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TRANSLATING CULTURAL SIGNS IN CHILDREN'S PICTURE BOOKS

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Abstract

Every happening in one's life may be regarded by her/him as a leading phenomenon to other happenings. This leading phenomenon which can anticipate the subsequent happenings is called SIGN. Signs are unique for every group of human being and hence culture-specific. This is even true for every individual. Signs permeate in every aspect of universe. Among these fields, children's literature is studied in this article, especially in the field of translating this kind of literature which consists of transferring cultural and visual aspects.

According to the model of '*Semiotic Entity as a Unit of Translation*', proposed by Hatim and Mason (1990), this article aims at identifying the process of translating cultural signs in children's picture books. Also this article investigates a) The relationship between the words and pictures as two aspects of semiotics in children's picture books b) The process of transferring this relationship into the target language and c) According to the concept of culture specific "Horizontal elongation" proposed by Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006), the direction of the 'given' and 'new' information in visual communication (here in pictures) is analyzed in two Western and Persian cultures. To achieve these aims, one of

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Silverstein's poems from *Where the Sidewalk Ends* collection and its Persian translations by Hirmandi (2010) and Morad Hosseini (2007) were analyzed.

The results showed that both translators had identified the semiotic entity in "Identification" procedure but had failed to successfully transfer the intentions of the message. In addition none of the translators had respected the relationship of complementary aspects of words and the picture. In terms of "horizontal elongation", as there were no contributing art directors in both translations to manage the culture specific directions, the message which is emitted by this visual aspect, is not conveyed in the translated texts.

It is suggested that translators get specialized acquaintance with the art of illustration and visual literacy in children's literature to make a better interpretation of picture books and publishers use the art directors as the managers of their artworks.

Keywords: children's and young adults' literature, signs, pictures, translation

1. Introduction

Every act of translation is supposed to show communicate well. To reach such a goal, it is necessary for a translator to concern for the TT reader's 'context of situation' and 'context of culture'. The 'context of situation' may be realized by the needs itself determined by the target reader's age which affects the procedure of translation which a translator may adopt. One group of readers which should be paid much attention to is children. This attention gets more prominence when semiotic and visual aspects, which incorporate culture and connotations, contribute to convey meaning whose understanding calls for a prior knowledge of related concepts.

Much of what we realize in our daily or specialized aspects of life is done not directly but through signs which convey something other than themselves. While there are some universals, perception of such signs is much relied on the cultural background of individuals. In the act of

translation, these nation-specific dimensions of texts may be problematic for the TL child reader.

This problem may be more manifested if some part of the job of words in the SL text is relegated to the pictures as in picture books, one type of children's literature. In such a case words and pictures play a bilateral role in conveying the meaning. It is the job of the translator to realize the relationship between the two sign systems, namely linguistic and visual, and the method of translation to make the text readable for the intended target reader. Also to convey the intended meaning, art directors play a crucial role in translated texts which include the original pictures. Art directors, specialized in both literature and illustrations, realize that some aspects of the original pictures should be conversed in terms of direction and elongation in order to be meaningful for a TT reader.

Realizing the meaning conveyed through textual or visual 'Signs' is the commission of 'Semiotics', which is discussed in this article, by referring to Hatim and Mason's (1990) framework for textual signs. In addition Kress and Van Leeuwen's (2006) concept of culture specific 'horizontal elongation' would be used to investigate whether the direction of positioning the pictures from ST (Western) to the TT (Persian) are correctly acted.

Up to now many researchs have been conducted in the area of translating picture books to explore the relationship between the words and pictures, some of which are as follows:

Oittinen (2008) in her article focuses on multiple issues such as: 1) Translating as rewriting 2) The issue of co-print in Picture book translations 3) How the visual information in a story, e.g. picture book, influences the verbal information and vice versa. With regards to the third item, Oittinen concludes that in picture books whole situations including the words, the illustration, and the whole (imagined) reading-aloud situation is to be translated.

Van Meerbergen (2006), on the basis of Kress and Van Leeuwen's (2006) multimodal analysis integrated into a descriptive model of translation analysis, proposed by Toury (1995), considers the translation

of picture books. She concludes that by using a multimodal analysis, not only the changing semiotic interplay between the verbal and the visual can be studied, but it also allows the study of how the semiotic content of images changes when placed into a new textual and socio-cultural context.

