# In the name of God

# SHEIKHBAHAEE UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES

## SOCIAL NORMS AND CONSTRAINTS IN TRANSLATING CHILDREN'S NOVELS FROM ENGLISH INTO PERSIAN

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN TRANSLATION STUDIES

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THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT THE CONTENT, FORMAT AND QUALITY OF PRESENTATION OF THE THESIS SUBMITTED BY

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IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF M.A. IN TRANSLATION STUDIES IS ACCEPTED AND APPROVED BY THE THESIS COMMITTEE.

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**DECLARATION**

I declare that this thesis was composed by myself, that the work provided in this thesis

unless referenced, is the researcher's own work, and has not been submitted elsewhere

for any other degree or professional qualification.

To my mother whose sense of affection has been the supporter of my steps and feelings.

To my father who offered me unconditional love, support, and patience.

To my sisters and brothers, who always encourage and help me.

To the Iranian children who deserve the best.

## Table of Contents

# LIST OF TABLES

# Abstract

Foreign and Iranian cultures are far distinct in the constraints imposed on writing and translating for children, since the Iranian literary system is mainly concerned with cultural and religious instructions which lead to manipulation of translated texts. This study sought to identify the cultural and social constraints and norms which determined the strategies applied in the translation of children's novels. To this end, three English novels by Roald Dahl: "The Big Friendly Giant", "Matilda" and "Charlie and Chocolate Factory" and their translations were selected. Examples were collected, classified and analyzed based on Bastin's (2005) adaptation model. The findings indicated that the norms more frequently applied in translating children's novels are cultural adequacy, transcription, creation and exoticism to adjust the translations to be in accord with the parents' approval and what they want their children to be exposed to.

**Chapter One**

**Introduction**

## 1.1 Preliminaries

Children's literature is considered as one of the most significant pathways that a child is first introduced and exposed to the real world through it. Its influence on the child's growing and forming of ideologies has been considered by many intellectuals and researchers (Mourad, 2005).

Like translation of adults' literature, translating children's literature into Persian poses not only linguistic, but also cultural problems regarding cultural items, foreign names, customs and social aspects since Islamic and English cultures are different (Hussein Taha, 2010). Rishah (2013) argues that as people from different countries speak different languages and have different backgrounds, translation becomes a very important communication mean between different communities. Translation actually is not only a process of translating words with similar concepts, but also is a process of finding suitable ways to convey the intended meaning in another language. The translator should know how to go beyond the surface and reflect the cultural references. The translator should consider the reader in the translation of

books, because translating an item not only requires linguistic knowledge but also needs pragmatic knowledge as well as (Rishah, 2013).

According to Wohlgemuth (1998), books accompany a person through their whole life; books play a significant role in children's lives and also have an important role in manipulating and influencing children. He believes that because of the limited experiences of children, the translator faces a lot of problems adapting their texts to the level of children's comprehension. Censorship which occurs in the translated texts between the different source and target culture should be taken into consideration, so the issue of Children's literature and its translation is a very complex one and different aspects of it should be taken into account (Wohlgemuth, 1998).

In the process of translation for children, translators should be aware of the specific norms more than any other literary genre. Children's literature plays an important role in instructing and educating children, so it is an opportunity for them to develop their knowledge and experience. In the translation of children's literature certain norms such as social, cultural and religious should be considered (Mourad, 2005).

According to Toury (1995), Toury (1995) and Lefever (1992) claim that supratextual factors all play an important role in the way in which texts are translated and presented in the target culture. The focus is placed almost on the function of the target text and culture. The fact is that not only the constraints of the source text and culture influence the translated text, but also those from the target language and culture impose certain limitations on the translator, on the way in which he or she translates the texts and fits them into the system of the target culture (Cited in Toury, 1995).

The aim of the present study is to examine the constraints, restrictions, and norms of Persian translation of English novels for children. Another purpose is to clarify how the

social and cultural factors influence the translation of children's literature. Through this study the researcher is going to focus on three children novels; Matilda (Roald Dahl, 1988) which was translated by Najafkhani (1386), and Tahmasbi (1377), Big Friendly Giant (Roald Dahl, 1982) which was translated by Najafkhani (1389), Tahmasbi (1377), and Charlie and Chocolate Factory (Roald Dahl, 1964) which translated by Najafkhani (1384), and Tahmasbi (1376) from Markaz and Ofogh publications, to explore the norms and constraints that are imposed upon translators, and also see which strategies the translator used while dealing with cultural and social specifications.

