The Pedagogical Importance of Illustrations in Translated and

Non-Translated Children's Literature:

An Intersemiotic Approach

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Abstract

In Children's literature the text is almost always paired with vivid illustration to appeal to children more effectively. For young children, the pictorial code is a more direct means of communication than the verbal code. Such children will look at the pictures and tell the story in their own words. Also, children's books are used for different purposes at different times. Children's literature, for example, is a powerful means of educating children, through which they will be exposed to the set of behaviors deemed appropriate. That's why illustrations in children's stories are so important. Therefore, it is necessary to pay close attention to the illustrations and the relationships they hold with the linguistic texts of the story. The illustrations will serve better if they are educational. In the present study a number of translated and original Persian children story books were collected. All the books have illustrations which accompany the texts of the books. Then all the texts were studied carefully, analyzed and compared with their accompanying pictures (or illustrations). Each picture was analyzed based on its educational value. The results of the study revealed that there are significant differences in illustrations in translated and non-translated children story books.

Keywords

Pedagogy, intersemiotic translation, Children's Literature, translation and non-translation, illustration

1. Introduction

There have been different definitions of children's literature and attempts to determine the exact nature and features of it. Education Encyclopedia (2008) defines ChL as: Any literature that is enjoyed by children. More specifically, ChL comprises those books written and published for young people who

are not yet interested in adult literature or who may not possess the reading skills or developmental understandings necessary for its perusal.

While translating children's books, various adjustments may be required in order to accomplish the notions of what is good and appropriate for children and also what is regarded as the suitable level of comprehensibility in a given target culture (Puurtinen, 1998).

Polysystem theory (Even-Zohar, 1990) believes that translated literature is usually in a peripheral position and thus is loyal to norms and models that have been already established in the literary system. Therefore little attention is paid to the importance of this field of study.

In respect to the cognitive aspect of ChL, children and young adults understand new information easier when it is told through stories (Wells, 1986), and especially when these stories are accompanied by illustrations.

Drawing on insights of Halliday's social semiotic theory of language, the researchers in the 1990s were mainly interested in the extension of systemic—functional grammar to non-verbal semiotic resources and media.

2. Research Questions

Q1. What pedagogical roles do illustrations play in children's literature?

Q2. How are illustrations different in translated and non-translated children story books?

2.1 Children's Literature

2.1.1 Definition

Peter Hunt (1991, p. 61) promotes the division of Children's literature into "dead" and "live" books. He claims that the definition of Children's literature as books read by and being suitable for children is not practical as this would include every text ever read by a child. However, generally, it is only those books which are contemporary (i.e., live) which can be regarded as real children's books.

Klingberg (1973) shifts the focus of attention solely to children and gives a rather clear-cut definition of Children's literature: "all literature intended and produced for children".

2.1.2 Purpose

The purpose of Children's literature is, generally speaking, to introduce children to reading in a positive and amusing manner, while educating them, as stated earlier, about the more fundamental aspects of life. As humans are products of nature and are constantly interacting with it in some way, many children's books have the environment as their major focus.

In Children's literature the text is almost always paired with vivid illustration to appeal to children more effectively. Illustrations render the text more real and help early readers make connections between what is written, and what seems to be happening in a picture.

2.1.3 Functions of Children's Literature

Children's books are used for different purposes at different times. According to Puurtinen (1995; as cited in O'Connell, 1999, p. 210), Children's literature belongs simultaneously to both literary system

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and socio-educational system. The latter implies that Children's literature is a powerful means of educating children, through which they will be exposed to the set of behaviors deemed appropriate. This view of Children's literature affects the way books are chosen and translated for children.

2.1.4 Translation of Children's Literature

Klingberg identifies four aims for the translation of Children's literature which he groups in sets of two as follows (1986, p. 10):

a.   To further the international outlook, understanding and emotional experience of foreign environments and cultures and (b) to make more literature available to children;

b.   To contribute to the development of the readers' set of values (b) to give readers a text they can understand given their lack of knowledge.

