

Definition of Children's Literature

Children's literature is generally defined as the body of written works (and oftentimes accompanying illustrations) produced primarily for children or young readers (typically from early childhood through adolescence), and which addresses their interests, experiences, developmental level, and imaginative capacities.

More precisely, according to the Encyclopaedia Britannica:

Children's literature ... the body of written works and accompanying illustrations produced in order to entertain or instruct young people."

Definition of children literature

It is also noted that children's literature constitutes a distinct literary category:

“Children's literature is literature **written primarily for a juvenile audience**, defined as ages **0 to 18** ... includes **fiction, nonfiction, drama, and poetry.**”

Scholars also emphasize that any definition must recognize the variable nature of “childhood” (developmental, cultural, historical) and that children's literature is not simply “adult literature with **simpler vocabulary**” but has its own **unique concerns and aesthetic criteria.**



Types

- ▶ **Picture books** (for very young children) combining simple narrative + illustrations + imaginative idioms.
- ▶ **Middle-grade fiction** that deals with friendship, identity, adventure, calibrated language and themes.

Key Characteristics of Children's Literature

- ▶ **1. Audience-focus and developmental appropriateness:**
 - ▶ The target audience is children (and young adolescents). Their cognitive, emotional and moral development influences vocabulary, structure, theme, character.
 - ▶ Language, narrative complexity, and themes are often calibrated to match children's comprehension and interests. For example: "The structure is simple and clear; ... the language is simple, lively, and colloquial."
 - ▶ There is an age-graded dimension: picture books for young children, chapter books for intermediate, middle-grade for older children, young-adult for adolescents.

Key Characteristics of Children's Literature

2. Children as protagonists or focal viewpoint

- ▶ Many children's books feature children or childlike figures as the central characters, and often the perspective is from a child's point of view.
- ▶ The world is presented in a way accessible to children, often reflecting their social, domestic, school, friendship, exploration experiences.



▶ 3. Language and style – accessibility, clarity, imaginative elements

- ▶ The language tends to be **simpler** and more **direct** than adult literature, though not simplistic or patronizing.
- ▶ Narratives often include **fantasy, imagination, play, whimsy, and wonder**. For example: "It tends toward fantasy and accepts fanciful ideas without major concern of reality."
- ▶ Frequent use of **repetition, rhyme, rhythm, pictures/illustrations** aids memory and engagement.

Key Characteristics of Children's Literature

▶ 4. Themes and moral/educational dimension

- ▶ Children's literature often addresses themes relevant to children's lives: friendship, family, courage, identity, change, social values.
- ▶ It often carries an element of instruction or moral purpose (though not necessarily didactic in a heavy-handed way) – for example, virtues, problem-solving, resilience.
- ▶ But it also entertains: balancing educational purpose with enjoyment is considered ideal.



► 5. Structure, plot, and resolution

- Many children's texts have a clear narrative arc, simpler plotlines, but with enough conflict or challenge to engage the young reader.
- Endings often tend toward hope, resolution, positive outcome (particularly in younger-child literature) though more complex works may challenge this.

6. What is the prerequisite of doing research in the field of "Translation Studies"?

As far as in this field theory and practice are inseparable, it is essential that before doing research, we have practical experience of translation. In other words, we should do translation, before we do research.

7. Who has offered some solutions to overcome the gap between translation profession (practice) and translation research (theory)?

Basil Hatim (1947) by suggesting some action research models (2001).

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▶ 6. Illustrations, multimodal features, and format considerations

▶ Especially in younger-age categories (picture books, early readers) the visual component (illustrations, picture-text interplay) is integral.

▶ Format and layout (large type, short chapters, illustrations, engaging design) matter to children's literature more than many adult texts.