## 1.2 Statement of the Problem

Since the 1970s, the emphasis of translation studies has moved away from the focus of equivalence and faithfulness towards descriptive approaches focusing on the purpose, function, and status of the translation in the target culture (Baker, 2008). Even Zohar (1979) argues that the emphasis is often on the function of the translated text in the target culture, and also claims that not only the constraints of the source text and culture influence the translated text, but that the target language and culture also impose certain limitations on the translator, on the way in which he or she translates, and on the way in which the translations fit into the systems of the target culture (Rudvin, 1996).

Lefever (1992) was concerned with the interaction between poetics, ideology, and translation (Munday 2001). In the process of translation, the most significant concerns of Lefever is the ideological one that refers to the ideology of the translator and the ideology imposed upon him or her, the former leads to individual censorship and the latter leads to institutional one. One area of translation that censors focus on is the translation of children's literature, because of the vulnerability of its readers (Baker, 2008). Some scholars describe translating children's literature as one means of 'cross-cultural communication' which includes child and adult culture, because adults communicate with children through literature.

Children's translation has cultural complexities due to social and ideological factors, since Persian and English cultures are different from each other. Children may be influenced by what they read, so translators should consider the reader and should translate in a way that the readers of those works don't face the influence of offensive and taboo ideas (Oittinnen, 2000).

Shavit (1986) argues that the low status of children's literature, different cultural image of childhood and different concepts of what is good for the child have led to censorship and manipulation (Baker, 2008). Translators may manipulate the text by applying certain' protective measures' by first selecting an acceptable text for translation, then purifying it (Mdallel, 2003).

Foreign and Iranian cultures are far distinct in the constraints imposed on writing and translating for children, since the Iranian literary system is mainly concerned with cultural and religious instructions. Moreover, the two cultures differ in many aspects as behaviors and beliefs. It follows that choosing children's texts to be translated into Persian should be governed by those restrictions that do not in any way violate the ideological, religious cultural taboos and traditions of writing for children in Persian (Mdallel, 2003). The current study is going to examine how cultural items are rendered to Iranian children to indicate our society's ideology regarding children, and also explores the social norms which determine the strategies applied in the translation of children's books.

**1.3 Research Questions**

The present research attempts to provide answer to the following question:

1.      What are the social and cultural norms and constraints in Persian translations of English novels of Charlie and Chocolate Factory, Matilda, and the Big Friendly Giant based on Bastin's (2005) model?

**1.4 Significance of the Study**

Meckling (1975) claims "whoever is dealing with children's books, is dealing with the central ideas of the society, in which these books are written, sold and read" (As cited in Xeni, 2010). Appropriateness, suitability, acceptability, and usefulness are children's literature norms. Parents are very protective towards their children, and they are much concerned with their choices regarding what to provide for them to read. Translators should be aware of parents' concerns, and know what they want, and censor anything that is not consistent with parental approval (Xeni, 2010, p.21). Adults claim that "bad" books give bad impressions of life, or worse, influence them in a bad way, so translators should be conscious about what the parents' wants and manipulate anything that is not according to social and cultural norms. Authors will adapt and write only "good" those from which children learn something useful according to the opinion of adults, and avoid taboo subjects (Wohlgemuth, 1998).

Through this study, the researcher is going to explore the social and cultural differences exist between English and Persian, and examine how the translations have been conducted according to social constraints and norms, and also indicate the strategies which are used by translators in the translation of children's novels. The present study can also provide guidelines for specifying the appropriate strategies for translating cultural and social factors appropriate for translating children's literature.

**1.5. Definition of key terms**

**1.5.1 Norm**

Translation is a kind of activity which inevitably involves at least two languages and two sets of norms system in each level (Munday, 2008). Toury (1995), defines norm as "translation of general values or ideas shared by a community into performance instructions

appropriate for and applicable to particular situations, specifying what is prescribed and forbidden as well as what is tolerated in a certain behavioral dimension" (Toury, 1995. p.55).

**1.5.2 Manipulation**

Manipulation is considered as "the translator's handling of a text which result in the adaptation of the text for the target reader, considering the cultural, ideological, linguistic and literary differences between the culture in contact, which takes place within a particular cultural setting and is carried out by a human agent, with the consequence of a possible influence of individual or psychology factors upon the end product" (Dukate, 2007, p.13).

**1.5.3 Children's Literature**

According to Bika'ee (2003), "children's literature is the literature that is aimed at children in their growing years and is suitable for their stage of mental and psychological development. This includes written material for children that are not yet interested in adult literature or do not yet possess adult reading skills" (Cited in Mourad, 2005, p.6).