2.2 Illustration and Translation

As semiotics implies semantics—signs, by definition, make sense—any channel of expression in any act of communication carries meaning. For this reason, even exclusively non-verbal communication deserves the label "text', thus accommodating phenomena as music and graphics, as well as sign language (for the deaf) and messages in Braille (for the blind). In a Translation Studies context, the two latter categories representing strictly conventionalized communication may very well be considered along with verbal-only (monosemiotic) and multi-channel (polysemiotic) texts.

2.2.1 Jacobson's Types of Translation

Illustrations can especially be seen as translations because as a process, the methodologies employed by illustrators are in the majority of cases the same as those adopted by translators to translate a text; and as products, illustrations play a very significant part in the reception of the literary work, so that the visual creation of the drawings is very similar to the verbal creation of the text during translation. I will discuss the reasons why illustration can be translation and certain ways through which the pictures can translate the text.

2.3 Illustrations as Translations

Similar to translation of poetry, illustration is only possible through the re-creation of the textual elements and values in the pictures. They are different in terms of the sign system, but constitute another construct of the (same) text in the universe of the illustrated book.

Translators select some elements, some aspects, or some parts of the source text to highlight and preserve; translators prioritize and privilege some parameters and not others; and, thus, translators represent some aspects of the source text partially or fully and others not at all in a translation (…) [C]ertain aspects or attributes of the source text come to represent the entire source text in translation. By definition, therefore, translation is metonymic: it is a form of representation in which parts or aspects of the source text come to stand for the whole (Tymoczko, 1999, pp. 54-55).

2.4 The Importance of Illustration for Children

A child is sensitive to pictures even before it can speak. This is not surprising if we consider that a baby easily distinguishes between its mother's face and other familiar faces on the one hand and strangers on

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the other hand. The child's mother, sister, brother and the stranger can all be regarded as living and moving images. In the same way, a child will recognize a favorite toy or pet.

These picture books have a series of pictures which tell a continuous story. For children of this age, the pictorial code is a more direct means of communication than the verbal code. Such children will look at the pictures and tell the story in their own words. This helps to develop their imagination. Thus the transmission of a message is not the privilege of written language alone. Pictorial language is literature in its own right. Even when words are used in books for pre-school children and beginning readers, these children understand the language and the message better when there are many pictures. Illustration accentuates the cognitive function.

Good illustrations can contribute to the overall development of the child by stimulating his imagination, arousing his perception, developing his potential.

3. Methodology

3.1 Source Materials

The corpus of the present study consists of 19 children story books. Some of the books (9 of them) were English story book which have been translated into Persian. The rest of the books (11 of them) were original Persian story books. Therefore, the corpus is parallel. In other words, the corpus consists of 19 translated and non-translated Persian story books. All the story books have illustrations.

The list of original (non-translated) story books is as follows:

✓   Once spring arrived

Taqi, Sh. (2013). *Once spring arrived*. Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults: Tehran.

✓   Are you my mother?

Shams, M. (2008). *Are you my mother*? Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults: Tehran.

✓   Hey! Will you be my friend?

Kalhor, M. (2005). *Hey! Will you be my friend*? Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults: Tehran.

✓   Little lamb's garden

Haqparast, N. (2013). *Little lamb's garden*. Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults: Tehran.

✓   The legend of bald birdman

Barjasteh, L. (2013). *The legend of bald birdman*. Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults: Tehran.

✓   Once upon time!

Taqdis, S. (2013). *Once upon a time*. Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults: Tehran.

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✓ Cloud goats

Shabannejad, A. (2008). *Cloud goats*. Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults: Tehran.

✓ The account of lion who was sad

Haqparast, N. (2008). *The account of a lion who was sad*. Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults: Tehran.

✓ Stair game

Katbi, S. (2004). *Stair game*. Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults: Tehran

✓ The account of Ahmad and the little baby

Tavakoli, N. (2013). *The account of Ahmad and the little baby*. Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults: Tehran.

✓ The Account of Uncle Nowruz and Aunt Spring

Qasemnia, Sh. (2014). *The Account of Uncle Nowruz and Aunt Spring*. Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults: Tehran.

