

Translating for Children: The Necklace as a Case

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Abstract: Translating for children is a novel area within Children's Literature as well as translation studies. The process of translation for children is not as easy as it looks. A translator has to pass through several problems as she/he has to keep several things in the mind: limited linguistic level of children, less exposure to the outer world and maintenance of innocent ambience. The present research paper is a critical and cautious attempt to comprehend the problems faced by a translator for children along with a somewhat contribution to this innovative field. The short story *The Necklace* written by the French writer Guy De Maupassant has been taken as a case study.

Keywords: Children, Translation, Translator, Linguistic level, Innocent ambience.

1. Introduction

Several scholars have represented literature for children in their own peculiar ways: Is a children's book a book written by children or for children? Is a book written for children still a children's book if it is (only) read by adults? What of adult books read also by children –are they children's literature? (O'Sullivan 13). Kimberley Reynolds comments that...“unlike other forms of writing, children's literature is defined by its audience rather than such things as genre, period, approach, or who writes it” (24). The same concept is applied when translating literature keeping children as the target audience in mind. Translating for children is done at various level through several processes. Different question are posed before the translator translating for children:

1. Is the source text- translating for children- Adult Literature?
2. Is the source text- translating for children- Children's Literature?

As Emer O'Sullivan in her book *Comparative Children's Literature* comments that classics of children's literature comprise works from three distinct sources such as adaptations of works from adult literature, adaptations from traditional narratives often originating in oral stories, and works of literature written specifically for children, the predominant form since around the middle of the nineteenth century.

Kimberley Reynolds in the book Children's Literature: A very short introduction defines children's literature as “The materials written to be read by children and young people, published by children's publishers, and stalked and shelved in

the children's and/or young adult sections of the libraries and bookshops” [1].

2. Translating for Children

Zohar Shavit in her paper *Translation of Children's Literature* concludes that translation for children is based on the two principles: an adjustment of the text to make it appropriate and useful to the child, in accordance with what society regards (at a certain point in time) as educationally ‘good for the child’; and an adjustment of plot, characterization, and language to prevailing society's perceptions of the child's ability to read and comprehend.

The most famous and familiar kind of translation is inter-lingual translation where a text available in one language is converted into a text belonging to another language but as such is not only the case. In the field of children's literature the act of intra-lingual translation is more relevant within the same national system. As Zohar Shav it elucidates that translation is understood as part of a transfer mechanism- that is, the process by which textual modals of one system are transferred to another; abridgements and adaptations are also considered along with translated texts.

3. The Necklace: A Case Study

One of the world's greatest short stories, *The Necklace* (French: *La Parure*), has been written by the father of short stories, Guy De Maupassant, a French writer. It is a short story written in French language but translated into English by Jonathan Sturges. The story has been adapted for children of class ten, CBSE, Delhi and children of class six ICSE, Delhi. The adaptation of this story into the world of children in the form of their text books justify its qualification as a short story, especially designed for children.

Such an adaptation for children as a product of translational procedures beings a lot of changes concerning linguistic, representation of content, length, etc. at various levels such a process looks easy as its product is simple but the process is not simple enough. It is another matter that a translator, especially for Children, has to simplify the story or in other words illustrate the story according to the comprehensible level of children.

The world of children is limited concerning their linguistic level and cultural level and so keeping this thing in mind a

translator has to be cautious enough to represent the same story in different manner. Really a great challenge!

The story, *The Necklace* revolves around a highly ambitious lady Mathilde Loisel who always dreams of an artificial world and lives in it. Her this ambition compels herself to borrow a diamond necklace from one of her friends for estier to join a grand party. She along with her husband Monsieur Loisel enjoys a lot but loses that borrowed necklace on the way from the party and her this carelessness due to being ambitious provides her and her husband a pitiable and panicked life for the last ten years resulting in a poverty-stricken existence.