Some of the issues Thomsom-Wohlgemuth (1998) focuses on in chapter 2 of his MA project about the problems of translating illustrations in children's literature are: The style of the text should correspond to the style of the illustrations in a book and to look optimally author/ translator and artist complete each other's work. He continues that whether the original illustrations are taken into the TT or new ones are commissioned, the translator should consider the illustrations of the TT book to produce a consistent translation.

This article, contrary to the aforementioned studies, investigates the semiotic meaning in both textual and visual signs in one of Silverstein's poetry collections which are illustrated by the poet himself. Although there is no continuous narration of the illustrations as in picture books, each illustration pertaining to one poem contributes to convey the ultimate meaning. The textual signs are analyzed within the model of '*Semiotic Entity as a Unit of Translation*', proposed by Hatim and Mason (1990).

2. Children's Literature

On the one hand, some assume that children would learn better when they are not obliged to learn, i.e., through playing games, reading story books for pleasure or murmuring children's poetry, for an instance, Nikolajeva (n.d) believes that "Children's literature has always been related to pedagogic' and as a 'powerful means for educating children" (qtd in Madallel, 2004). On the other hand, some others like Lensnik-Oberstein (2005, p.21) may differentiate books used for didactics from children's literature, by stating:

To the children's literature critic the outstanding characteristic of 'children's literature' is that it is supposed to speak to the reading child through amusement and inherent appeal, and not through primarily didactic messages, which are described as being merely instructive, coercive, intrusive, or dull to the reading child. This also often comes to be the main means of indicating the 'literary' qualities of children's books

Nevertheless it is the child's needs that should define the literature written for them and adults' realized needs of children should not intrude into the literature. Therefore the definition of children's literature must be underpinned by PURPOSE as Lensnik-Oberstein (ibid, p: 15) insists: "The definition of 'children's literature' therefore is underpinned by purpose: it wants to be something in particular, because this is supposed to connect it with that reading audience—'children'—with which it declares itself to be overtly and purposefully concerned". Literature written for children should satisfy their situation that especial needs in different situations and age groups.

According to Oittinen (2000), children's literature has some characteristics such as: a) it is to be read aloud and b) it is illustrated. Illustrations in picture books which are a very important part of this kind of literature and can satisfy the situation of children, would be discussed in due section.

In the following section, picture books provided for children, the main concern of this research would be analyzed and the relationship between the appropriateness of each kind of picture books for each age group would be manifested briefly.

3. Picture Books

Younger children are mostly attracted to the colorful pictures depicted in the books appropriate for them. Some of the books allocated to them contain no words and there are just a series of continuous pictures which

they interpret for themselves or their parents may do the job. Whether there are words included in picture books or not, pictures help children to grasp the content more easily and they may make more convenient interaction with the outer world. Thomsom-Wohlgemuth (1998) confirms that:

Through pictures, children learn about their surroundings and the world. When children are read to, picture helps them to imagine the individual characters, the scenery, etc. Through pictures, they learn about contexts in the text when reading on their own; through pictures, their imagination develops; through pictures, they are given incentives to continue with their reading. (p.73)

Where there are pictures used, both words and pictures play their role to convey the meaning. Van Meerbergen (2006) describes such a text in which words and pictures have a bilateral interplay as 'Multimodal text': "The picture book will thus be considered as a multimodal text where meaning is created through a complex interaction between verbal and visual text components" (p.2). She further defines the 'multimodal' text as being realized through more than one semiotic code (multisemiotic). In this respect Oittinen (2008), titles picture books as "iconotexts" which incorporate two semiotic systems, the verbal and visual and are based on series of images and have a serial character and instead of frames, picture books have the turnings of the pages. In picture books the ideas of the illustrator gets the same prominence as that of the author. Oittinen (2000) calls the relationship between the author, illustrator, translator and the publisher as "Dialogic relation". Consequently the meaning in picture books is perceived through such a dialogue and pictures are regarded as a special kind of language through which communication is possible.

There are several kinds of picture books each of which are appropriate for specific children in specific ages. Moss and Suben (1995) point that small children are literal-minded as they do not have a wealth

of associations for new ideas and therefore the picture books for them should not be overwhelmed. Norton (1999) classifies the kinds of picture books and offers the most suitable age category of readers for each:

-Mother goose rhymes: Are the first literature enjoyed by young children who are experimenting with their own language patterns. They can aid children through the development of their language.

