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“NOTHING BUT THE BEST IS GOOD ENOUGH FOR THE YOUNG.” DILEMMAS OF THE TRANSLATOR OF CHILDREN’S LITERATURE

Abstract: No doubt the world without Winnie the Pooh, Pippi Longstocking, Pinocchio or Moomin Trolls would have been less colourful. Characters from fairy tales imperceptibly slip into young readers’ minds and tend to stay there forever. Children accept them unconditionally and do not ask questions about their descent. Children’s response to books is usually very spontaneous: a love at first sight or an immediate dislike. Therefore, it is very important that they receive “the best” – not only beautiful and wise books but also books that are skillfully translated. Discussing the role of the translator of children’s literature, this article focuses on the child–translator relationship and the translator–author dichotomy. It points to different attitudes toward the translator’s creativity and “visibility.” It examines terminological ambiguities of such notions as “adaptation,” “reconstruction,” “rewriting” and “translation.” Finally, it deals with translation challenges that arise from didactic, entertaining and aesthetic functions of children’s books.

Keywords: children’s literature, adaptation, reproduction, retelling, foreignization, domestication

*Only one sort of children’s literature should never ever be written,
books which are botched together in an early morning break
by a writer [translator] who thinks it isn’t of any importance
as they are “only” children’s books.*

(Bridget Stolt)

For centuries scholars have been concerned with both the theory and the practice of translation, but until quite recently “scarcely anything has been said about the translation of books for children and young people” (Reiss

1982 qtd in O'Sullivan 2005: 76). This discipline developed within Translation Studies in response to the psycho-pedagogical research that focuses on young recipients. Addressing their needs, translation scholars attempted to formulate child-friendly translation theories. They observed that:

translators cannot work without a hypothesis of a recipient. In this way, they control their moves with regard to the supposed presence and participation of someone whose opinion should be considered and who has got every right not to be ignored in the profit and loss account that from now on becomes a joint work of a translator and a recipient (Święch 1976 qtd in Adamczyk-Garbowska 1988: 137; trans. K.A).

However, as Mikhail Bakhtin claimed, a translation for children is not always intended for a particular, real child. Usually it is created for a “superaddressee” – an abstracted concept of a child (Oittinen 1993: 68).

This approach shapes the translation process itself: translators develop their own view of child readers and attribute specific traits to them. Consequently, they translate with “special regard to [the child’s] (supposed) interests, needs, reactions, knowledge, reading abilities” (Klingberg 1986: 11) as well as “experience of life and knowledge of the world” (Puurttinen 1995: 22). Generally, divergent views on how children’s literature should be translated stem from translators’ different images of the child and their assumptions about the psychological and physical abilities of the addressee.

Translators, then, must decide which kind of child readers they translate for: “naive or understanding, innocent or experienced” (Oittinen 1993: 68), because “if our child is wise and responsive, we do not have to explain to him/her as much as we would, if our child was dull and ignorant” (Oittinen 2000: 34). Thus, translation for younger and less sophisticated readers will require much interference in order to make texts “easier to assimilate.”

The relationship between the translator and the child reader, however, is friendly and uncondescending because translators do not look at the world only with the adults’ eyes. Each translator was a child once; they still carry that child within themselves (Oittinen 2000: 26). The person who translates children’s literature

should reach out to the children of her/his culture. The translator should dive into the carnivalistic children’s world, reexperience it. Even if she/he should try to reach into the realm of childhood, the children around her/him, the child in her/himself. This reaching into the carnivalistic world of children, this reaching out to children without the fear of relinquishing one’s own authority, is dialogic (Oittinen 1993 qtd in O’Sullivan 2005: 79).

Translator–author dichotomy

The origins of the modern methods of translating children's literature should be sought in the old distinction between source-oriented and target-oriented approaches (Puurttinen 1995: 22–25). Translators' "visibility," their creativity and their deviations from the original have been fundamental points of contention, which has helped to formulate the underpinnings of CTLS (Children's Literature Translation Studies).

For years, translators have been expected to be "discreet," if not "invisible." They have been seen as transmitters who, by remaining uninvolved and objective, can mechanically produce target texts because, as Walter Benjamin wrote, "a real translator is transparent" (Benjamin 1989 qtd in Oittinen 1993: 93). Many scholars dealing with children's literature translation still agree with this statement. Patricia Crampton compares translators to musicians who try to objectively render the composer's intentions. Anthea Bell describes a translator as "an actor on paper" who resembles glass (Bell qtd in Jobe 2001: 782).