The list of translated story books is as follows:

✓ Don't let the pigeon drive the bus

Mo, W. (2007). *Don't let the pigeon drive the bus*. Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults: Tehran.

✓ Little hungry boy

Delye, P. (2013). *Little hungry boy*. Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults: Tehran.

✓ Yellow and pink

Steig, W. (2013). *Yellow and pink*. Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults: Tehran.

✓ Where I am?...

Butterfield, M. (2001). *Where I am*?... Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults: Tehran.

✓ The Gruffalo

Donaldson, J. (2015). *The Gruffalo*. Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults: Tehran.

✓ Farmer duck

Waddell, M. (2014). *Farmer duck*. Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults: Tehran.

✓ How to cure a broken wing?

Graham, B. (2014). *How to cure a broken wing*? Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults: Tehran.

✓   Here is mine

Rui Llier, J. (2014). *Here is mine*. Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults: Tehran.

✓   Marvin gets mad

Theobald, J. (2015). *Marvin gets mad*. Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults: Tehran.

3.2 Type of Research

The present study makes use of a number of children story books, some of which are originally written in Persian, while the rest have been translated into Persian. Therefore, this is a corpus-based study. Also, since the texts are not the translations of each other therefore the corpus of the present study is a comparable one.

The study is also descriptive in nature since it tries to explain and compare/contrast the relationship between linguistic texts and illustrations in translated and non-translated Persian children's story books.

3.3 Data Collection

In order to collect the data for the present study a number of translated and original Persian children story books were collected. All the books have illustrations which accompany the texts of the books. Then all the texts were study carefully, analyzed and compared with their accompanying pictures (or illustrations). Each picture was analyzed based on its educational value.

3.4 Data Analysis

Looking from an intersemiotic point of view, it is believed that illustrations have specific relationships with their corresponding texts. These relations can be described as metonymic. In children story books, in particular, pictures accompany texts in order to make them more interesting and also to make it easier for the children to follow the story. Therefore, in the present study all the pictures, after being placed next to their corresponding texts, were explained in terms of their educational value. In other words, it was attempted to reveal how illustrations serve as educational tools.

4. Findings and Results

4.1 Non-Translation (Original) Stories

The first part of the analysis is devoted to stories which are originally written in Persian. Therefore, there is no translation. The aim of the present section is to investigate the way texts are translated by their accompanying pictures; in other words, how illustrations come to complement texts and serve as teaching tools.

Two criteria were taken into consideration for the selection of the books. First, all the stories contained texts as well as illustrations. This was needed because the focus of the present study is on the intersemiotic translation between texts and illustrations in children's stories, and how they may be different in translated and non-translated stories. Also, all the authors and illustrators were Iranian. This was of great importance since we wanted to check the difference between illustrations by Iranian

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(original) illustrators and those of foreign illustrators.

All the 11 stories were studied and analyzed. Here only one sample is presented.

The illustration is from The account of a lion who was sad.

Figure 1. The Account of a Lion Who was Sad

This was one of (and maybe the only) original Persian story with some kind of educational purpose. This is story is an attempt to teach numbers. In each page there are a certain number of animals, which represent a number. In the illustrations the kind of the animal is depicted. However, the emotions or feeling of the animals are not reproduced. Also the way animals are illustrated are so unrealistic; they are not the way they are supposed to be seen in the reality.

4.2 Translated Stories

The second part of the analysis is the investigation of translated stories into Persian. These stories include stories which are originally written and illustrated in English but translated into Persian; in other words, the illustrations are not from Iranian illustrators. This could help the researcher to compare the illustrations done by Iranian and English illustrators, and the way they accompany and complement texts.

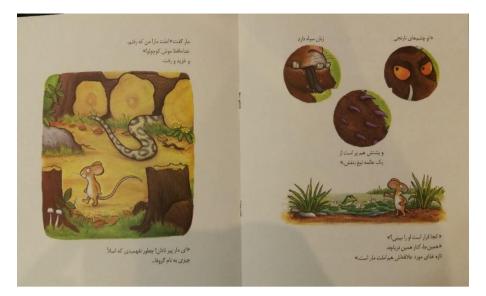The next sample picture is taken from the story The Gruffalo.