-Alphabet books: They have been used for a long time to help young children identify familiar objects and letters and sounds. One kind of it is used for very young children and the other for older ones which contains rich details and numerous objects to develop their observation and discussion skills.

-Counting books: As alphabet books, they are used for young children in different degrees of difficulty and are often used for educational purposes, like one-to-one correspondence and counting sequentially from one to ten.

-Concept books: They appear in different levels of difficulty for children in different levels of understanding to help them understand both easy concepts (such as red and circle) and more abstract ones (such as prepositions, antonyms).

-Wordless books: They contain various degrees of detail and plot complexity and therefore are for children of different ages and reading levels.

-Easy-to-read books: Are designed to be read by children in their beginning reading skills (pp. 216-233)

4. Translating Children's Literature

An historical overview of translation studies shows that the transformation of linguistic and prescriptive approaches to translation to more descriptive ones has made a path for study of translation for children. Lathey (2006) in her introduction insisting on this trend, summarizes O'Connell who over viewing translation studies in relation

to the translating of children's literature and a more descriptive approach that addresses the purpose and reception of the translated text for children in the target culture, concludes with a plea for regarding the children's literature in translation courses, and also a broadening of definitions to include visual elements as well as audiovisual texts in children's literature.

Children's literature consists of both the literature originally written and also the translated literature from other cultures. Nowadays it is obvious that through the rapid-progressing media, the borders between cultures are being broken and culture-specific notions permeate through the borders. Children are also among others, affected by this process. The translated literature for them is another medium assisting here. Vandergrift (2009) states that the translation of children's books from other languages enhances the number of excellent literary works for young people, introduces them to life in other cultures, and makes an international perspective and an understanding of both the uniqueness and the universality of human experience. In each act of translation, according to the purpose and the situation of the translation, some alterations may be foreseen. Children's literature translation is of no exception. This may occur especially in cases in which the original text has not been intended for children. In such a situation, adaptation would be necessary to satisfy the expectations of the child reader.

Nevertheless disturbing the integrity of SL or simply adapting it in children's translation may have some undesirable consequences as well. Jobe (2005) states that a word for word and adapted translation may both have dangers; the latter may give rise to lack of validity and readability and the former may be far removed from the author's original intent. As it is clear, translating for children is a true challenge through which a translator should find the best way.

Obviously, for children to benefit from the translated literature, the texts should communicate properly and hence be intratextually coherent and readable, if children are supposed to enjoy the literature. Readability has been previously seen as the simplicity of linguistic choices as

Thomson-Wohlgemuth (1998, p.12) points out, but the most recent view stated by him (*ibid*) is that of Oittinen's, which beside textual elements insists on the "entire reader's situation": “[which] is much more than just counting nouns, adjectives or other constituents in a text. Reading is always linked with emotional charge [...], reading means living and feeling the text to be read.”

Another characteristic of children's literature translation is 'reading'. Both the translator and the reader child are considered as readers who have their own interpretation of, respectively, ST/ the future child reader and TT as Oittinen (2000) persists.

These issues should also be regarded in translating children's literature. Some of ST aspects may be not tangible and readable for the specified TT reader (especially in culture-bound terms and the items which are interpreted semiotically). Also the choice of words and equivalence of terms should match the comprehensibility of the intended reader child. Thomson-Wohlgemuth (1998) cites the studies of psycholinguists on the concreteness and abstractness of expressions, which have conveyed that small children need concrete language with preference for verbs not so many nouns and also repetitions of words and sentences are preferred, and that while children up to the age of about 11 have a limited capacity to understand idioms, metaphors or other figurative devices, in puberty their linguistic comprehension and cultural familiarity fully develop. As a result, the translator should be conscious in choice of words and also equivalence of cultural words, which act as sign.

5. Translating Picture Books

In picture books some parts of the theme of the story is conveyed through the pictures, and words are kept silent in this respect. There are cases in which pictures and words act in a unique dimension to transfer the meaning. But in other cases, what pictures say is not what depicted in words and this is the reason why Nodelman (2005) describes picture books as being ‘inherently ironic’. This is the case of the relation

between the words and pictures in Silverstein's *Santa and Reindeers* (the intended material to be analyzed in this article).

