

DOMESTICATION AND FOREIGNIZATION IN THE TRANSLATION OF CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

M. Xamidova

*Students of DIEP institute, Faculty
of Philology, Department of Foreign
Languages and Literature, 4th course*

Abstract

This article studies domestication and foreignization in the translation of children's literature. The topic is important because children's books carry language, culture, values, humor, and daily life together. When a story is translated, the translator must decide whether to make the text closer to the young reader or preserve the foreign color of the source text. The article analyzes how this problem appears in culture-specific items, food names, proper names, and short rhythmic lines. The research is based on descriptive translation analysis, close reading, and comparative textual analysis. Classical works by Lawrence Venuti, Riitta Oittinen, Gillian Lathey, Göte Klingberg, and Emer O'Sullivan are used together with newer studies by Haidee Kruger, Fenik M. Ghafur, and Kaveh Bassiri. Short extracts from well-known children's stories are examined to show how each strategy changes meaning, tone, rhythm, and cultural atmosphere. The main result is that children's literature translation usually works best when a balanced method is used: very difficult items may be adapted, but important cultural signs should remain visible.

Introduction

Translation of children's literature is not only a transfer of words. A children's story carries family life, school culture, daily objects, food, play, rhythm, and values. For that reason, the translator works with language and culture at the same time. The task becomes more complex when the target reader is a child. A child may not know the place, the custom, or the hidden joke in the source text. Some parts of the text can stay foreign, but some parts may need to be made easier. This question leads directly to the debate on domestication and foreignization.

Domestication brings the story closer to the target reader. A foreign food item may be replaced with a more familiar one. A difficult cultural sign may be simplified. A rhyme may be changed so that it sounds natural in the new language. Foreignization does the opposite. It keeps more of the source culture and lets the reader feel that the story comes from another world. This strategy can preserve cultural color, but it can also make reading slower or harder for young readers.

The topic is important in modern translation studies because children's books help shape language growth, imagination, and early cultural understanding. Oittinen explains that translating for children must be connected to the child reader and the reading situation. Lathey also shows that translating for children demands attention to voice, age, and oral rhythm. Venuti's terms are helpful because they make the cultural consequences of translation choices easier to describe. When these ideas are applied to children's literature, the debate becomes both practical and educational.

This article aims to explain how domestication and foreignization work in children's literature translation and what results they can produce. The article asks three main questions: how scholars describe the two strategies, what methods can be used to analyze them, and how the strategies appear in short extracts from well-known children's stories. The article is written in simple language and is expected to show that neither strategy is fully sufficient on its own. A careful balance often produces the strongest result.

Literature review

The discussion of domestication and foreignization in translation studies is strongly linked to Lawrence Venuti. In *The Translator's Invisibility*, Venuti explains that domestication usually produces a fluent text that feels natural in the target language, while foreignization keeps signs of the original culture visible. This idea is useful because it explains why some translations read very naturally but lose cultural detail, while others preserve difference but may feel less familiar.

Riitta Oittinen brought an important child-centered view to the field. In *Translating for Children*, Oittinen argues that children's literature cannot be studied in the same way as adult literature because the child reader, the reading voice, and the reading event matter deeply. The translator therefore works with readability, tone, rhythm, and emotional effect, not with words alone. This point is helpful for the present article because strategy choice must be linked to the real needs of young readers.

Göte Klingberg made a classic contribution by focusing on cultural context in children's literature translation. His work showed that translators often stand between two pressures: preserving foreign background and giving the young reader enough help to understand the story. This remains important because the same problem continues in present-day translation practice.

Gillian Lathey provides a practical modern guide for the field. She shows that translating children's literature involves voice, age sensitivity, oral rhythm, illustration, and cultural detail. Her work is useful because it connects theory with the real work of translating books for children and supports a balanced use of domestication and foreignization.

Eirlys E. Davies studied culture-specific references in the Harry Potter books and showed that translators use several practical procedures when they face names,

jokes, objects, and local references. Jaleniauskiene and Čičelytė also showed that proper names are important in children's literature because a name may carry sound play, local flavor, and character value. These studies are helpful because food items, names, and playful expressions often become the clearest test cases for domestication and foreignization.

Haidee Kruger added a reception-based view through an eye-tracking study of child and adult readers. Her work suggests that foreign elements do not affect all readers in the same way. This is important because the usefulness of a strategy should be judged not only by theory but also by the likely response of young readers.

Recent research confirms that the topic remains active. Fenik M. Ghafur's 2024 study of Kurdish translations of English short stories for children found a strong tendency toward domestication, but also showed that translators still keep a visible level of foreignness to introduce young readers to another culture. Kaveh Bassiri's study of retranslations of *The Little Black Fish* also shows how domestication can change the ideological and cultural force of a children's story over time. These newer studies prove that the debate is still alive in real translation practice.