Translators have been dehumanized because a source text has been believed to be chosen due to "what it is and what it represents" (Mazi-Lescovar 2003: 253). According to this rule, one must keep true to the original (Oittinen 1993: 94). Only in this way can the real intentions of the author be reproduced. This view is shared by Göte Klingberg, who claims that the author's text has already been adjusted, "adapted" to young readers. One may only begin to talk of the translator's intervention when dealing with "cultural context adaptation" (Klingberg 1986: 12–13). Ewa Teodorowicz-Hellman perceives the translator's role in the same way. She also speaks of double adaptation. The first adaptation consists in the author's adjustment of the text to young recipients' needs, the second is aimed at introducing the text to its future readers in accordance with their cultural norms (Teodorowicz-Hellman 1996: 143).

By presenting the concept of the second adaptation, both these scholars undermine the assumption about an "invisible" translator, devoid of any responsibility, who is obliged to be absolutely faithful to the original. In the process of translating for children, therefore, some deviations from the original are allowed, although Klingberg perceives them as a disgraceful exception rather than a norm (1986: 17).

Full translatory visibility is recommended by Ritta Oittinen, for whom translators are not anonymous. They have a full right to speak in their own

voice: “a professional translator does not hide behind the original author but takes her/his place in the dialogic interaction; she/he steps forward and stands in sight” (Oittinen 2000: 162). Thus, translators of children’s literature are granted the status of authors because it is from their point of view that the reader interprets the story (Poplak 2002: 22).

Andrzej Polkowski, reconciling these extreme views, emphasizes that there is no discrepancy between the author’s truth and the translator’s truth, because translators should step into authors’ shoes and imagine what form the texts would have taken if the authors had used target languages (2006: 2).

Through the activity of a creative translator, the source text is pushed into the background (Oittinen 2000: 163), it “takes a back seat” (Stolt 1976: 132), and the translated text becomes “a product, not reproduction” (Godard 1990 qtd in Oittinen 1993: 110). A translator of children’s literature is allowed to compose, not just make a replica of the original (Oittinen 2000: 21). In fact, translation is always an act of interpretation, alteration, manipulation. It is impossible to produce a carbon copy identical to the original (Adamczyk-Garbowska 1988: 36).

Similar views are expressed by Jolanta Kozak, who compares the translation process to a very complicated chemical reaction that occurs according to Archimedes’ principle. During this process, the source text reacts with the target text and the final product depends on the weight of the original displaced by the translation and on the chemical composition of the two languages (Kozak 2000: 174–175).

Patricia Crampton offers a new perspective on creativity:

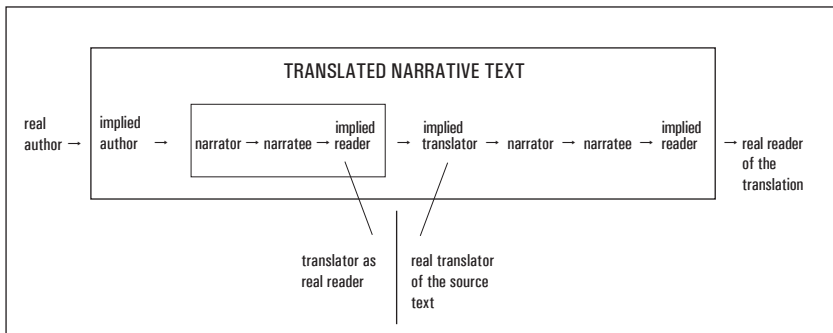
Many years ago, when I translated my first book for publication, the editor at Jonathan Cape told me: “As soon as you have translated a book, throw away the original and start again.” At the time I accepted the advice respectfully (...) but as the years passed, one distinction became clear: if you are translating (...) reverse the advice, and as you revise your translation, refer back again and again to the original” (2002: 47).

It should be remembered that under the current copyright laws, the source text must not be changed freely, as it imposes restrictions and provides the basis for interpretation. Crampton’s theory is founded on the idea of repeated rereading as conducive to translators’ active role.

Other scholars share Crampton’s point of view. Oittinen writes that the translator can read the text in two different ways by assuming two different roles of a real reader and a real translator. During “aesthetic” reading translators focus on the story itself; they read simply for pleasure. During

“efferent” reading they look at the text as professionals. Only the second, critical and analytical perception of the source material initiates creative translation. However, the first stage should not be omitted because it is the harmonious combination of two reading methods that makes it possible to understand the source text both subjectively and objectively (Oittinen 2000: 28).