The same story when adapted for children goes through several changes. In one of the translations the story starts:

Madame Mathilde Loisel was a beautiful and charming woman, but she was very unhappy with her life. She believed that life had deceived her. She wanted to marry a rich gentleman, but had to marry a junior clerk who was working in the Ministry of Education. (Children Version 1(i))

Here the name is mentioned for a clear understanding of children and sentences are straight forward to comprehend quickly. There is no trace of suspense. The marriage, here, looks because of helplessness as children are dependent and no individual identity and compelled to follow what grown-ups command.

In another translation the story starts:

SHE was one of those pretty, young ladies, born as if through an error destiny into a family of clerks. She had no dowry, no hopes, no means of becoming known, loved, and married by a man either rich or distinguished; and she allowed herself to marry a pretty clerk in the office of the Board of Education. (Children Version 2(i))

Here the version is for older children and that's why there exists somewhat suspense. The act of marriage is not because of helplessness but there is somewhat existence of individualism.

In another translation the story starts:

She was one of those pretty and charming girls who are sometimes, as if by a mistake of destiny, born in a family of clerks. She had no dowry, no expectations, no means of being known, understood, loved, wedded, by any rich and distinguished man; and she let herself be married to a little clerk at the Ministry of Public Instruction. (Grown-up Version (i))

Here there is complete suspense and the act of marriage is because of complete control of her individual identity.

It can be said that the graph of individualistic figure increases from the world of children to the world of grown-up along with the increment of the percentage of suspense. Moreover the simplification at linguistic level exists in the process of translation for children.

In another translation the story goes with:

Her existence was one of constant frustration as she had lots of regrets. She hated her apartment and spent time daydreaming about fancy things and a lavish lifestyle. ...She dreamt about an elaborate feast served in fancy crockery, eating in the company

of wealthy friends. She longed for fancy clothing expensive jewellery (Children Version 1(ii))

Here the element of frustration has become the cause of dream and desire.

In another translation the story goes with:

She suffered from the poverty of her apartment, the shabby walls and the worn chairs. All these things tortured and angered her. ...She would think of elegant dinners, of shinning silver; she thought of the exquisite food served in marvelous dishes. She had neither frocks nor jewels, nothing. And she loved only those things. (Children Version 2(ii))

Here the element of frustration exists but implicitly.

In another translation the story goes with:

She suffered from the poverty of her dwelling, from the wretched look up the walls, from the worn out chairs, from the ugliness of the curtains. All those things, of which another women of her rank would never even have been conscious, tortured her and made her angry. ...She thought of dainty dinners, of shinning silverware, of tapestry which peopled the walls with ancient personages and with strange birds flying in the midst of a fairy forest; and she thought of delicious dishes served on marvelous plates, she had no dresses, no jewels, nothing. And she loved nothing but that; she felt made for that. (Grown-up Version (ii))

Here frustration is explored explicitly and the outcome of that very frustration results into pitiable condition.

It can be said that the element of frustration available in grown-up literature becomes the vehicle of dream and desire in Children's Literature.

In another translation the story goes with:

Monsieur Loisel thought his wife would be excited to attend such a party, but she got upset and threw the invitation on the table. 'What am I to do with this?' She asked angrily. (Children Version 1(iii))

In another translation the story goes with:

Instead of being delighted, as her husband had hoped, she threw the invitation spitefully upon the table murmuring, "What do you suppose I want with that?" (Children Version 2(iii))

In another translation the story goes with:

Instead of being delighted, as her husband hoped, she threw the invitation on the table with disdain, murmuring:

"What do you want me to do with that?" (Grown-up Version (iii))

By overviewing all the three expressions expressed in different manners expose that the manner of negation is soft in children's literature where as it is hard in adult literature.

In another translation the story goes with:

'What do you suppose I will wear to the party?' she said, sounding sad. (Children Version 1(iv))

In another translation the story goes with:

"Nothing. Only I have no dress and consequently I cannot go to this affair. Give your card to some colleague whose wife is better fitted out than I." (Children Version 2(iv))

In another translation the story goes with:

“Nothing. Only I have no dress, and therefore I can’t go this ball. Give your card to some colleague whose wife is better equipped than I.” (Grown-up Version (iv))

The reviews suggest that the complaining nature in children’s literature is not as harsh as that available in adult literature.