When translating picture books, the translator should pay attention to the direction of the relationship between words and pictures to make a faithful interpretation of the multisemiotic SL text. Also as Oittinen (2000) mentions, in translation where parts contribute to the whole, the illustrator's interpretation of the story should be taken into consideration. Sometimes it is necessary to convert the message of pictures into words for the readability of the TT to be achieved as VanMeerbergen (2006, p.15) asserts:

[..] other translated picture book texts by Bruna that are part of the larger study that includes this paper, several of the translated texts show signs of explicitation in the relationship between words and images, which also proved to be the case in translated film texts analyzed by Baumgarten (2008).

There are situations in which the original pictures are transferred in to the TT, and the translator should be wary about the cultural and unfamiliar aspects or strangeness of the pictures in translating for the young readers. Provided that the tolerance of strangeness in young readers is measured, the translator can decide more easily whether to simply transfer the SL material to keep the flow of reading or to seek a way to make the strange SL input more tangible for the TT reader. O'Sullivan (2005) defines "strangeness" as what is not yet familiar to the child readers in the process of acquiring basic knowledge and experience of the world around them.

There are two opposite results gained in the problem of the tolerance of strangeness in children: one is done by Puurtinen (1992):

Tiina Puurtinen, who has studied the readability of two Finnish translations of L. Frank Baum's *The Wizard of Oz*, observes that tolerance for strangeness is much lower in children's literature than in books for adults, which makes

readability as a whole a key issue within translating for children (in Oittinen: 2000, p. 33).

However as Oittinen (2000) continues, the results of Puurtinen may be changed through translation situations such as books, cultures, children and child image, and hence this result is not an unyielding rule.

The other result obtained from the problem is done by Saif (1995, qtd. in O'Sullivan 2005) who puts forward that the observations of a publisher promoting Swedish children's literature in the Arabic-speaking area have showed that children are not frustrated by an unknown or foreign setting, because their main attention is focused on the action of the plot and that the child's imagination is not constrained by cultural limits.

Nevertheless in the case of the researcher's study, as would be discussed in detail in related paragraphs, the problem lies not only in strangeness of the terms but also on the cultural and connotative aspects they depict as sign, which should be necessarily interpreted in order to yield meaning. On the importance of the strange cultural items in translation O'Sullivan (2005) asserts:

The representational aspects of a foreign culture (time, place, natural conditions, customs, history, the cultural heritage) may be less disruptive than the norms and attitudes of a source text that do not coincide with those of the target culture. It is the conceptual elements of a foreign culture that make a text seem particularly 'foreign' and thus harder to communicate. The more 'foreign' a text is in this way, the lower are the chances that it will be translated at all. (p.82)

She (2005) continues that the status of the SL is a determining factor in cutting or adapting the foreign elements; the lower the status of a text, the more freely is it treated.

6. Semiotics in Children's in Children's Literature

Some semioticians like Saussure insist on the linguistic dimension of semiotics. Saussure considers language as the most important aspect of the field. Analyzing sign systems other than language is better fitted to the semiotic model of Pierce. In children's literature both linguistic and visual semiotics are analyzable. Culture-specific aspects of SL may be regarded as signs, signifying other things. Myth as one culture-specific notion which may be used in children's literature is analyzed within the semiotic field by one of the leading semioticians, namely, Umberto Eco. According to Saxby (2005) the historical development of myth "is from imagination to beliefs" (p.162).

What myth postulates is about the natural or real, grotesque or unreal phenomena, life before birth and an afterlife, a pantheon of deities, demi-gods, nymphs, satyrs and a multitude of other supernatural creatures as Saxby (ibid) asserts.

According to Saxby (p.163) although concepts presented by some of the myths are universally accepted by all nations, there are myths which are perceived only by the nations from which they originated: "the form and tone of the *mythos*, the environmental details, the characteristics and attributes of the local deities, spirits and the human participants in the drama vary with the culture that gave the stories birth". Myth also intrudes into the children's literature. Children can broaden their worldview through challenging with myth as Saxby (ibid) confirms: "Myth and legend, being truly multicultural, introduce children to diversity of national temperaments and to different ways of confronting universal and ongoing questions about life and human nature."