The double task set for the translator-reader is not alien to Emer O’Sullivan, the author of the communicative model of translation. Wondering “what kinds of translators are in the text,” O’Sullivan (2005: 108) sketches the following diagram:



While discussing translators’ creativity, one should not forget about their personal traits revealed in the translated book. Apart from their own image of the child, translators may introduce into the text their cultural heritage, reading experience (Oittinen 2000: 3), personal skills, knowledge and translation methods (Huhtala 1995 qtd in Rossi 2003), as well as the norms and poetics prevailing in their societies (Oittinen 2003: 129).

However, not all scholars approve of this approach. Some argue that manifestations of translators’ personality should be kept to a minimum, thus limiting translators’ creative role. They claim that the “unhealthy tradition” described above distorts the true image of the author (Stolt 1978: 133). Nevertheless, even they understand that it is impossible to reproduce all aspects of the source text in translation.

To reach a consensus between these opposing views, Steiner promotes the concept of translation as “the mirror which not only reflects but also generates light” (Steiner 1976 qtd in Oittinen 1993: 92), now dominating in

research on translation. Thus, translators of children's literature need first and foremost to pay heed to the putative recipients and not to the author:

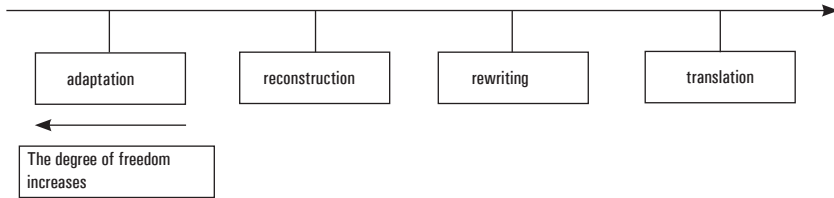
Being loyal to the target-language readers, the translator is not at all disloyal to the author of the original, but the other way around: when books are willingly read by target-language readers, the children, they learn how to love the original author (Oittinen 1993: abstract).

Translators working on books addressed to the youngest readers face the dilemma over how far they can stray from the original. No less contentious than the problems of creativity and "invisibility," this dilemma shows clearly in the differences expressed by Göte Klingberg and Ritta Oittinen. Klingberg favours the view that one must not intervene in the original as this would be disrespectful toward the author and toward the children, who would be offered a literary product that has nothing in common with the original (1986: 10). Oittinen argues that only readjustments of the source text can ensure that its readers receive due attention. She also puts great emphasis on the terminological distinction between "translation of children's literature" and "translation for children" (Oittinen 2000: 69).

Zahar Shavit looks at this problem from an entirely different vantage point. She claims that deviations from the original cannot be justified by respect for children – or by disrespect; rather, they result from a marginal position of children's literature in the literary polysystem. Since original works have low status, the position of their translations is even lower (Shavit 1986: 112). Stanisław Barańczak, in turn, sees the deviations as part of the generic diversity of children's literature. In his view, there is no such thing as "writing for children", because this branch of literary output is as diverse as books aimed at adults. As a rule, translators of poetry for young readers have great liberty of artistic choice; translation of prose for children, just like that for adults, is more restricted (Barańczak 1992: 68).

There is, therefore, no agreement on how books for children should be translated and how much artistic freedom should be allowed to translators. In consequence, every "foreign" text that enters the native canon of children's literature may be placed on the scale between word-for-word translation and free translation, and the translator is both a passive imitator and an active creator. This is reflected in the terminology which describes products of translation: "reproduction," "rewriting" and "adaptation" function along with "translation" while scholars try in vain to determine the distinctions between the concepts.

Those who believe that an accurate classification is possible put the four terms on the following axis:



The concept of “adaptation” is “*vis-à-vis* the issue of remaining ‘faithful’ to the original text” (Bastin 2000: 6). “Adaptation” is most often perceived as a derivative “version, abridgement, shortened edition, less valuable than a ‘full text’ – translation” (Oittinen 1993: 85). Thus, “adaptation” tends to have lower status and uncertain authorship, while “reconstruction” and “rewriting” are placed somewhere between these two extremes (according to popular belief, however, “reconstruction” departs from the original to a smaller extent than “rewriting”; Kenda 2002: 34). The term “translation” usually connotes such positive values as faithfulness, accuracy, exactitude and precision (cf. Adamczyk-Garbowska 1988: 142; Oittinen 2000: 76–84); therefore, the product of “translation” is considered to be as prestigious as the original.