Figure 2. The Gruffalo

An interesting case of illustration is the one in the above story. At the age children read these stories (from 2 to 5), still they have not mastered their mother tongue, or we can claim still they are expanding it. Story books read to children play a significant role in helping them expand their language competence including their vocabulary.

Here we can see how every word expressed verbally is also accompanied by illustrations. In every page there are a number of parts of the body as well as actions. These include things which may be unknown to young children such as ivory, paw, the colors, etc. Illustrations which accompany these concepts help the child audience visualize them and understand them better. Therefore, we see how illustration, also as a translation strategy proposed by Baker (2011), can be employed to facilitate understanding and therefore as an educational tool. This is a good example of intersemiotic translation: expressing what is said verbally by means of non-verbal systems (illustrations).

5. Discussion

In the previous section two types of short stories were analyzed: the first type included English short stories with English illustrators, which are translated into Persian but the English illustrations are kept. The second type included original Persian short stories with Iranian illustrators. The texts were studied and compared with their corresponding illustrations. The goal was to see whether there is any difference between the educational value of illustrations in English and Persian children short stories.

The analyses revealed some significant points which can be summarized as follows:

1)   Facial expressions in original non-translated Persian stories are not recognizable; however, this is something quite different from the quality of printing, rather it's a matter of the quality of the illustrations.

2)   The variety in and creativity of illustrations. This has to do with the level of professionalism. In some of the original stories some of the illustrations are repeated without any change. This was not seen in any of the translated story books.

3)   Part of the quality of the illustrations has to do with the degree to which the illustrations resemble the reality; in other words, how easily can the child audience recognize what the entity depicted is. However, the illustrations in original Persian stories are (mainly) not realistic.

4)   The illustrations in original non-translated Persian stories were not dynamic; in other words, they do not narrate the story in the same way that the verbal words do. Therefore, it must be difficult for the child audience to make coherent story out of "discontinuous" illustrations which depict one single character or event among others.

5)   The illustrations in original non-translated Persian stories did not match (for some cases) the content presented by verbal texts; something is expressed in one page verbally but the related illustration is given in the next page.

6)   The illustrations in original non-translated Persian stories—for many of the cases—did not seem to serve educational purposes, except for some cases.

7)   In original non-translated Persian stories most of the illustrations are of surprisingly low quality.

8)   Omission could be seen in the illustrations original non-translated Persian stories, so that only limited aspects or contents of what was expressed verbally was translated by the illustrations.

9)   Illustrations may narrate the story, so that the child audience can follow the story by looking at the illustrations.

10)   The illustrations are dynamic rather static in translated stories.

11)   Illustrations are extremely educational in translated stories.

6. Conclusion

6.1 Restatement of Research Questions

Q1. What pedagogical roles do illustrations play in children's literature?

Children's literature is a genre with a variety of interesting and effective rhetorical techniques seeking to entertain children and educate them about the fundamentals in life. Shavit (1986, p. ix) elucidates the importance of Children's literature in this way:

As a result of society's concept of childhood, children's literature, unlike adult literature, was considered an important vehicle for achieving certain aims in the education of children […].

Also according to Puurtinen (1995; as cited in O'Connell, 1999, p. 210), Children's literature belongs simultaneously to both literary system and socio-educational system. The latter implies that Children's literature is a powerful means of educating children.

Considering the importance of children's literature and the inseparability of illustrations as an essential part of children's literature, one cannot underestimate the educational value of illustrations in children's literature.

Q2. How are illustrations different in translated and non-translated children story books?

As the points (especially number 6) mentioned in the discussion part revealed, the translated stories were far more successful in their illustrations as educational tools.

6.2 Conclusion

According to Tymoczko (1999, p. 54), translations are always carried out in a metonymic way. This means that translations do not match all the aspects of the source text, but rather some parts of the source text are taken to the target text and some other parts are left "un-transferred". When translating for children this process of selection should be based on some educational purpose.

Also the pedagogical implications of the present study can be generally categorized into several groups:

The implications for illustrators as translators,

The implications for translation studies, and

The implications for the use of illustrations for educational purposes.

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