Signs in children's literature are seen not only in words but also in visual aspects as, the typography of words, the overall format of the book and the most importantly in the pictures, which may be culture-specific. Oittinen (2000) emphasizes the visual appearance of a book, comprising not only illustrations but also actual print, the shape and style of letters and headings, and book's entire layout, which influences the reader emotionally.

According to Pierce's sign triad categorization, i.e. index, icon and symbol, pictures are categorized as iconic, since pictures visualize what they are supposed to depict.

One should not go very far to seek for visuals of communication. The everyday materials of communication, namely spoken and written forms of communication, also embrace the visuals: as Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) believe, when one is talking, the spoken form is combined with modes such as facial expressions and gestures and totally various forms of self-expression. In terms of written forms, they believe that more than language is involved in it, for example, the material on which the text is written, the material with which the text is written, letters shaped as type of font, and the layout which is imposed on the material substance, are all visual aspects to be considered in written materials.

One other visual aspect in written forms is the direction of writing, which also is considered by Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006). They believe that as different cultures use different directions in their written form (right to left, left to right, from top to bottom, or in circular mode from the center to the outside), different values are attached to these dimensions of visual space. The distribution of information (thematization) can be managed by positioning of the new and given data in due direction according to the culture under study. This distributing of information is workable in pictures as well, as Kress and Van Leeuwen (ibid) confirm that this kind of valuation (different directions and their meanings in different cultures), impose its influence beyond writing and the elements of 'center or margin', and 'top or bottom' have a role in visual semiotics of different cultures. These concepts are to be discussed more in the following paragraph.

As Kress and Van Leeuwen step forward in analyzing visuals and considering the basic shapes and their meaning which they emit in each culture, they postulate that the elongation of the shapes in each directions, whether horizontally or vertically, can posit different meanings as well. Following them *Vertical elongation*, intensifies the

distinction between top and bottom and as a result creates a prejudice toward hierarchy and opposition (what is the most important goes on top and what is less important is left to the bottom).

They assert that in western culture, *horizontal elongation* (what we focus on in this study), makes a shape to lean towards a structure that has the 'Given' information (the known and familiar information) on the left as the point of departure, and the 'New' information (not yet known information) on the right. This structure is different in different writing systems.

The notion of 'Horizontal elongation' which posits meaning should be regarded in the process of translating picture books, those cases in which the original pictures are transmitted into the TT. This should be done by the 'art director'. As Tarhande (2009, pp.86-88) mentions, an art director who is specialized in literature and in the art of illustration, has the following jobs:

- To read the text submitted by the author and according to the style of the text, to choose an illustrator who can make the most relevant relation between the text and the illustrations.
- To unite the staff who contribute in producing an art work and
- To take the responsibility of the emotional or psychological effects of the final artwork and its success to address the reader.

According to Trahande (ibid) the art directors are not much considered in the publication system of Iran and publishers rarely relegate the job of the art directors to themselves. This matter can impose problems, especially in terms of translated works.

7. Semiotics in Shel Verstein's Silverstein

A close look at *Where the sidewalk ends* would reveal that not only Silverstein speaks through words and the informality of his speech but also through the pictures he has made for most of his poems,

transposition of some the poems and so on. MacDonald¹ (2003) realizes some aspects, other than words, in the collection which are used to convey meaning, some of which are in the 'opening and closing poems', 'grammar of the words', 'punctuation' and 'picture':

-The collection has an opening, the poem *Invitation*, which connotes that the collection is like a building whose door is the first poem through which the reader is invited in by the poet's voice (pp. 76-77).

-The paginations are two-page ordered and the transposition of the poems are not accidental (p.76).

-*The search*, being placed at the end of the collection, shows the disagreement of Silverstein with determining an extreme limit for the book and life. To be interesting, life should lie in moving forward not in achievement of the aimed product (p.83).

-There are some grammatical errors in *my beard*, which are faded by the powerful rhythm of the poem: never wears no clothes which is rhymed with I goes. This is one of the informal features of the collection and a sign for 'nakedness' being unimportant (p.81).

-The three dots after the title of *Merry* are sign of the decreasing feelings just as the approach of feelings is after the Christmas holidays (82).