However, “borderlines between the categories are repeatedly being questioned” (Mazi-Leskovar 2003: 254). Skeptics see these four concepts as interwoven so closely that they are indistinguishable (Adamczyk-Garbowska 1988: 143). In Oittinen’s opinion, “though very significant, the difference between translation and adaptation lies in our attitudes and points of view” (1993: 91), because every translation presupposes an adaptation as an end result. To Michael Garneau, all these concepts are so inexact and ill-defined that a new term is needed to describe translated books, and Garneau proposes “tradaptation” (1986 qtd in Bastin 2000: 8). Due to these terminological ambiguities, in this paper I use one term only: “translation,” to refer to the process that results in the creation of children’s literature adjusted to new young recipients who live in different cultural environments and are subject to different linguistic norms.

Translation problems and children's literature

Selection of books for children is controlled by adults, convinced that they know exactly what is best for the youngest readers. Peter Hunt states clearly: "children's books are an expression of a power-relationship, are mediated through adults, and are unprotected by any supposed literary status;" therefore, "adults (...) control the books as they control their children" (Hunt 2001: 255). By controlling the literary market, adults act on behalf of the young recipients at every stage of book production: as publishers or consultants, they are experts and judges; as librarians, teachers, booksellers or parents, they decide which books fall into children's hands (Weinreich 1976: 146). As far as foreign literature is concerned, translators, too, influence the message conveyed in books for young readers, because in their role of intercultural mediators they shape translated children's literature (Dollerup 2003: 90–91).

This is not an easy task since translation is a continuous problem-solving process:

What can I expect of children whose understanding of language is not yet nearly as well developed as my own adult linguistic skills, without asking too much of them? What ought I to expect of children without contravening educational, psychological, moral and aesthetic requirements (...)? What does the market allow me, want me or forbid me to do? (Boie 1995 qtd in O'Sullivan 2005: 14)

We may argue that translation dilemmas stem from three fundamental tasks that children's literature has always been expected to perform. The didactic aim informs such decisions as: should the translated text be adjusted to the moral, educational, ethical and ideological norms of the target culture? Can peculiarities typical of the source culture be displayed? Should one adjust to the accepted linguistic norms or purposefully violate them to show the linguistic wealth of other countries? The entertaining aim influences answers to the following questions: should the translation be as funny as the original? How to translate something that is, in principle, untranslatable, i.e. humour? The aesthetic aim is fulfilled when the translator knows how to change the linguistic sound of the text without stripping it of its original "music" and how to establish the right relationship between the verbal and the visual elements.

Dilemmas that stem from the didactic function of children’s literature

Oscar Wilde claimed that there are no moral or immoral books, there are only books well or badly written. However, this claim does not seem to apply to translated children’s literature. An observable tendency is, or was until recently, to think that the message of a children’s book must be clear and proper, i.e. moral, ethical, decent and in accord with universal norms, as it serves pedagogical aims (Mdallel 2003: 300). A book labeled “for children,” therefore, is supposed to:

include industry, honesty, respect for one’s seniors, a spirit of self criticism and self-demand, tolerance, and a sense of civic responsibility. It should arouse an empathy, nurture a humanitarian outlook, and at the same time provoke abhorrence of such human qualities as egoism, cruelty, perfidy, falsehood, violence, parasitism, greed, indifference to another’s suffering and pain (...) and refute racist, militarist, chauvinist (...) antidemocratic ideas and values (Motyashov 1976: 99–100).

On the other hand, ethical, didactic, moral and ideological norms change depending on the country, its culture and social determinants. Should translators lean toward the source or the target cultures, “domesticate” or “foreignize?” There has also been some anxiety about the potentially negative psychological impact of translated literature on children and the possible undermining of the imposed set of values. Translated book have been regarded as “Trojan-horses-in-print,” bringing unpredictable or even disastrous consequences (Baker 2000: 2). Pedagogically ambiguous fragments have always been a challenge to translators. In order to ensure conformity to norms, translators have been obliged to adopt some “protective measures” in the form of “enlargements, polishing up, modifications and abbreviations aimed at getting the target text in correspondence with the values of potential readers or – in the case of children’s books – rather with the supposed values of adults” (Klingberg 1976: 86–87). These adaptive translation efforts, called “purification” (Klingberg 1986: 58) or “purgation” (Dollerup 2003: 96), have been a common practice used to disguise inconvenient subjects.

One of these inconvenient subjects is a religious allusion: “if a book from a strictly Catholic or from an orthodox Jewish milieu is to ‘land’ on an alien shore, adaptation will be a necessary evil if the ‘landing’ is

not to become stranding” (Stolt 1976: 134). Monica Burns gives the example of translations for children in Anglican England, where passages referring to Catholicism were often deleted or replaced with expressions that were neutral or common to both denominations (1962: 81). Carmen Bravo-Villasante writes that *Robinson Crusoe* lost its Protestant moral in a Spanish version because of the predominantly Catholic target culture in Spain (1976: 47).