Chapter Two

Literature Review

## 2.1 Overview

This chapter consists of five sections; Section 2.2 will deal with the nature of children's literature and provides definitions of children's literature, Section 2.3 is about children's literature and its translation, Section 2.4 will concern with manipulation in children's literature. Section 2.5 will concern with norms in translation in children's literature, polysystem theory, Toury and descriptive translation studies, and adaptation strategies suggested by Bastin (2005), will be given some focuses in Section 2.6. And Section 2.7 is dealt with concluding remarks of the study.

## 2.2 Children's Literature

Ray (1996) claims that "in the early stages of a printed literature, there are few or no books written specifically for children. There are perhaps a few books intended for educational purposes, such as behavior books printed in the fifteenth or sixteenth centuries, or the twentieth century text books published to support the formal school curriculum in developing countries. Step by step stories written especially for children begin to appear, and

demands for books to meet a variety of interests and special needs emerge" (As cited in Hunt, 2000, p.5).

Mourad (2005) claims that the emersion age of children literature is from childbirth and specifically from the stories that are narrated to the child by its mother, and can continue to as much as 24 years. In this case, children's literature would include songs, theatre, poems, cinema, television and story. And since adults write and narrate this literature, children literature is not separated from adult literature. It is conveyed from the same authority of the adults who have power to control what is addressed to children (Mourad, 2005).

During the past fifty years the researches of children's literature have increased. It is unwise to assume that there exists a single definition for children's literature. Because of the different characteristics of children's literature there exist many definitions for it. (Wohlgemuth, 1998).

Defining children's literature may include some interactions such as: texts intentionally written for children by adults, texts addressed to adults but read children, text read by both children and adults (Baker, 2008). Oittinen (2000) defines literature as "literature produced and intended for children or as literature read by children, and it seems that compared to literature written for adults, children's literature tends to be more directed toward its readers" (Oittinen, 2000, p.3).

Children's books are different from adult's book; they are written for different readers, with different skills, different needs, and different ways of reading and equally different experiences (Hunt, 2000).

Hunt (1990) believes that "the boundaries of children's literature are very hazy, and cannot be defined by textual characteristics either style or content, and its particular reading

audience: children's literature in comparison to adults' literature tends to be more directed toward its readers" (Cited in Oittinen; 2000, p.61).

According to O'Sullivan (2005) Children's literature must adjust to the needs of its readers, i.e. the children's stage of development and skills they have already acquired, these texts are identified by various social authorities as acceptable for children. These include educational institutions, participants active in the literary market and those who produce the books. Therefore adults assign texts to children and transmit dominant morals, values and ideals (O'Sullivan, 2005).

According to Klingberg (1972), "children's literature is literature that produced specifically for children, he also excludes all other writing and pictures that children may read, and suggests that we differentiate between child behavior and the literature read by children and produced for children" (Cited in Oittinen 2000, p.61).

Landsberg (1987) describes children's literature as follows: "Good books can do so much for children. At their best, they expand horizons and instill in children a sense of the wonderful complexity of life …No other pastime available to children is so conducive to empathy and the enlargement of human sympathies. No other pleasure can so richly furnish a child's mind with the symbols, patterns, depths, and possibilities of civilization "(Quoted in Hunt, 2000, p.16).

So, according to Landsberg (1987), the meaning of children's literature is books which are good for children. Regarding this fact, the content of the books that are written for children should be appropriate for children and translators are allowed and even expected to manipulate the original texts to fit in with literary requirements of Iran.

## 2.3 Children's Literature and Translation

Baker (2008) claims that children's literature translation is a field of study that is relatively new within translation studies. Translation for children covers different literary genres such as story books, young adult novels and the illustrated information books. An understanding of developmental factors and the world of childhood is an issue that should be considered in translation of children's literature (Baker, 2008).

When we look at the translation of children's literature, we can see many of a lot of constraints which are similar to those in writing for children, but there are much more complicated factors playing special roles in the decision making process (Mourad, 2005).

Pascua (2005) argues that in every social context there are a series of constraints and rules which are imposed on the translator by authorities or individuals who play significant role in the translation process. Translation produced in the contexts that everything depends on not only the conditions and terms in which a text is created, but also on the constraints it may face. The translator finds himself or herself in a position which is critical of publishers and institutions which change with both time and place (Pascua, 2005).

Issues of ideology in the adaptation of translation strategies for children have attracted the attention of a number of scholars The translated children's literature can be affected by the target language, culture and readers which make it necessary intervene the source text according to the notions of what is good and suitable for children in the context of target culture (Baker, 2008).

Western cultures differ in the constraints imposed on writing and translating for children since the Islamic countries are mainly concerned with didactics and religious instructions. Moreover, the two cultures differ in many aspects as behaviors and beliefs. It follows that choosing children's texts to be translated into Persian should be governed by