Methodology

This research uses descriptive translation analysis, close reading, and comparative textual analysis. These methods were chosen because the article aims to explain how meaning and cultural effect change when a translator moves between domestication and foreignization. The first step was to review major studies in children's literature translation and define the main concepts used in the article.

The second step was the selection of short primary extracts from well-known children's stories. The extracts were chosen according to three criteria. They had to come from recognized children's texts, they had to include a clear cultural or stylistic sign, and they had to be short enough for close discussion. The selected items include food terms and a nursery-rhyme line, because such items often force the translator to decide whether to preserve foreign texture or create immediate clarity.

The third step was practical analysis. Each extract was discussed in three parts: extract, simple analysis, and discussion. In the simple analysis, the cultural or stylistic feature was identified in direct language. In the discussion, possible translation outcomes were considered in relation to young readers. This method was used throughout the article because it helps connect theory and practice and keeps the argument clear.

Analysis and discussion

The extracts below were selected because they show the main issue of the article in a clear way. Each one contains a word or phrase that may seem small, but each one carries culture, tone, and reading effect. The analysis is kept simple, and the discussion shows how the two strategies may work in practice.

Extract 1. From Beatrix Potter's *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*:

*"She bought a loaf of brown bread and five currant buns."*¹

Simple analysis. This line contains ordinary English food items. The words are simple for the source reader, but they are culturally marked. A child in another language may understand bread easily, but "currant buns" may not be familiar. The line also helps build the quiet domestic world of an English countryside family.

Discussion. A domesticating translation may replace "currant buns" with a more familiar sweet bread or pastry so that the child immediately understands the scene. This can improve fluency and speed of reading. A foreignizing translation may keep the specific item and preserve the English setting more clearly. That choice teaches something about another culture, but it may need support from context or illustration. In this case, a balanced method often works well.

Extract 2. From Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*:

*"The Queen of Hearts, she made some tarts."*²

Simple analysis. This line is short, musical, and easy to remember. At the same time, the word "tarts" is culture-bound because it refers to a specific baked item in an English nursery-rhyme world. The line is not important only for meaning. Sound, rhyme, and playful tone are also important.

Discussion. A domesticating translation may change "tarts" into a more familiar sweet item in the target culture. This may help rhyme and make the line feel natural in the new language. However, too much adaptation can reduce the English nursery flavor of the scene. A foreignizing choice keeps the original cultural taste but may make the line sound less smooth if the target language lacks a close rhythmic match. The translator must therefore protect sense, sound, and atmosphere at the same time.

Extract 3. From Hans Christian Andersen's "The Little Match Girl":

*"A roast goose, stuffed with apples and prunes, steamed famously."*³

Simple analysis. This line carries a festive image, but the image is deeply cultural. The goose, the stuffing, and the scene of hot food behind a bright window create a European winter household. The line also works emotionally because the rich food is seen by a hungry child from the outside.

Discussion. A domesticating translation may replace the meal with a more familiar festive dish for the target audience. This can make the emotional contrast immediate. Still, that decision also changes the social and visual setting of the tale. A foreignizing translation keeps the goose and the stuffing and preserves the original winter atmosphere. In many cases this is the stronger choice because the sadness of the

¹ Beatrix Potter, *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*. "She bought a loaf of brown bread and five currant buns." — *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*, Frederick Warne & Co., 1902.

² Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. "The Queen of Hearts, she made some tarts." — *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, Macmillan, 1865.

³ Andersen, Hans Christian. "The Little Match Girl" // *Hans Andersen's Fairy Tales*.

story depends on the sharp contrast between the child's cold reality and a very specific festive table. If the cultural image is erased, the literary texture becomes weaker.

The extracts produce one clear pattern. Domestication is especially useful when a culture-specific item blocks basic understanding for the child reader. Foreignization is especially useful when the item is closely tied to literary atmosphere, sound, or symbolic meaning. The translator's task is therefore not to choose one method once and use it everywhere. Food items, names, rhyme, games, and household details may need different solutions even inside the same story. This supports the view found in both classical and recent research that translation for children is a practical art of balance.

The analysis also shows that children's literature translation should not be treated as linguistically easy only because the source text may look short or simple. A short line can carry sound play, class background, family life, humor, and local memory. If all such details are replaced, the story may become clear but flat. If all such details are preserved without support, the story may remain rich but become distant. For this reason, a balanced strategy is often the most readable and the most respectful to the literary value of the source text.

Conclusion

This article studied domestication and foreignization in the translation of children's literature through theory, method, and short textual analysis. The research showed that both strategies have value, but they serve different purposes. Domestication can support immediate clarity and child-friendly access. Foreignization can protect cultural color, literary texture, and the sense that the story comes from a different world. The strongest result is reached when the translator uses a balanced method and makes careful local decisions instead of following a rigid rule. The article also showed that small details such as food words, rhyme, and household images can become major translation problems in children's literature. The novelty achieved here lies in joining classical theory with recent research and showing the issue through simple extract-based analysis.

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