Klingberg adds political motifs to the list of taboo subjects. He mentions a Spanish translation of a German-language book for children from which all original allusions to the king were removed to avoid slandering the monarchy as a form of government (1986: 58). Bravo-Villasante notes that one of Julius Verne’s novels appeared in translation without its original anti-Semitic passages because its translator was a Jew (1976: 47).

Physiological activities, a topic natural for children and embarrassing for adults, may also seem suspicious. To conceal these motifs, translators can resort to peculiar modifications. In two English-language versions of a Moomin book, the sentence *I just had to go out to pee* was replaced with *I only wanted to go out for a while* or *I just wanted to look for stars* (Müller 1997 qtd in Klingberg 1986: 59). Similar changes were introduced in a children’s version of *Gulliver’s Travels*, where the main character was not allowed to extinguish a bonfire with his urine; instead, he poured water over it or blew it out (Shavit 1986: 123).

Consistently “neutralized” have also been passages with possible erotic connotations. Hence, in Tove Jansson’s book mentioned above, the Snork Maiden sleeps wrapped up in a quilt and not – as in the original – with her head on the Moomintroll’s lap (Klingberg 1986: 59). Literary allusions to prostitution and homosexuality can lead to even greater controversy. In *King & King* by Linda de Haan and Stern Nijland, the whole plot was changed in translation so as to avoid the topic of different sexual orientations (Lehmen 2003: 5).

Translators of children’s literature may also interfere in the source text when the characters do not behave in an exemplary way. Ewa Teodorowicz-Hellman (1996: 133–135) shows that some changes were made in translation of *Pippi Langstockings* to prevent readers from eating poisonous mushrooms, walking a tightrope or playing with guns. Other scholars mention bad table manners (Burns 1962: 83), bribery (Teodorowicz-Hellman 1996: 133) or insolent replies to adults (Yamazaki 2002: 54–55).

Of course, translators can also try to whitewash reprehensible deeds of adult characters in children’s books, particularly violence (e.g. maltreat-

ment of one's own wife) or child abuse (Klingberg 1986: 61). Allusions that may make young recipients worried disappear at times as well, especially when they refer to the topic of death or poverty (Adamczyk-Garbowska 1988: 156; Oittinen 2000: 91–92).

However, some translation experts believe that such overprotective measures can be harmful. Peter Hunt claims that "purification" is unethical because children may also be hurt by something that they do not know (Hunt 2001: 256). For children, "especially when they are small, the whole world can look like a foreign country where people are apt to do or say unaccountable things" (Tucker 2005: 10). Moreover, child readers may have developed their own ways of defense, subconsciously ignoring what they do not like or do not understand (Avery 1976 qtd in Lesnik-Oberstein 1996: 21). Besides, the "child" category itself is not homogenous, and it is impossible to predict all reactions from subjects who belong to it. Translation, therefore, means generalization, reduction to the lowest common denominator.

In her criticism of "purification," Darja Mazi-Leskovar goes as far as to assert that it contravenes Article 13 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which guarantees the young audience the following:

the right to freedom of expression (...) this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child's choice (qtd in Mazi-Leskovar 2003: 252).

Consequently, the didactic function of children's literature is nowadays less preponderant: "the mere intention of educating spoils children's books" (Herbart qtd in Stolt 1976: 133). "Purification" is no longer commonly used, although it has not been abandoned completely.

The concept of translated children's literature relies on the assumption that books adapted from other languages are to broaden children's knowledge about foreign cultures and thereby give them an opportunity to think independently and to create their own view of the world. More and more often it is stressed that target texts should include foreign references because it is these "infinitely small details that in translation build up again the atmosphere of the original" (Burns 1962: 84).

Klingberg divides culture-specific phenomena into the following categories: literary references; references to mythology and popular belief; historical, religious and political background; building and home furnishing; food; customs and practices; plays and games; flora and fauna; personal

names, titles, names of domestic animals, names of objects; geographical names; weights and measures (1986: 17–18). Monika Adamczyk-Garbowska adds two more: names of clothes and culturally marked idioms and expressions (1988: 80–95).

Isabel Pascuala states that through this kind of “exotization” children do not have to leave their rooms in order to travel, because translations can broaden their horizons and allow them to reach the farthest corners of the world (2003: 277). Most young recipients like stories about exotic places, unfamiliar situations and strange people. They find foreignness attractive and intriguing: “Faced with new and seemingly strange texts, children don’t turn away: they look. They ask: what does this mean?” (Billings 2005: 18).