▶ 7. Cultural, social, and historical responsiveness

- ▶ Children's literature reflects and responds to the culture, age-expectations, social values of its time and place.
 - ▶ It also is increasingly conscious of diversity, representation, inclusivity (though this is a more recent emphasis).
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Examples Illustrating Characteristics

- ▶ **“Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland” by Lewis Carroll** – though enjoyed by adults, it is often cited as a milestone in children’s literature, emerging from the tradition of **imaginative literature** aimed at younger readers.
- ▶ Picture books (for very young children) combining simple narrative + illustrations + imaginative idioms.
- ▶ Middle-grade fiction that deals with friendship, identity, adventure, calibrated language and themes.

Key Arguments & Theoretical Frameworks
in
the Introduction of
Studying texts and contexts in translated
children's literature
by
Jan Van Coillie & Jack McMartin:

1. Statement of the problem (main issue/ challenge)

- 1.1 Conceptualizing “**Context**” in Translation Studies
- Van Coillie & McMartin begin by **problematizing the notion of context**. They note that while context is universally acknowledged as important in translation studies, there is **no single, agreed-upon definition of it**. They draw on Rodica Dimitriu’s idea that context is “a key notion ... that allows for complex **analyses** of the translator’s activities ... of translation processes, and, ultimately, of what accounts for the meaning(s) of a translated text.”
- Thus, the editors set the stage for exploring how **context influences translation decisions**, and equally, how **texts are shaped by (and shape) their context**: social, cultural, economic, and political environments.

1.2. Why Children's Literature Is Especially Suitable to Explore Text–Context Dynamics

- Van Coillie & McMartin argue that children's literature is a particularly revealing domain to study translation because of **its distinctive features**:
 - **2.1 Asymmetric Relationship**: There is an inherent asymmetry between authors/translators (usually adult) and the readers (children). This affects how translators make decisions.
 - **2.2 High Stake Cultural, Economic & Political Dimensions**: When children's books travel across cultures, there are often strong cultural, political, or economic motivations and pressures.
 - **2.3. Multimodality**: Many children's books are not just linguistic texts; they include illustrations, layout design, and other semiotic elements. Translation, then, often involves not just translating words, but also **dealing with visual and multimodal features**.
- Because of these characteristics, translation of children's literature is not just a linguistic act, but a cultural mediation.

1. 3. Interdisciplinary Lens

- The editors explicitly position the book at the intersection of **Children's Literature Studies** and **Translation Studies**. This is important because it allows for cross-fertilization: scholars can combine **close readings** of texts with **empirical investigations** (e.g., of how readers receive a translated book).
- They also **expand the notion of translation** to include wider transfer practices (not just interlingual translation but also adaptation, localization, transcreation, and even intersemiotic translation).
- This reflects their commitment to a broad conceptualization of translation: translation is not just about rendering text from one language to another, but about how **meaning, form, and function shift in new cultural and semiotic environments**.

4. Analytical & Empirical Goals

- The introduction outlines clear goals for the volume:
 - **To showcase analytical richness:** by considering how **texts change through translation**, how **translators intervene**, and how **context shapes those changes**.
 - **To highlight empirical research:** the book contains case studies that examine real-world translation practices, publication history, reception, and editorial decisions.
 - **To cover a wide geographic scope:** The editors deliberately include contributions from many different cultural contexts (UK, US, Brazil, Poland, China, former Yugoslavia, etc.) to show how context-dependent translation practices are.
 - **To identify trajectories for future research:** by bringing together different perspectives, they hope to map out where the field could go — which understudied areas to explore, which methods to develop, and how both text-based and context-based analyses can be deepened.
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5. Significance and Implications

- By situating translators' decisions in their broader socio-cultural contexts, the introduction argues, we gain better insight **into power, ideology, and agency** in translation.
- Understanding how translated children's books are received (by child readers, parents, educational systems, publishers) helps us see how translation contributes to **cultural transmission and identity formation** in young readers.

“Meeting the unknown: Translating names, cultural markers and intertextual references.”