-The picture of the *Invitation* is a long candle, burning in an old candlestick which has been used in days with no electricity and nowadays is a reminder of storytellers and long night stories. The candle is almost being used but it is a sign of the storytelling party being held. This candlestick is used again at the end of the collection after the index page and also at the acknowledgement page. Silverstein in the acknowledgement page expresses his gratitude to the aids of another poet of children and also to the Publisher.

The candle perhaps is burning to thank their efforts or to show a complete cycle of the collection (p.80).

Another poem in which signs are used is *Santa and the Reindeer*, the focus of this study. This poem is about the well-known myth of Santa which is Clause and his eight flying reindeer but there happens some unexpected events. While Santa and reindeer are always known for their gift giving and generosity, in this poem, it is one of the reindeer (this reindeer is not named in the poem) who asks Santa for a Christmas gift insistently and this request distresses Santa because he is impatient to move for the gift-giving ceremony as MacDonald (2003) puts. Stranger than that is the gift Santa gives the reindeer which is a flea he catches from among his beard and as a result according to MacDonald, Santa is no more a wise and clean angel, rather he carries fleas and impatience. Also one vague issue is that when the reindeer receives the unusual gift, she/he shouts 'gee'; which is not clear whether it is a cry of happiness or of distress, as MacDonald doubts. There is also a 'falling star' in the poem which is according to MacDonald a sign of death and makes the message of the poem vaguer.

There are also some other signs which should be interpreted in order to grasp the meaning of the poem. While the total message and moral conclusion of the poem is not clear, it is interesting for a curious child to know or to discover which of the reindeer has insistently required a gift. In addition to names of the reindeer each of which has a connotative clue, pictures¹ made by Silverstein himself also add to the information children need in order to guess the name of the reindeer in the picture. On how children perceive pictures, Nodelman (2005) claims:

Intriguingly, young children tend to scan a picture with equal attention to all parts; the ability to pick out and focus on the human at the centre is therefore a learned activity, and one that reinforces important cultural assumptions, not just about the relative value of particular objects, but also about the general assumption that objects do indeed have

different values and do therefore require different degrees of attention (p.114).

According to Nodelman, as children pay attention to all parts of a picture, what they may perceive from the picture is that the reindeer in the picture is murmuring and is standing still; the reindeer and Santa are standing in front of each other; the reindeer having large antlers and little angry eyes, seems to be ready to attack Santa; and on the other side Santa having puffed eyes and the tassel on his hat looks disheveled; there is no sign of a gentle request by the reindeer and the confrontation of the two is very obvious (MacDonald, 2003).

In the previous paragraphs it was mentioned that the names of the reindeer have a specific meaning which should be considered. The reindeers are named as: Dasher, Dancer, Prancer, Vixen, Comet, Cupid, Donner, Blitzen, (India Parenting web site, 2010) which are based on the publication of poem "A visit from Saint Nicholas" in 1823 which is also known as "The night before Christmas" or 'T'was the night before Christmas' by Clement Clarke Moore:

When, what to my wondering eyes should appear,
But a miniature sleigh, and eight tinny reindeer,
With a little old driver, so lively and quick,
I knew in a moment it must be St Nick.
More rapid than eagles his coursers they came,
And he whistled, and shouted, and called them by name;
Now Dasher! now, Dancer! now, Prancer and Vixen!
On, Comet! On, Cupid! on, on Donner and Blitzen!
To the top of the porch! to the top of the wall!
Now dash away! dash away! dash away all!

As to the order of the reindeer,

if the reindeer were placed in the same order as they appear in the poem, then their position in the sleigh can be obtained and that reindeer are both male and female and are called out alternately: the left line is said to contain male reindeer in order Dasher, Prancer, Comet,

and Donner, The right line will have the female reindeer in order Dancer, Vixen, Cupid, and Blitzen, each of which has been assigned a description based on its name. (India Parenting web site, 2010)

TABLE 1. Names and the description of the santa's reindeer (Rudolph, the ninth reindeer, is added in later years to the myth).

| NAME OF REINDEER | DESCRIPTIONS |
|------------------|--|
| DASHER | The leader The fastest |
| DANCER | Graceful |
| PRANCER | Stands behind Dasher The most powerful |
| VIXEN | Beautiful Powerful Female counterpart of Prancer |
| COMET | Making children happy |
| CUPID | Love-bringing |
| DONNER | Thunder |
| BLITZEN | Lightning |
| RUDOLPH | RED-NOSED Lights up the way Donner's son |

According to MacDonald (2003) to realize the right reindeer, one should know the names of the 8 reindeer, mentioned in Moor's poem, Dasher or Vixen, as these are just the two reindeer not named by Silverstein. She continues that it is impossible to consider Rudolph to be the intended reindeer as the reindeer in the illustration has a normal nose and has a rude character contrary to courteous Rudolph.