However, it is not so easy to reconstruct the “aroma” of the original. In principle, it is impossible to preserve the original “amount of foreignness” while retaining the clarity and intelligibility of the text without burdening children with additional cultural information. One should not expect that cultural references left in their original form will evoke the right associations in recipients who live in a different reality and, by virtue of their age, are less experienced. Remembering that a task easy for adults can be an insurmountable barrier for children, translators resort to various explanations to make the text more accessible to young readers. Klingberg calls this “context adaptation” and enumerates the following translation strategies used to solve the problem: “added explanation, rewording, explanatory translation, explanation outside the text, substitution of an equivalent in the culture of the target language, substitution of a rough equivalent in the culture of the target language, simplification, deletion, localization” (1986: 18).

Linguistic aspects of the source text, closely related to cultural issues, can be equally problematic in translation since language plays “an important role as the main component of culture, as well as being its total manifestation” (Benchat, Valdivieso 1992: 10). To solve language problems, translators can either create the illusion of “familiarity” by adjusting the text to linguistic norms of the target culture or break the norms and reveal peculiarities of the source language. Contemporary approaches recommend conformity to linguistic conventions and standardization of the language (Adamczyk-Garbowska 1988: 47–79), either as a general trend or a strategy limited to certain linguistic aspects. The first method is used in children’s books translated into Hebrew, because their style tends to be

rendered as more solemn (Shavit 1986: 128). In most European countries, translation involves less drastic changes in untypical or difficult words, sentences or sentence structures, e.g. adjustment of spelling or punctuation, reduction of repetitions, shorter sentences, shifts in emphasis, changes in syntax (Adamczyk-Garbowska 1988: 47–79; Batchelder 1966: 39; Klingberg 1986: 63–73; Puurtinen 1993: 63–103; Teodorowicz-Hellman 1996: 139–143).

Dilemmas that stem from the entertainment function of children's literature

Discussion of linguistic problems in translation does not exhaust the subject since books for children are intended not only to educate but also to entertain. Primarily, children's literature should meet its readers' expectations and satisfy their needs; books appreciated by adults cannot be the ones hated by children (Bredsdorff 1962: 12). A dose of language humour is introduced, even if it is only a byproduct of the story rather than a deliberate, widely accepted literary device (Tiemensma 2004: 2).

Children usually respond to the text spontaneously (Nowaczek 2006: 5); therefore, the translation, like the original, is expected to be entertaining (Newmark 1991 qtd in O'Connell 1999: 208). Translators of children's literature should pay attention to this quality, because "there are several kinds of stories, but only one difficult kind – the humorous" (Liebensberg quoted in Tiemensma 2004: 2). Children start using language humour very early. When they are two to four years old, they play with the names of objects; at the age of three to five, they begin distorting sounds and assembling nonsensical sentence structures. Between the ages of five and seven they imitate overheard humorous expressions, and when they turn seven, they are able to notice deviations from linguistic norms (Kolb 2006a: 1; Kolb 2006b: 1–2; Smith 2006: 2–3; McGhee 2002: 1–5).

To attract children's attention, writers often try to stimulate those linguistic abilities by misspellings and punctuation errors, sound deformations, anagrams, alliteration, nonsense words, onomatopoeic words, bizarre similes, hyperboles, repetitions, tautologies, riddles and puns, jokes involving logic, poems and parody, stylized forms of bad language, colloquial expressions, dialects and other non-standard forms of language, as well as foreign words and expressions (Adamczyk-Garbowska 1988:

47–80; Kenda 2002: 35–37; Klingberg 1986: 67–70; O’Sullivan 2005: 87–91; Tabbert 2002: 319–321). These linguistic devices are frequently untranslatable, and it is hard to find solutions that would sound natural and convincing in the target language. Because the expressions lack morphological, lexical or syntactic equivalents, translators may feel forced to diverge from the original (Grassegger 1985 qtd Tabbert 2002: 319). They “do the best [they] can in each individual case – and reduce the inevitable damage to a minimum” (Burns 1962: 84).

Research into translation does not offer much advice on handling language humour, apart from three general statements:

- 1) Whenever possible, use the same kind of solutions as in the original – this strategy will allow you to maintain the fullest equivalence. Language plays that are different from the original ones will invite a smile, but children will laugh for different reasons, which subverts the author’s intentions.
- 2) Try to render the language humour; do not delete fragments of the source text which are problematic from the translator’s point of view.
- 3) Do not use long explanations and inserted intratextual digressions that may spoil the comic effect because this would change a language play into “an indigestible language lesson,” as was the case with a German version of one Roald Dahl’s book (O’Sullivan 2005: 115).