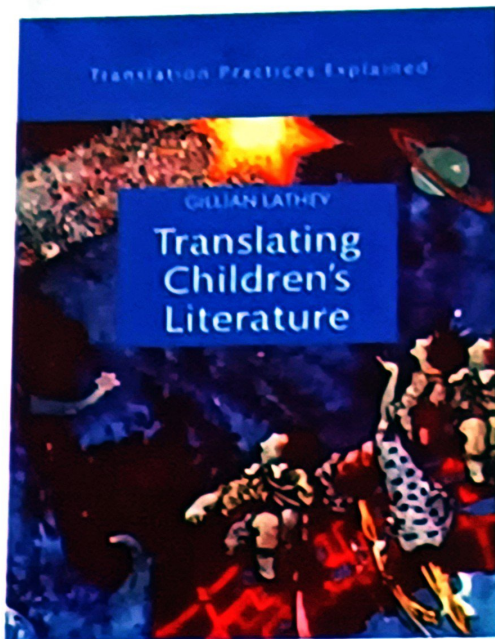
Between

From

Translating Children’s Literature

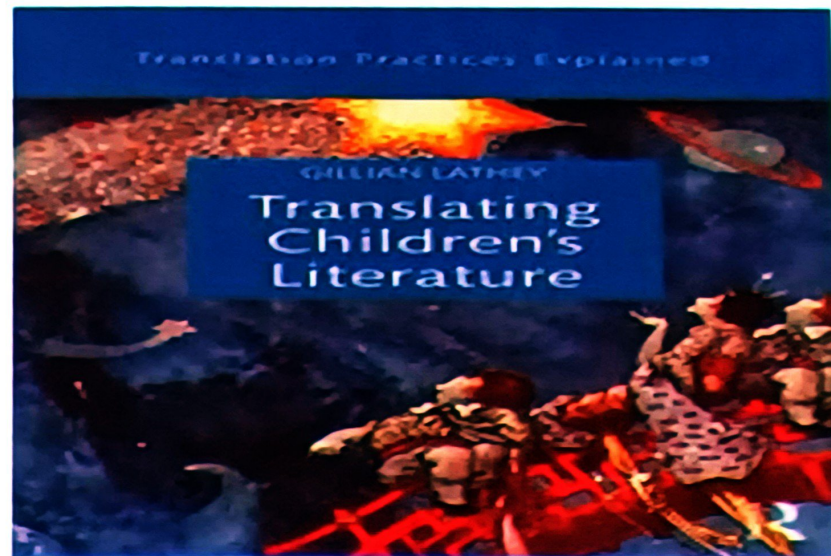
by

Gillian Lathey



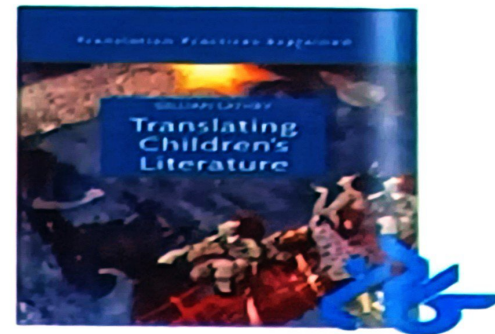
Statement of the problem

- Chapter 2 explores one of the most **central challenges** in translating children's literature: **how to deal with elements from the source culture that may be unfamiliar or "unknown" to young readers in the target culture.**



