



CHALLENGING CULTURAL ISSUES IN TRANSLATION OF CHILDREN FANTASY NOVELS IN REFERENCE TO ROWLING'S HARRY POTTER SERIES

DR. NANDITA JAIN ¹

¹ ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR, ENGLISH LITERATURE.

ABSTRACT:

Culture and personal style influence translators and their translation. Most scholars and translators agree that translating for children is different than translating for adults. What may be considered a mild hard for adults such as allusions to cultural heritage may be a serious comprehension barrier for children. While referring to cross cultural Communications it seems to be a Herculean task to translate any work of literature, especially the work like Harry Potter stories in which the imaginary world seems impossible to translate into another language and culture. Some of the questions that immediately arise in the mind when we consider cross-cultural communications are, how can the imaginary magical world with British background be translated literally? Do all the specific cultural references to cross boundaries remain intact? How one culture can understand the habits, customs and rituals of other cultures exactly as they are depicted in the source text? We know absolutely that no two cultures share the same values. The language of Harry Potter's world is fraught with challenges for translation proper names, made -up words, magic spells, regional accent and unknown creatures and descriptive names invariably evoke powerful imagery and thus create immensely difficult problems for translators.

KEYWORDS:

CULTURE, TRANSLATION, ALLUSIONS, CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATIONS, IMAGINARY, CHALLENGES, DESCRIPTIVE, INVARIABLY.

INTRODUCTION

Translation is considered as a kind of literary activism-a mode of engagement with literature. Translators are necessarily involved in a politics of transmission in pertaining or contesting the values which sustain our literary culture. Every culture diverges either in features, functions, situations or concepts. Culture is very much embedded in language and no text can be translated without taking into account the cultural aspects peculiar to that language. If not impossible cultural specific expressions are deemed to be very difficult to translate from source text (ST) to the target text (TT). Translation is a kind of activity which involves at least two languages and two cultural traditions. (Toury)

Lotman's theory states that no language can exist unless it is steeped in the context of culture and no culture can exist which does not have at its Centre the structure of natural language. (Lottman). On the other hand, feminist literary theory regards literature solely as a political expression of the relationship between sexes. The author's context and intentions are completely irrelevant and are considered only to the extent to which they confirm the negative position of women within the patriarchal structure of power. Instead of the author's context it is the reader's context that is examined from the feminist perspective (Paul). Literary translation is one of the prominent ways of Communications across cultures. Literary texts display many linguistic peculiarities as well as social and cultural aspects of our lives, literature is so deeply rooted in our source culture and some specific words have no equivalent in the target culture because many of them are unknown

or they are not yet qualified in the target language.

When discussing the problems of correspondence in translation, differences between cultures may cause many severe implications for the translators than do differences in language structure. (Nida) The traditional view is that when translating, the translator needs to make a choice between seeking for formal equivalents, focusing on the semantic sense of the text -known also as word-for-word or literal translation – or finding functional equivalents, aiming to maintain the communication, the message of the ST; that is, producing a free translation, translating meaning-for-meaning.

Culture and personal style influence translators and their translation. Most scholars and translators agree that translating for children is different than translating for adults. What may be considered a mild hard for adults such as foreign names allusions to cultural heritage may be a serious comprehension barrier for children. The feminist reading of a children's book can direct its attention to the examination of the ways women are portrayed, search for archetypes from a feminist perspective, examine female values and the sense of community, or focus its attention to the patriarchal way of subject construction and possible points of resistance, etc (Dresang).

While referring to cross-cultural Communications it seems to be a Herculean task to translate any work of literature. Specially the work like *Harry Potter* stories in which the imaginary world seems impossible to translate into another language and culture. When Rowling imagined

the famous story of Harry Potter, she built a specific Universe set in UK and that world shares culture references with the British society as well as the Western world. Due to the immense popularity and huge number of fans across the fantasy world Harry Potter novels has been translated into 73 languages. The Harry Potter novels present translators all sorts of challenges, the most important of which is undoubtedly a cultural one. The English setting, regional accent and British terms and cultural nuances pose special problems for readers who are unfamiliar with this culture. The translations of the HP series into Spanish, Catalan, Italian, Portuguese, German, and French reproduce the plot devices, characterizations, and countless descriptive details of J.K. Rowling's books with varying degrees of success.

Translating children fantasy novels into different languages is a challenging issue which has gained popularity worldwide for researches and has become a major topic of attraction. Loaded with the cultural related items which are scattered throughout the texts of Harry Potter series, has become the largest challenge and an interesting area of investigation within the field of translation studies for translators. With the publication of first Harry Potter novel in 1997, when Rowling first appeared on the scene with her series, she conquered the world, no one knew what a big success it would be. The names of places and things like Knockturn Alley, Diagon Alley, Muggles, Ravenclaw etc. require extreme creativity and sensitivity in an attempt to duplicate or at a minimum approximate the associations of the nature English.