Hence, translators should preserve as much of the original language play as possible, since “humour can bring children and children’s literature together, and children’s literature can bring humour to children” (Tiemensma 2004: 1).

When trying to render humour, one should not forget that distorted language, so natural for young readers, has an emotional impact because words “smell, taste, sound good or bad, warm or cold, dangerous or safe” (Oittinen 1993: 23). Through them, young recipients can experience not only joy but a whole array of other emotions. Translators should not rob them of these experiences.

Dilemmas that stem from the aesthetic function of children's literature

Every text, irrespective of its dissemination, has its "music" or – depending on the accepted terminology – "melody." "Texts which are read silently by the recipients, can also be assumed to have a phonological gestalt, which becomes evident to the careful reader and gives him further information about the intention of the sender and other factors" (Nord 2005: 132). These remarks have a special relevance to children's literature because, due to its "linguistic over-organization" (Barańczak 1992: 62; trans. K. A.), texts for children are music-like and resemble a "theatre of sounds" (Papuzińska 1994 qtd in Waksmund 1998: 73; trans. K.A.). Admittedly, this statement has been formulated with reference to children's poetry, but it suits all literary genres aimed at young readers.

It hardly needs saying that the sound of the source text can be a challenge to translators. Translated books should reflect the sound quality of their originals. The words must "flow smoothly" (Puurttinen 1993: 162), and the entire text "should live, roll, taste good" on both child's and adult's tongues (Oittinen 1993: 77). Therefore, retaining the sounds of the original is extremely important in translation. Some people claim that "a translation is no translation (...) unless it will give you the music of the poem along with the words of it" (Synge qtd in Baker 2000: 1).

This problem is related to another crucial issue, i.e. performance. In the case of children's literature, the term usually refers to reading aloud (Lathey 2003: 234; O'Sullivan 2005: 24; Oittinen 1993: 77–82), a practice which certainly plays an important role in young recipients' lives. It allows them to enter the literary world, develop linguistic skills and start learning to read for themselves (Eccleshare 1988: 5–13; Short, Pierce 1990: 5; Lis 2002: 61–63; Luckens 2003: xxi–xxiii; Oittinen 2000: 32–37). Most of all, it creates a bond between the reader, the text and the listener (Dollerup 2004: 83; Morup Hansen 2005: 102–108) because this relationship is a continuation of the oral tradition of storytelling involving myths, legends and folktales (Dollerup 2003: 86; Luckens 2003: xii).

If a book for children is intended for an environment with a deeply rooted cult of the spoken word, translators need to pay special attention to the musical value of the target text, thereby contributing to the aesthetic experience of its young recipients (Morup Hansen (2005: 102–108). When creating "for children's ears," they should not only preserve visual elements,

e.g. italics, bold type or punctuation, but also recreate such features of the spoken language as rhyme, rhythm, intonation, stress or tempo (Oittinen 2000: 110–111). Translators sometimes manipulate punctuation marks and the typographical design, convinced that the altered text better meets the requirements of reading aloud. If necessary, they change details which disturb verbal fluency of the written expression, e.g. numbers or characters' names (Dollerup 2003: 87; Nord 2003: 182–196; Stolt 1976: 136).

In the light of modern theories concerning translation of children's literature, one can distinguish "two different schools of 'respectable translators,' one targeting stories for reading aloud and another for silent reading even though translators may not be aware of this" (Dollerup 2003: 81). Those supporting the first option stress the importance of preserving both "read-aloud-ability and silent-reading-ability" (Puurtinen 1993: 165). They claim that "the proof of the potato is in its eating, the truth of the translation is in its reading" (Caws 1989 qtd in Oittinen 1993: 77), so a book devoid of "music" is not very interesting (Lis 2002: 61–63).

Scholars agree that before a translation appears in a bookstore, the translator should make sure that it is as easy to read aloud as the original. Moreover, translators should test this reading ease empirically (Adamczyk-Garbowska 1988: 34). "The translator has to create a text for oral rendition – the obvious way of doing this for translators is to read the translation aloud to themselves" (Morup Hansen 2005: 164). Eugene A. Nida and Charles R. Taber suggest that the only reliable test is to read the translation out loud in front of an audience (Nida, Taber 1982 qtd in Puurtinen 1993: 165–167), although their recommendation has not been verified. In *Linguistic Acceptability in Translated Children's Literature*, Tina Puurtinen categorizes read-aloud mistakes to measure "readability" (1993: 170).

