

Translation of Children's Literature : In Search of a Theory

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Abstract. The act of visualizing literature from two perspectives – one from children and another from translation – is said to be Translation of Children's Literature. The hybrid form of Children's Literature and Translation Studies is the attempt of several theorists to establish and thus universalize a contemporary and current theory pertinent to translation of children's literature. But culture plays a pivotal role in literary representation and a child is the product of a particular culture- the culture where one is born simultaneously where one is grown – thus culture clutches a theory and makes it limited more or less. Translation of Children's Literature is in a constant search of a theory – almost free from all cultural and other hurdles – and therefore the present paper is a scholarly attempt to theorize a theory in translation of children's literature – more or less – free from almost all barriers – suited to children across the globe.

Keywords: Children's Literature; translation studies; culture; children.

Children's Literature got due favour with translation studies and as a result translation of Children's Literature as a particular field emerged on the screen. Whenever a new or so-called new field is innovated, certain interrogations chase the intellectual mind – how to define, how to fix among other fields, how to suspend on a large canvass, how to establish as a distinct field – challenges as well as chats, problems as well as resolutions, limitations as well as freedom – as such are imposed. It is also true that several scholars are in a constant dilemma to demystify all these with their own typical perspectives. Various ones attempted their hands to establish the fact and to a large extent they succeeded but almost all are to universalize the concept accordingly and all these are going on and on. The central questions to this distinct field are –

- What is Children's Literature ?
- What is translation of Children's Literature ?
- What are the different approaches taken in Translation of Children's Literature ?
- Is there any universal concept concerning all the above- mentioned interrogations ?

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The present paper is in a constant search for a universal concept concerning these questions.

What is Children's Literature ?

Several scholars have attempted to define the term accordingly. Some agree sometimes. Some disagree sometimes. The definitions are going on in different directions. Almost all tried to establish a universal definition but almost failed as a particular context may justify.

Emergence of Children's Literature

Literature is a work of translation. Children's literature is no exception.

Source Text

A.1. Adult literature

A.1.1. Nation A (L1)

A.1.2. Nation B (L2)

A.1.3. Nation A (L1)

A.1.4. Nation B (L2)

A.2. Children's literature

A.2.1. Nation A (L1)

A.2.2. Nation B (L2)

A.3. Adult-turned-children's literature

A.3.1. Nation A (L1)

A.3.2. Nation B (L2)

Target Text

B. Children's literature

B.1. Nation A (L1)

B.2. Nation B (L2)

B.3. Nation B (L2)

B4. Nation A (L1)

B. Children's literature

B.1. Nation B (L2)

B.2. Nation A (L1)

B. Children's literature

B.1. Nation B (L2)

B.2. Nation A (L1)

- * Nation A - Oriental Country (India)
- * Nation B - Occidental Country (England/America)
- * Nation A - Language (L1)
- * Nation B - Language (L2)
- * L1 -L2 / L2 -L1 : Inter-lingual Translation
- * L1 -L1/L2 – L2: Intra-lingual Translation
- * Hard copy- Soft copy : Inter semiotic Translation

Kimberley Reynolds defines it broadly, "Currently, everything from folk and fairy tales, myths and legends, ballads and nursery rhymes- many of which date back to preliterate epochs- to such embodiments of our transliterate age as e-books, fan fiction, and computer games may come under the umbrella of children's literature. Additionally, as an area of

research and teaching, children's literature encompasses all genres, formats, and media; all periods, movements, and kinds of writing from any part of the world, and often related ephemera and merchandise too. It addresses works that were specifically directed at the young, those that came to be regarded as children's literature by being appropriated by young readers. (2)

Translation is taken as a different concept when it comes in the periphery of the literature for children as Zohar Shavit comments :

The act of translation is understood not in the traditional normative sense, but rather as a semiotic concept. Thus, translation is understood as part of a transfer mechanism- that is, the process by which textual models of one system are transferred to another. In this process certain products are produced within the target system, which relate in various and complex ways to products of the source system... (25)

Further Shavit affirms :

In viewing translation as part of the transfer process, it must be stressed that the subject at stake is not just translations of texts from one language to another, but also the translations of texts from one system to another- for example, translations from the adult system into the children's. (25)

Next concept is provided by Gillian Lathey in her book *The Translation of Children's Literature: A Reader (2006)*. It suggests :