A child knowing the mentioned assumptions may guess the name of the reindeer and the process of the reading may become more interesting for her/him.

8. Translation of Santa and the Reindeer

To translate the *Santa and Reindeer*, one should pay attention to mentioned aspects of linguistic and visual semiotics.

According to Hatim and Mason's (1990) 'semiotic entity as a unit of translation', a translator should be involved in a four-level procedure to translate semiotically:

Stage 1 Identification The translator identifies a source-system semiotic entity.

This will be a constituent element of a certain cultural (sub-) system.

Stage 2 Information The translator identifies an information core.

Stage 3 Explication If the information equivalent is not self-sufficient, translator will seek to explicate by means of synonymy, expansion, paraphrase, etc.

Stage 4 Transformation Having retrieved the information core and carried out the necessary modification, the translator then considers what is missing in terms of intentionality and status as a sign (p.106)

Two translations of Silverstein's collection are chosen, one by Hirmandi (2010) and the other by Morad Hosseini (2007). The translations of the eight reindeer's names by the two translators are provided below in sequence with their related original terms, as they are presented in the TL and SL texts (the researcher has considered that the Persian terms in both translations are put in the same sequence as the originals).

The original terms are considered to be semiotically burdened to be taken as the unit of translation, as it is supposed by Hatim and Mason (1990). They are to be analyzed semiotically in terms of the connotations they posit. The translations offered by the translators would be compared to the original names in terms of accurateness of conveying the connotations intended, following the aforementioned steps suggested by Hatim and Mason (1990).

Table 2. Hirmandi's translation

| ORIGINAL TERMS | HIRMANDI'S TRANSLATIONS |
|----------------|-------------------------|
| DANCER | رقصان |
| PRANCER | لگد پړان |
| DONNER | بی امان |
| BLITZEN | الهه عشق |
| COMET | ستاره دنباله دار |
| CUPID | ؟ |

Table 3. MoradHosseini's translation

| ORIGINAL TERMS | MORADHOSSEINI'S TRANSLATIONS |
|----------------|------------------------------|
| DANCER | گلکام |
| PRANCER | عروسکام |
| DONNER | ناز نازکام |
| BLITZEN | ملوسکام |
| COMET | گوزنکام |
| CUPID | ؟ |

Based on the mentioned stages, a comparison between two translations is provided:

Stage 1: Both of the translators have 'identified' that the names of the reindeer have signification:

- Hirmandi, although almost unsuccessful, has tried to translate the names.
- While has put unrelated terms instead of the names, MoradHosseini has used one footnote line which shows his acknowledgement of the significance of the names.

Stage 2: - Hirmand has used denotative and dictionary meaning of the names.

- The equivalents MoradHosseini has used, does not fall into the denotational category.

Stage 3: None of the translators' equivalents conformed to this stage.

Stage 4: - Hirmandi has almost completely missed the intentions and connotative meanings of the names.

-MoradHosseini has completely missed this part.

- Both of the translators have put five terms instead of the six names of the reindeer used by Silverstein.
- MoradHosseini has not tried to connect the Persian translations to the original names.
- Hirmandi has tried to use terms which denote the meanings of the names, but he has mostly failed to use the connotations:
 - As it is shown in Tables 1, *Dancer* has a 'graceful' character. Hirmandi has translated it into "رقصان" (: being in dancing motions) which in Persian culture does not connote being graceful.
 - *Prancer* is 'the most powerful' reindeer and is translated into 'لگد پیران' (: kicking one), which not only does not connote being powerful but rather connotes something negative.
 - *Donner* means 'thunder' and is translated into 'بی امان' (: relentless). Of course the word relentless may connote something about lightning.
 - *Blitzen* means 'lightening' and is translated as "الهه عشق" (: goddess of love)
 - *Comet* who 'makes children happy' is translated to "ستاره دنباله دار".