The aesthetic reception of a translation depends also on illustrations, inextricably linked with children's literature since the beginning of the 19th century. They function as an attractive decoration emphasizing the plot (Oittinen 2000: 103), help to visualize characters and the setting (Stolt 1976: 137), reflect the mood and atmosphere of the book (Luckens 2003: 45), tell the same story as the text does or contradict it, leaving the gaps to be filled by children's imagination and interpretation (Winters, Schmidt 2001: 23). Their suggestiveness can be so great that "babies 'pick' ice creams off pages and 'lick' them, they 'smell' the flowers that are shown in the pictures, they 'kiss' dolls and teddies" (Eccleshare 1988: 15).

The verbal and the visual elements are so closely interrelated in children's books that a characteristic "tandem" or "marriage" is created (Luckens 2003: 43, 69). Carol J. Winters and Gray D. Schmidt claim that:

illustrations and the written text combine to form a single work of art. It is in the combination of text and illustration that meaning occurs. One without the other is impossible – or at least severely limits the experience of the reader and probably prohibits full understanding of the book's meaning (2001: 22).

Children's literature, therefore, is an audiovisual work in which illustrations act as a kind of stage scenery for verbal performance (Rhedin 1992 qtd in Oittinen 2003: 32). The connection between the illustrations and the text reflects the inextricable bond between the author and the illustrator which Maurice Sendak calls "seamlessness" (Luckens 2003: 45).

Due to the close connection between the verbal and the visual which influences reception, a book created for children's eyes and ears is both easier and more difficult to translate. Translation of an iconotext is sometimes regarded as less problematic since the pictures may serve as translation hints: "when the translator sees the original text with certain illustrations, the pictures influence solutions. This affects not only the choice of words but also the style of writing" (Oittinen 1993 qtd in Jobe 1996: 522). In Oittinen's view, illustrations are especially helpful when onomatopoeic words are translated, because thanks to them translators can visualize details of the described situations and express their ideas in words (Oittinen 2003: 132). Illustrations also help to convey physical features and can even suggest personality traits.

Sometimes, illustrations lead to changes in translated books. On the one hand, translators of children's literature can dispense with those fragments of the text which they consider as unnecessary repetitions of the illustrations. On the other hand, by trying to convey the written message more precisely, they excessively extend it by supplementing it with details from the illustrations (Oittinen 2000: 108). It is particularly difficult to maintain the verbal and visual harmony when depicted culture-specific elements are unknown or hard to explain to the new readers. Some translations are inconsistent when the adjusted text is accompanied by original illustrations which show characteristic traits of a foreign culture. To prevent such situations, publishers may oversimplify the verbal-visual layer or omit culture-specific details so as not to cause problems for future translators. This practice is widespread especially in co-productions (O'Sullivan 2005: 98–103; Stolt 1976: 144).

Translators should pay close attention to textual elements included in illustrations to avoid inconsistent bilingual messages which mix two cultural realities, as was the case in a French edition of *Emil und die Detectives* (O'Sullivan 2005: 100). It is also worth remembering that the main text and the caption accompanying the illustration should contain exactly the same form of a written expression (Adamczyk-Garbowska 1988: 160).

Although the text usually plays a superior role, priority is sometimes given to illustrations. For example, in *Max und Moritz* translated into Yiddish the word *piano* has been replaced with *organ* because the latter instrument is shown in the picture (Görlach 1997 qtd in Tabbert 2002: 316). However, changes like these can go much deeper, especially in co-productions, where the original illustrations must be preserved. Smith mentions an English-language book translated into Urdu where a whole passage about a car accident was altered because the new illustration showed the characters leaning over a newspaper and reading in Urdu about an accident involving a bicycle and a tonga (Smith 1962: 107). Translators may also have to dispense with entire passages of the original because its illustrations have been deleted. It is a strategy still used in Muslim countries whenever religious symbols are depicted. Naturally, interventions like these reduce the number of pages and may require new spatial adjustments of the text.

Other visual elements should also be kept in a translation, e.g. the typeface for words that appear in illustrations accompanying the text. According to Oittinen, this aspect contributes greatly to the emotional impact of a book (e.g. italics introduce familiarity), and alterations may influence its general reception (1993: 114). Children, especially those who cannot read to themselves, spend long hours poring over illustrations and listening to the voice of the grown-ups who read to them. Therefore, the text and the pictures should correspond to each other.

As Walter de la Mare writes, nothing but the best is good enough for the young. Unfortunately, it is impossible to determine which solutions will lead to translations that are good from a child's point of view. There is no single remedy for all translation problems. One should remember, however, that "to be successful, a translator must know how to interpret the whole and its parts; she/he must take into consideration not just the text in words, but the music, movement and illustrations" (Oittinen 1993: 138). Only this integral approach to translation helps to come closer to the ideal: "the best children's literature."

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