One of the most notable differences between translating for adults and translating for children is the challenge of what Anthea Bell has called a third dimension to the translation process. In addition to source and target languages, a translator for children often works with images, either illustrations that punctuate a prose text or, in the case of the modern picture book, an intricate

and vital counterpoint between image and text. An understanding of the role of the visual in children's texts is essential for any translator working for a child audience. (111)

Riitta Oittinen, comments in the book *Translating for Children*, "Translating illustrated texts is a special field, or a special language, and requires specialization in translation studies, combined with art for example." (114). The comment by B.K. Das does not go unnoticed as, "Text is not what the author makes it to be but it is as the reader takes it to be" (53). According to Shavit, "An orientation of the text to make it convenient and fruitful to the child, in accordance with what society regards (at a certain point in time) as academically 'nice for the child' An orientation of characterization, language, and plot to prevalent society's ideas of the ability of child to read and comprehend".

Tiina Puurtinen in one of the articles *Translating Children's Literature: Theoretical Approaches and Empirical Studies* says that: "writing and translating for children though often regarded as simple and even insignificant matter, each governed by numerous constraints, which usually vary from culture to culture". (54)

Several scholars have interpreted the concept of translation and it is this very concept that has brought certain changes in the activity of translation from time to time. It can be observed that, "A translator is not necessarily bound to the original he chooses; he can make his even poem out of it, if he likes, and that is what is generally done." (65) If we peep into the act of translation in the Indian context, it has been regarded as a new writing as commented by Sujit Mukherjee:

This can be exposed most easily in the career of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* in various Indian languages. The *Pampabharata* and the *Pandavavijaya* for example, are complete and autonomous literary works, irrespective of their sources. But when literary historians tell us that Pampa 'wrote' the Mahabharata in Kannada or that Kashiram Das 'wrote' the same in Bangla, we were suddenly made aware that 'writing' in this context is not broken up from the act of original penning. (77)

Actually a child is the product of a particular culture - not the culture where that child is born but simultaneously the culture where that one is reared and if both the cultures are the same – that does not matter. But the fact is that culture plays a pivotal role in a child's life. In the same way the literature, especially written or created for children is also culture-specific.

The Scholars trying to define children's Literature cannot escape themselves from the clutch of a particular culture – no matter to what extent they have tried to universalize their utterances. The same thing happens when these scholars start translating or creating or writing literatures for children, they have to keep one thing common in mind – culture. Here the focus is only on translating literatures for children.

Several theorists have tried their hands in the activity of translation for children. They attempted to establish a particular theory for the Translation of Children's Literature. Keeping one thing or another in mind they have done their work and tried to establish a universal theory. But as a child is the product of a particular culture, the inclination of a particular theory may be towards a particular culture more or less.

Actually the genesis of children's literature is not only writing for children, especially or translating a text originating in one culture into a text establishing in another culture. The Theory of Innocence is established as a child is innocent irrespective of a particular culture if a child is the product of a particular culture. And if the act of translation occurs from an adult literature or the act of writing occurs for children, especially, the universal concept of innocence should be kept in mind. The Theory of Experience occurs in the case of an adult literature and if children's literature is prepared from adult literature, the mode of experience should be converted into the mode of innocence.

The representation of the literature demands form as well as content. In case of children's literature, too, at the level of form as well as at the level of content, irrespective of a particular culture, the matter and materials corresponding to experience should be converted into those of innocence. A child is inherently innocent and an adult becomes experienced. Taking only these two strata, a translator has to translate or a writer has to write literatures for children. At the level of form, innocent forms should be used and at the level of content, innocent terms should be used.

The structures should be innocent – free from complexity and connectors meaninglessly. The concepts should be innocent – capable of children’s psychology. The content should be innocent – free from worldly affairs. It may be true that the content and form corresponding to innocence and experience should vary from culture to culture. This very concept may be entangled with culture but it must be emphasized that if a culture-specific content corresponding to experience is valid for children in one culture and corresponding to innocence is valid for adult in another culture and thus in such a scenario, the content correspondence to experience should be represented innocently and innocent contents should be represented in the guise of experience in adult literature.

The present paper is a scholarly attempt to establish the Theory of Innocence in Translation of Children’s Literature and The Theory of Experience in Translation of Adult Literature. The limitation of the paper is that it tries to establish the theory in the theoretical perspectives only and their pragmatic approach is taken in the extension of the paper as the field of children’s literature is very dynamic.

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