Translating the Bible for Children: The Importance of the Target Audience and the Role of the Translator in Making Meaning

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ABSTRACT

Translated into some eight-hundred languages, the Holy Bible is one of the most translated pieces in the history of human written language. Within this broad scope of translation, there are not only target audiences of varying languages and cultures, but also of ages and levels of linguistic comprehension. Translations for children provide an extra challenge because they provide a complicated task of the translator to produce a text that, above all, cannot be misunderstood. By examining the translator prefaces, accompanying illustrations, and selected verses from two English children’s Bibles, the role of the translator in ensuring the comprehensibility of the text is split into examples of foreignizing and domesticating translation methods. However, regardless of translation methods, both translator prefaces include a statement relinquishing responsibility for errors in translation which complicates the role of the translator as the one responsible for comprehension. Looking at the preface justifications in conjunction with the language of the texts themselves and theory from Bible scholar Nida, fostering understanding on the part of the target audience is ultimately revealed to be the responsibility of the translator, though acknowledgement of the child audience in the translator-text-audience interaction is also vital.
The translation of proper names is one of the most challenging activities every translator faces. While working on children's literature, the aim is to engage children's audience and address the issues of their translation. For children, authors like Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone, Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets (translated from English by Zita Marienė), Laura und das Geheimnis von Aventera (Laura and the Secret of Aventera) (translated from German by Teodoras Ėttrauskas), and Eragon (translated from English by Andrius Tapinas) are popular. One of the questions that frequently arises in translation for children is whether proper names should be translated or not. The present study is based on Van Coillie's model of translating strategies of proper names in children's literature. Concerning the importance of the young readers as valuable national assets, translating children's literature is a very significant task. Ghesquiere (2006) asks if children's literature needs translation. Translation has played an important role in children's literature. One of the problems any translator faces, in all text, including children's literature, independently of the theme or subject he/she is working on, is the translation of proper names. Naturally, the main object of translation was the Bible. At first, it was translated from Hebrew and Greek to Latin mostly. Latin had status as the target language, since it was the international language in science and church. The greatest event in the early Middle Ages was the Bible as translated by St. Jerome (342-419/20). His Bible, known as the Vulgate, or standard Latin Bible, had great influence on succeeding generations of translators. RENAISSANCE TRANSLATION. In culture, this period marks a greater role of translated secular literature. Special emphasis was placed on translating the classics (ancient Greek and Roman literature), which was the model for Renaissance ideas and culture.