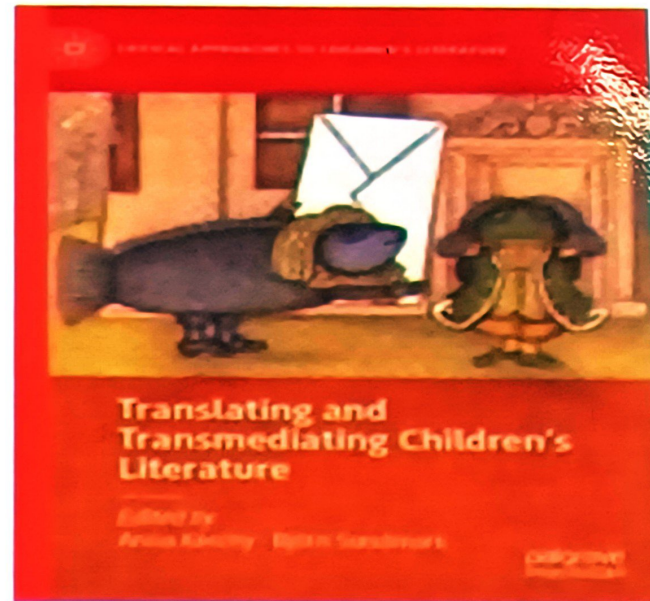
Statement of the problem

- Lathey argues that translators inevitably encounter names, **cultural markers** (foods, customs, places, social practices) and **intertextual references** (allusions to other stories, songs, fairy tales, legends, etc.). These elements pose special challenges in children's books because:
 - young readers often have **less background knowledge** than adult readers,
 - **cultural unfamiliarity can confuse** rather than enrich the reading experience,
 - but **oversimplifying or eliminating** foreign elements can strip a text of richness, identity and authenticity.



Statement of the problem

- Lathey calls this arena **“meeting the unknown”** because translators must decide how to present what the target reader does not already know without losing the vitality or intention of the original text.



Answering the RQs

- **1. Unfamiliarity Is Not Always a Problem to Be Eliminated**
- Lathey emphasizes that children can enjoy encountering unfamiliar names and cultural practices — and that translators should avoid unnecessary “domestication” that removes all traces of the source culture. Preserving exotic or unknown elements may enrich the reader’s experience if handled thoughtfully.



• 2. Names in Children's Literature

• Names (of characters or places) often carry meaning in the source text (sound symbolism, cultural associations, jokes). Translators have several options:

• keep them **unchanged**,

• **translate** them with approximate equivalents in the target language,

• or **adapt** them to signal similar cultural cues.

• For example, translators of Harry Potter have dealt differently with culturally bound names depending on their target audience.

- 3. Cultural Markers

- These include foods, games, social roles, holidays, daily routines, or idiomatic behavior. Decisions include:

- keeping the original term (with or without explanation),
- substituting a culturally appropriate equivalent,
- or using glossaries or footnotes only if appropriate to the age and format.





- **4. Intertextual References**

- Children's texts often contain references to other stories, nursery rhymes, popular characters, legends, etc. These pose a unique problem: if the target culture does not recognize a referenced story, then the allusion loses meaning. Strategies include translating references literally, substituting familiar local equivalents (if appropriate), or explaining them in supplemental material.

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- **5. Mediation vs. Transparency**

- Lathey discusses cultural mediation — where the translator intentionally assists the reader in understanding unfamiliar elements — as an important skill. However, it must be balanced so the translation remains lively and engaging rather than overly explanatory or patronizing.

Main Definitions & Concepts

- **Cultural Markers**
- Elements in the source text that signify cultural identity: foods, clothing, traditions, names, places, social roles. These are often specific to the source culture and require careful handling in translation.

Main Definitions & Concepts

- **Intertextual References**

- Allusions to other texts, legends, songs, stories, or shared cultural narratives. These can be explicit (e.g., mentioning Cinderella) or implicit (structural or thematic echoes).

- **Mediation**

- The translator's intervention to help the target reader understand aspects of the source culture, either through glossaries, notes, brief explanations, or adaptation.

Main Definitions & Concepts

- **5. Mediation vs. Transparency**
- Lathey discusses cultural mediation — where the translator intentionally assists the reader in understanding unfamiliar elements — as an important skill. However, it must be balanced so the translation remains lively and engaging rather than overly explanatory or patronizing.

Main Definitions & Concepts

- **Domestication vs. Foreignization**
- These are translation strategies:
- **Domestication:** adapting source elements to relatable equivalents in the target culture.
- **Foreignization:** retaining source culture elements to preserve their original flavor. Lathey suggests a balanced approach, particularly for children.