In short, different translators use different strategies, but it is not easy to establish clear boundaries between these different strategies. The comparison also reveals that the same translator doesn't always use the same strategies nor is the use of specific strategies associated to specific languages. All of the strategies are used in all of the languages. The differences are in how and where they are used. And the translator is the one that must have the ability and the necessary tools to produce adequate texts in TL in order to produce equivalent

However, Neologisms and invented words are a challenge for the translators who must be familiar not only with both cultures, that of the OT and the TT, but also with the two languages in order to adapt the morphological processes to produce the same effect. One more major problem in translating is posed that Translators too might have not been aware with the association between the names and their implicit meanings. moreover, their choices may affect the reader's perception of the characters. Do the readers of the translated versions infer the same meaning as their English counterparts? Actually, they deleted various cultural habits like drinking references while translating in other languages such as in Arabic because some food habits and drinks popular in western world are not accepted in our culture especially those prohibited by Islam like pork and alcohol. At some places if it was not possible to delete, the translator changed it according to convenience for example "a large brandy" became "a glass

of water". Other invented place names that exploit the punning possibilities of the English language are the **Street Diagon Alley** that immediately calls to mind the English word 'diagonally' (describing a straight line that crosses a square at opposite corners), or **Knockturn Alley** whose Germanic roots conjure up the image of a place so shadowy and mysterious that at every 'turn' one is 'knocking' into something.

Various items designated with different names such as food, clothes, currency and cultural notions like customs Institutions represent a particular culture to setup in a British background culture. These stories are dominated by English names and locations, yet the author has merged the real world and magical world in such a way that it touches the peak of multicultural real world. On the contrary the words, magical objects and creatures found in the stories do not at all exist in the reality what the author has actually named. In fact, in reality they are opposed to reality. Thus, the challenges posed by cultural references in translation is very complex so it is needed for the translator to provide the British cultural background to his readers which is easily comprehensible and accessible to the audience of target culture. Finding the substitution of an equivalent name in the corresponding language and trying to keep some of the implicit meanings seems a tough job for the translators. Snape, the master of potions, whose name in English refers of a snake and may conjure up of all the biblical associations for malice. Snape is maintained in four of the six translations (Spanish, Catalan, Portuguese, and German). Another example is Professor Lockhart that can be associated with 'locked heart', 'cold person'. So, the same English name has been maintained in most of the translations. Finally, there are two invented main words that are basic to the development of the plot and are constantly repeated: muggles and squib. A muggle is someone 'without a drop of magical blood in their veins' and a squib is 'someone who was born into a wizarding family but hasn't got any magic powers'. Kind of the opposite of Muggler-born wizard. (Rowling).

Though Chaudhuri disapproves of this forced cultural shift which subvert the meaning of the source language and the words are totally transformed for the sake of translation. Let us see how vocabulary changes when 'post' becomes 'mail' and 'Lori' becomes 'truck' and 'fortnight' becomes 'two weeks', 'crumpets' become 'muffins', (which they actually are not) and 'dustbins' become 'trashcan'.

Translators of Harry Potter novels actually face the dilemma that when to translate and when to keep the original because some certain words are almost impossible to translate directly in many cultures. Talking about the state of relationship, the formal or informal address is always different but in translation sometimes it is difficult to satisfy how the word plays its role. According to a good translator the original translation should be centred on the ideological meaning expressed by the original author without tampering with his intentions. In fact, he wants the novels to be kept in the original language. So it is necessary for a translator to preserve Harry Potter novel's

'Britishness', the original culture framework of source text like the name of the main character Harry Potter, name of the game Quidditch, muggles, mud-bloods, Hogwarts etc.

Davis points out that Harry Potter novels offer the opportunity to compare the tactics used in tackling cultural issues in translation of the children fantasy novels and provide with the abundance of material for the translators dealing with culturally specific references. Goldstein states that the American version of the HP novels has altered some of the British cultural terms to make it suitable for the target readers. The main aim of the translator is to produce as nearly as possible the same effect on his readers as was produced on the readers of the original. Focusing on finding or creating sameness where sameness, in fact, cannot exist, seems to overlook other important characteristics of translating.

Translation is not only a simple one-to-one exchange between words of two languages; much rather it is "a communicative process which takes place within a social context" (Goldstein) In the various translations of Harry Potter the characters' names have consistently been kept in their English form. Many of the names in this group are in other ways suggestive of their referent's cultural background, such as the names Parvati Patil (Indian), Seamus Finnigan (Irish) or Cho Chang (Chinese). In these cases, a translation is not necessary or even hoped for, because the names indicate their referent's nationality or cultural background, in comparison with the fellow students that have more "typically English" names (Hannah Abbott, Katie Bell). Consequently, retaining them in the translation helps maintain the authentic feeling of the story. The cultural content of these names is probably self-evident to native English readers, but it is more difficult to estimate the extent to which non-native readers (young ones in particular) can grasp these connotations, especially if they do not live in a multicultural society where such "foreign" names are a commonplace.

However, it is concluded that the localization and transformation strategies used most frequently in the translated version of the Harry Potter novels distorted and fractured the essence of creativity and realness of fantasy world woven by Rowling in her original work. In fact, real beauty and actual original flavour is lost in the target texts. The humorous effect is diminished and the terminology used in the translated texts do not match to the level of children brain. The translations of the HP series into Spanish, Catalan, Italian, Portuguese, German, and French reproduce the plot devices, characterizations, and countless descriptive details of J.K. Rowling's books with varying degrees of success. The above analysis shows that different strategies are used by the different translators, but for different purposes and with a different frequency as well, obviously producing a different effect.

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