In another translation the story goes with:

At the event, Mathilde was truly the most beautiful woman present; everyone wanted to dance with her! She was very happy and enjoyed herself a lot... (Children Version 1(v))

In another translation the story goes with:

She was the prettiest of all- elegant, gracious, smiling and full of joy. All the men noticed her, asked her name, and wanted to be presented. (Children Version 2(v))

In another translation the story goes with:

Madame Loisel made a great success. She was prettier than them all, elegant, gracious, smiling, and crazy with joy. All the man looked at her, asked her name, endeavored to be introduced. (Grown-up Version (v))

The study suggests that there exists innocent pouring of beauty in children’s literature but in adult literature there exist somewhat traces of vulgarity.

In another translation the story goes with:

She danced with enthusiasm, intoxicated with pleasure, thinking of nothing but all this admiration, this victory so complete and sweet to her heart. (Children Version 2(vi))

In another translation the story goes with:

She danced with intoxication, with passion, made drunk by pleasure, forgetting all, in the triumph of her beauty, in the glory of her success, in a sort of cloud of happiness composed of all these homage, of all this admiration, of all these awakened desires, and of that sense of complete victory which is so sweet to woman's heart. (Grown-up Version (vi))

The review suggests that such an exposition of beauty is not suitable, especially for smaller children and that’s why this paragraph is omitted while translating for smaller children but very methodically represented in older children but such a paragraph is represented in adult literature with a full potential.

In another translation the story goes with:

...she cried out loud, ‘Oh no! Where is the necklace?’ (Children Version 1(vii))

In another translation the story goes with:

Suddenly she uttered a cry. Her necklace was not around her neck. (Children Version 2(vii))

In another translation the story goes with:

But suddenly she uttered a cry. She had no longer the necklace around her neck! (Grown-up Version (vii))

The critical studies suggests that the feeling of loss is more evident inwardly in adult but more represented outwardly in children.

In another translation the story goes with:

‘Oh! My poor Mathilde! But mine was a fake. It was worth no more than five hundred francs!’ (Children Version 1(viii))

In another translation the story goes with:

‘Oh! My poor Mathilde! Mine were false. They were not

worth over five hundred francs!’ (Children Version 2(viii))

In another translation the story goes with:

‘Oh! My poor Mathilde! Why, my necklace was paste. It was worth at most five hundred francs!’ (Grown-up Version (viii)). This suggests that children are shown more surprised than adult.

4. Theory of Desire

...how far children may have resented or enjoyed what they were given to read- and desired what they were forbidden to read (Reynolds, 14).

Generally whatever children are provided is resented more by them and enjoyed less and on the other whatever they are forbidden creates desire in them and they browse them a lot. This very desire creates the field of Children’s Literature Translation from the canon of adult literature. For instance, John Bunyan's The Pilgrim’s Progress, Daniel Defoe’s Robinson Crusoe, Jonathan Swift's Gulliver’s Travels and as such were not written for children but translated for them as their desire provides an ambience to do so. That’s why adult classics are the living classics in children’s literature as the product of the translation studies.

Taking the same theory of desire translation for children happens as in the present story the elements of depression become the vehicles of desire when the story is translated for children.

5. Methodology

To study the translational norms and strategies for children, three different translations of the short story The Necklace written by Guy De Maupassant are critically studied. Two of the translations are, especially, adapted for children and one is for adult. An evaluation is carried out by studying all the three translations from the perspective of adult as well as children.

6. Conclusion

The critical and careful study of all the three translations suggests that whenever a text, especially designed for adult, is repackaged for children as a result of translation activity, several changes occur at various levels: the linguistic level is simplified; elements of frustration become the vehicles of dream and desire; the percentage of suspense is either reduced or minimized along with the percentage of individualism; the manner of negation should be soft; the manner of complaining should not be harsh and the pouring of beauty should be innocent lest it should take the form of vulgarity.

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