turn into heritage of a group of people through the retelling of the stories over and over. Children would be present at the time of the retelling of these stories and would learn from them and remember them, since children were considered as young adults who should sooner step into the adult world. "The stories of ghouls, heroes and ordinary people were told to reduce the pressure of life on adults and children were interested in them too" (ibid: 54) (my translation). And these are the stories which after years of telling and retelling formed the first printed books in Europe. In the West in addition to the Greek and Roman myths, 'Aesop' fables were the most well-known ones. These were the stories with animal characters that would think and talk with a moral message at the end of them. In the East the counterparts of these fables were 'Panjatantareh' or 'Kelileh and Demneh' (its Persian translation) which was aimed to nurture the Indian princes and 'Jatakaha' related to the times before the birth of Buda (Ghezel Ayagh 2004:76-77).

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The definition of children's literature is influenced by the understanding of the "notion of childhood". As Hunt (2005:3) puts it, the notion of childhood is contingent and "changes from place to place, from time to time, and the history, definition, and study of childhood as a concept has burgeoned in recent years". This explains why some works, which are recognized as children's literature and even in some cases they are the best works in this field, were not intended for them in the first place.

According to Ghezel Ayagh (2004:74) the Greeks were the first people who established schools with the aim of spreading the Greek culture all over the world by the help of those who graduated from these schools. But it was the Romans who completed this concept after adapting it from Greeks and reached to a level of self-consciousness of childhood characteristics. But after the collapse of the Romans by Barbarians this trend changed. Ghezel Ayagh quotes Postman as saying that before the invention of writing till the era when the church limited literacy, all that existed was just oral literature (ibid:75).

As in different eras depending on what people thought about childhood, children were provided with different literatures ranging from high literature for adults to folk tales and children's literature; Some books

written first for adults may become appealing for children as well or even they would become children's book with some adaptation or rewriting like 'The Adventures of Gulliver' whereas the classics which were considered appropriate for children may not be appealing to them after some time. As Hunt (1990:1) maintains:

> Much more than other literatures, there is a fracture between contemporary and historical works; some books seem to remain eternally in its living canon; other non-contemporary works in some senses cease to belong to the species. This is because the concepts of childhood which produces the conditions of production swift radically; similarly, the way texts are read, by both primary and secondary, and peer and non-peer audiences can be radically different.
>
> All of this suggests a species of literature defined in terms of the reader rather than the author's intentions of the texts themselves. It also demonstrates the closeness of the relationship between text and reader...It is obvious when an historical children's book ceases to be 'alive'; it is, perhaps, not so obvious when an adult one ceases to be so.

Therefore the way the text communicates with children will determine the position of the text among children not the intention of adults ranging from author, publisher, teacher and parent who would choose and buy a book for children.

Plato in his book 'Republic' says that since children can't differentiate between the ironies and reality of fables, they should not be prepared with them (Hejazi 1995:27). In 1628 Johan Amos Comenius wrote a book named 'The Institute of Childhood' and in 1654 published a book called 'World Through Pictures' and studied the child as an individual and emphasized her/his talents and interests. He did so at a time when Europe was still suffering from the effects of the thirty years of war (ibid: 27, Hürlimann 1968: xii). John Lock in 1693 published his book in which he emphasized the relation between mental and physical growth and defended the kind and friendly ways in educating children and posed the idea that it's important for children to enjoy their childhood. He considered the mind of the child as a white and unwritten script which was ready to accept ideas and thoughts. He believed that simple books which are easy to understand for children and which are relevant to their knowledge should be provided for them (Norton 2003:58). He believed that children should be guided in gaining knowledge, whereas Rousseau maintained that children should just be accompanied in their way to gain knowledge and experience life, so children no longer were considered as guilty creatures, but little angles who could remain child and who would not hurry to take the roles of their parents (ibid:60). In 1762 Jan Jac Rousseau published 'Emil' (Hejazi 1995:27). But after some time as Hürlimann mentions: