



**University of Isfahan  
Faculty of Foreign Languages  
Department of English Language**

**M.A. Thesis**

**Translating Culture Specific Items in Children's Literature:  
*Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* as a Case in Point**

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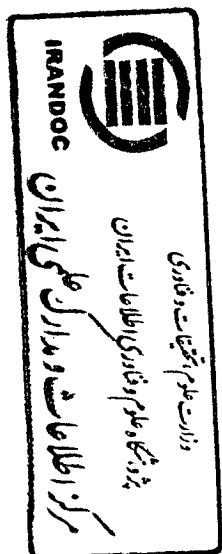
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## Abstract

The present study intends to examine translating culture-specific items from English into Persian and the way they are rendered for a special audience, that is, children. There are three objectives for this study. The first one is to investigate different procedures used by translators in translating culture-specific items in children's literature. The second one is to detect the most frequent procedure used regarding children as special addressees by comparing different translations of the same text. The third objective is to explore possible reasons for adopting certain procedures in translations of children's texts.

In order to find the most frequently used procedures in translating culture specific items in children's literature *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* written by Lewis Carroll (1865) was chosen. First, the culture specific items were detected and their Persian renderings by different translators were identified. Then, these items were categorized using Newmark (1988) categorization of culture as a framework. As the next step the procedures used by different Persian translators of the same text while dealing with culture specific items were identified. Finally, through comparison of different translations, the most frequent procedures used by translators were found and the reasons for such frequencies were determined.

The results of this study are as follows:

Each translator used different procedures dealing with culture-specific items; moreover, different procedures were used for translating culture-specific items of the same category.

Cultural equivalence, transference, and functional equivalence are the most frequent procedures used by the translators. Cultural equivalence is the main procedure used in the one and only translation which was done in 1360s. The translator tried to make the story more tangible for target readers. However, translators in 1370s adopted transference as their main procedure to make children familiar with the foreign culture and encourage them to learn more about other cultures. Therefore, it seems that translators moved towards using foreignizing procedures in translation from English to Persian. So as time passed and according to retranslation hypothesis, retranslation is necessary for it is the only way to keep texts alive.

**Keywords:** culture-specific items, procedure, children's literature, domestication, foreignization

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# **Chapter One**

## **Introduction**

### **1.1. Overview**

Culture-bound elements place the story of a book in a specific culture and period of time and also imply certain values. These elements also have an effect on how the reader identifies with the story and character. Thus, it is important to find the most appropriate procedure to translate such elements. Considering the audience and the purpose of translation, these procedures will vary.

### **1.2. Statement of the Problem**

The term children's literature is used to refer to fictional texts where children are presumed to be the primary audience. The mission of

children's literature is to socialize young readers into the thought patterns, codes, norms, and habits of a specific culture (Metcalf, 2003). According to Metcalf (2003), some translators opted for adaptation to the target culture and making the text more reader-friendly and against keeping intact much of the otherness of the foreign culture in their translation. (p.326)

The greatest challenge for a translator of children's book is posed by culturally specific words and concepts, which may be unknown to the target culture, and may not have any direct equivalent in the target language. Some of these culture-specific items include proper names, historical references, meals and food items, names of plant and animal species, measurements, customs, and games. How do translators deal with these items that do not exist in the target culture?

According to Newmark (1988), there are several different ways to translate culture-specific items. They include transference, cultural equivalence, neutralization, naturalization, componential analysis, gloss, notes, using classifiers, couplet, paraphrase, and zero translation. For example, Christmas is a culture-specific item for which different translators used different equivalents: نوروز (nowruz), عید کریسمس (eyde krismas), کریسمس (krismas), and سال نو (sale now). The procedures used are cultural equivalence, classifier, transference, and descriptive equivalence.

Considering children as our special audience, this research intends to investigate the different procedures used by translators in translating culture-specific items in children's literature. A variety of culture-specific items were explored, and their translations were compared to see how a piece of literature was translated as a children's book.

### **1.3. Significance of the study**

The question of having children as audience of translation has many aspects. One of the greatest aspects of literature, and of course literature for children, is that it not only entertains readers, but also broadens their minds and their view of the world by providing them with information about other cultures and times, types of ideas and values other than those that prevail in their own society.

Culture-specific items seem to have an important role in providing information about the cultural values of the readers of the source language and their translation is bound to have great impact on familiarizing readers of the target language with those values.

### **1.4. Objectives**

The present study intends to examine translating culture-specific items and the way they are rendered into Persian for a special audience; that is,

children. There are three objectives for this study. The first one is to investigate different procedures used by translators in translating culture-specific items in children's literature. The second one is to detect the most frequent procedure used regarding children as special addressees by comparing different translations of the same text. The third objective is to explore possible reasons for adopting certain procedures in translations of children's texts.

## **1.5. Research Questions**

This study intends to provide answers to the following questions:

1-What procedures are used by different translators in translating culture-specific items in Alice's Adventures in Wonderland as a children's book?

2-What is the most frequent procedure used in translating culture-specific items in Alice's Adventures in Wonderland as a children's book?

3-What are possible reasons for choosing certain procedures of rendering culture-specific items in Alice's Adventures in Wonderland?

## **1.6. Definition of key terms**

1- **Children's Literature:** Fictional texts of which children are presumed to be the primary audience. (Metcalf: 2003)

2- **Culture:** The way of life and its manifestation, that is peculiar to a community that uses a particular language as its means of expression. (Newmark: 1988)

3- **Culture-specific Items:** Words and concepts which may be totally unknown to the target culture. These words and concepts may relate to a religious belief, a social custom, or even a type of food. (Baker: 1992)

4- **Translation Procedure:** The way a translator follows to render words and concepts of a text into another language. (Newmark: 1988)

5- **Domestication:** A target-culture-oriented translation which means making the text recognizable and familiar and thus bringing the foreign culture closer to the reader in the target culture. (Lindfors, 2003)

6- **Foreignization:** A source-culture-oriented translation which means taking the reader over to the foreign culture and making him or her feel the cultural and linguistic differences. (Lindfors, 2003)

## 1.7. Organization of the Thesis

This research is organized in five chapters. Chapter one is introduction in which the problem under study and the significance of the study introduced and objectives and research questions presented.

Chapter two is literature review in which different definitions of translation and culture and various theories of equivalence will be



presented, and different procedures used in translating Culture-specific items will be defined, and children's literature and its translation will be introduced.

Chapter three deals with method of the study in which the material used for the study will be introduced and the procedure of data collection and data analysis will be presented.

Chapter four is data analysis and discussion in which data gathered will be presented in appropriate tables and figures and the results of the study will be analyzed and discussed.

Chapter five is conclusion in which the conclusions of the study will be discussed, and some implications will be presented.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Literature review**

#### **2.1. Overview**

According to translation scholars languages are the most effective methods of communication between different nations throughout the world, but dissimilarity of languages seems to be the obstacle in the way of communication. In today's world translation has made communication between different nations with different languages possible, but difference in cultures makes some challenging problems in the translation process, especially when the audience of the translation is children.

This chapter deals with different views about translation, equivalence, culture and the way they are related. Then different methods and

procedures used in a translation process will be defined and the way these procedures used for translating culture-specific items will be determined. Then children's literature and its translation will be briefly considered.

## **2.2. What Is Translation?**

Translation has been defined in many ways. Some of the most important ones are as follows:

Catford (1964:20) states that translation is "the replacement of textual material in one language (SL) by equivalent textual material in another language (TL)."

According to Nida and Taber (1969) translating consists of reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the source language message, first in terms of meaning and secondly in terms of style.

Brislin (1976: 1) defines translation as: "the transfer of thoughts and ideas from one language (source) to another (target), whether the languages are in written or oral form; whether the languages have established orthographies or do not have such standardization or whether one or both languages is based on signs, as with sign languages of the deaf."

Pinhhuck (1977:38) proposed that translation is "a process of finding a TL equivalent for an SL utterance."

Toury (1978:200) suggests that "Translation is a kind of activity which inevitably involves at least two languages and two cultural traditions."

Bassnett (1991:2) states that translation involves the rendering of a source language (SL) text into the target language (TL) "so as to ensure that (1) the surface meaning of the two will be approximately similar and (2) the structure of the SL will be preserved as closely as possible, but not so closely that the TL structure will be seriously distorted."

Wills (1982:3) defines translation as "a transfer process which aims at the transformation of a written SL text into an optimally equivalent TL text, and which requires the syntactic, the semantic and the pragmatic understanding and analytical processing of the SL."

Larson (1984) states that translation is "studying the lexicon, grammatical structure, communication situation, and cultural context of the source language text, analyzing it in order to determine its meaning, and then reconstructing this same meaning using the lexicon and grammatical structure which are appropriate in the receptor language and its cultural context."(P: 3)

Newmark (1988) says "translation is a craft consisting in the attempt to replace a written message and/or statement in one language by the same message and/or statement in another language."(P: 7) He also affirms what