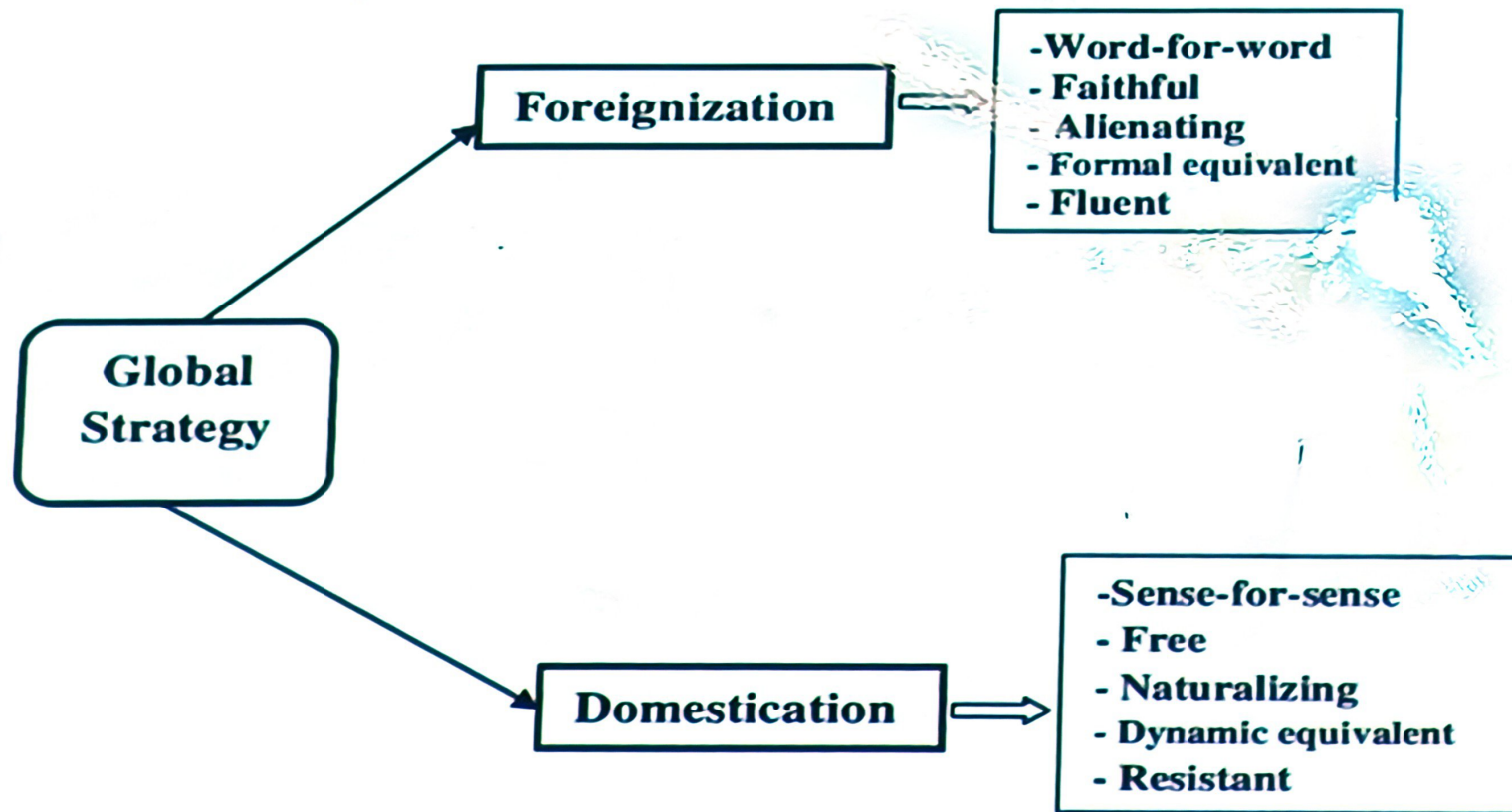


Figure 3: Suo's Translation Strategies