Also as stated in previous paragraphs, the pictures contribute much in conveying the meaning of the poem. Unless the reader knows the true characteristics of the Santa and reindeer, s/he cannot grasp the intended unexpected message in the picture. However, the translators had not acknowledged the messages in the pictures. While the reindeer shouts 'gee' when she/he receives the flea, in the picture the reindeer and Santa are looking angrily at each other and as Macdonald (2003) says it is not clear that whether the shout is of happiness or of distress and the falling

star adds to the doubt; but equivalents used by the translators, may make the reader to believe that the shout is of happiness:

Table 4: Translators' Equivalents

| THE ORIGINAL WORD | PERSIAN TRANSLATION |
|-------------------|---|
| GEE | HIRMANDI: جانمی جان! |
| | MORADHOSSEINI: جانمی جان! جونمی جون! |

Therefore as the poem does not clearly state its moral message, and as realizing some aspect of the poem needs prior cultural knowledge, it seems that translators should have taken some alternative procedures. The proposed procedures by the researcher may be:

1. Translating the exact connotative meaning of each name of reindeer;
2. Footnoting some of the characteristics of the original Santa and reindeer;
3. Adopting a way to approach the reader's attention to the paradoxes of the words and the illustration (e.g. expressing the word 'Wow' by the reindeer and his angry look in illustration);
4. Using such words which have the quality of retaining the doubts and inconsistencies in the original message of words and the picture.

In so doing, as the researchers believe, the message of the SL and also its vagueness would be conveyed more honestly to the TL's young reader.

In part of analyzing the chosen data for their "horizontal elongation", as it is shown in the second and third appendices, there are no art directors contributing to the job and unfortunately the publications had been unsuccessful in transferring the pictures in terms of their horizontal elongation into the TT. In the original text (an originally American

children's poem), according to the left- right direction of written form, the reindeer is positioned on the left page as the 'given' information and the Santa on the right as the 'new' one (his reaction and attributes are 'new' in comparison with what children have fostered from the original myth). In the TT (Persian, with right to left direction in written form), both of the publishers have missed to reverse the positions of the Santa and the reindeer in accordance with the Persian writing system and the place of 'given' and 'new' information.

In order to serve children trustfully, it is necessary to engage art directors in works published for this age group who need to focus on the visuals in the age of multimodalities.

9. Conclusion

In every process of publishing literary works, there are different individuals who contribute in providing the best product. An 'author' writes what he aims at and the 'editor' reads and edits the text. Considering a book to contain pictures, it is the job of an 'art director' who should select an illustrator who can depict the text in the same style as that of the author's. The 'illustrator' hands the art director a dummy (a first draft of illustration provided by the illustrator) and they discuss over the appropriateness of the illustrations in accordance to the text. The unity of all elements including visuals is the job of the art director. If the text to be published is a translated one, 'translator' comes in to the process too.

Every act of translation consists of embracing many dimensions of the translation situation. These dimensions, most importantly among all, are culture (including culture-specific signs-linguistic and visual) and situation (receptor audience). The translator considering these dimensions may determine the best way to communicate with the intended audience. One group of audience, to whom much attention should be paid, is children who have specific expectations of the literature they read. Mostly for younger ones, children's literature is multisemiotic, i.e. pictures cooperate with words in conveying the

meaning. Translation of pictures in which specific signs of SL should be 'identified' as significant, is a hard job as some signs are culture-specific and also not always the interpretation of the illustrator is the same as what the author has intended. In addition translators should have some knowledge on art, as picture books are mixture of words and art. Not only visual signs are important considering in children's literature but also linguistic signs are used and are crucial in translation, which may emit culture as well. Translators, competent in the task of translation should adopt strategies, in both visual and linguistic aspects, which suit the intended TT reader (even if they may be obliged to explicate the message of the pictures). In translating picture books, the act of translation is aided by art directors who are specialized in both literature and illustration creating and have the job of identifying reversible aspects of the ST in to the digestible aspects of TT. Although the presence of the art directors, crucial in making a fine work, is mentionable, it has been not much considered in Iranian publishing offices which results in mismatch of words and pictures in a translated text.

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Note

¹ All the material by Macdonald, are the researcher's English back translations of Hirmandi's (2003) Persian translation of MacDonald's (1997) *Shel Silverstein*.