Translating Proper Names in Children's Literature: A Semantic Perspective

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Abstract

The process of Translation enters the message of a source language (SL) into a target language (TL) making no alterations to the meaning of the message. The purpose of any literary translation would be to realize the author's imagination and intent without losing clarity with respect to the readership. Translating any proper name would be a special challenge since the process of shifting an expression may rely on whether the translator is stage-oriented or source-oriented.

With increasing cultural exchange, translating children's literature has become a most important means of introducing young readers to other cultures. Yet proper names remain a challenge in translation due to their cultural nature. While some scholars consider proper names untranslatable, some are looking at options for translating them meaningfully into the TL. This abstract indicates the complexity of translating proper names and the necessity of bringing in an awareness of culture into the process of literary translation.

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الملخص

تدخل عملية الترجمة رسالة اللغة المصدر (SL) إلى اللغة الهدف (TL) دون إجراء أي تغييرات على معنى الرسالة. والغرض من أي ترجمة أدبية هو تحقيق نقل خيال المؤلف ونيته دون فقدان الوضوح بالنسبة للقراء. إن ترجمة أي اسم علم تشكل تحدياً خاصاً، إذ قد تعتمد عملية نقل التعبير على ما إذا كان المترجم موجهاً نحو النص المستهدف أو نحو المصدر.

ومع تزايد التبادل الثقافي، أصبحت ترجمة أدب الأطفال من أهم الوسائل لتعريف القراء الصغار بثقافات أخرى. ومع ذلك، تظل اسماء العلم تحدياً في الترجمة بسبب طبيعتها الثقافية. و بينما يرى بعض الباحثين أن أسماء العلم غير قابلة للترجمة، يبحث آخرون عن خيارات لترجمتها إلى اللغة الهدف بشكل ذي معنى. تشير نتائج هذه الدراسة إلى الطبيعة المعقدة لترجمة الأسماء العلمية وضرورة إدخال الوعي الثقافي في عملية الترجمة الأدبية.

1. Introduction

Proper names perform critical functions in the literary texts, not only as identifiers but as carriers of culture, history, and language significance. Proper names are primarily defined by the linguistic terminology as nouns or noun phrases that uniquely refer to a particular individual, place, or entity, hence distinguishing them from common nouns, which refer to general categories (Crystal, 2008). Onomastics, as the study of names, has shown that proper names usually contain cultural stories, values, and worldviews themselves (Nuessel, 1992), which seeks semantic treatment of their translation. In children's literature, speculation regarding proper names assumes an entirely different scale. Such names may denote a single person, for example—yet not necessarily a 'real' person; they may designate particular animals or imaginary places, magical objects, and so on. It is often imitative or symbolic, playfully engaging children's minds, stimulating their imagination, and developing logical thinking with this kind of naming. Winnie-the-Pooh or Pippi Longstocking, Hogwarts, etc.: these names have a wider meaning than mere labels because they constitute part of the story-lives of the characters, reflecting authorial creativity, narrative function, and linguistic inventiveness (Fernández Fontecha, 2016). That makes the translation of such proper nouns a very critical balance between fidelity in meaning and cultural adaptation, especially with regard to the cognitive and emotional processes implied by the child reader.

Children's literature has been touted to lack complexity. It doesn't, however, entirely reflect reality; rather, it constitutes one of the most complicated literary spaces in the double-voiced address of children and, indeed, adults who mediate their reading experiences. This double perspective, as Gauthier (2018) notes, arises from the interplay between the author's adult consciousness and the imagined worldview of the child. Indeed, the naming process in children's texts is rarely undertaken without another motive; pedagogical, ideological, and sociocultural factors often impact this naming process.

It is therefore a very tied-in-with cultural semiotics, ideology, and audience reception (Oittinen, 2000) that constitutes the very nature of children's literature translation. The translator should then decide on the treatment of proper names: whether to remain in its original form (foreignization), to adapt it to the target culture (domestication), or even to replace it entirely by a name with an equivalent semantic or cultural weight. All three choices

bring about a change not only into language but also into cultural meanings locked up within the name (Davies, 2003). The translator's choices might depend on factors such as the target culture expectations, the publishing context, and the intended age group of the readership.

Proper nouns, in semantic terms, would comprise referential as well as connotative dimensions. The referential function refers generally to the object or character that the name designates, while the connotative function expresses some cultural, emotional, or symbolic connotation (Van Langendonck, 2007). During translation, it is possible for a proper name to preserve its referential value but lose or alter its total semantic connotation. For example, what may carry some phonetic jest or allusion in the source language may turn semantically opaque or culturally irrelevant in the target language; hence, the translator is forced to intervene with creativity.

Recent studies have focused on the role of cultural context and ideological undercurrents in the translation of children's proper names. According to Al-Fouzan (2019), naming is not an act of neutral language, but an action that is culturally bound and historically situated. In children's literature, names often carry some power dynamics, identity politics, or pedagogy, all of which influence how and what is subjected to translation. Similarly, because literature is significantly valuable in shaping a child's perspective in life, translated names thus contribute to the construction of cultural identity and awareness in the minds of young readers (Lathey, 2015).

In essence, translating proper names in children's literature is a complex process combining appropriate semantic interpretation, cultural negotiation, and literary sensibility. It requires an understanding not only of linguistic equivalence but also of narrative function, audience reception, and cultural translatability. By analyzing how the semantic aspects of names are maintained, adapted, or transformed in a translation, scholars can learn more about cross-cultural literary exchange and the cognitive-linguistic processes that underlie child readership.

2. The Narrative and Semantic Functions of Proper Names in Children's Literature

Proper names constitute a vital narrative element in children's literature, playing a multidimensional role in character construction, plot development, thematic expression, and cultural resonance. Far from being arbitrary labels, names in literary texts often encapsulate key character traits, evoke sensory or emotional associations, and reflect broader sociolinguistic realities. As argued by Algeo (1985), names in literature operate as semiotic signs, capable of both referential and connotative meaning, thereby enriching the reader's interpretive experience.

Proper names in the domain of children's literature acquire this additional level of significance because they have the potential to resonate with the imaginative frameworks and experiences of young readers. They often disclose such details as the age, ethnicity, geographical origin, social status, or even moral alignment of the character; such salient features in character shaping and plot construction. For example, names with suggestiveness and playfulness, such as Ginger Snap, Cousin Jock, or Little Jack Jumper-a-Dee, conjure up a rich sensorial picture for children-a picture that is sound and auditory, which corresponds with their cognitive and emotive engagement with the text.

In the case of children's literature, nicknames and invented names have an even stronger dose of intimacy, whimsy, and immediacy. Their perceived simplicity often conceals much more intricate linguistic play or cultural allusion. They lend themselves to granting familiarity even

in absence of any reference. This situation fits Leech's (1969) observation of "associative meaning," according to which names stir up memories, feelings, or archetypes residing within the shared cultural or linguistic subconscious. Hence, when a reader has never come across a character called Bloomin' Billy or Breezy Shoe-Sole, the sound and semantic making of the name may evoke a world of childhood impressions and imaginative associations.

Names, too, function symbolically. They may stand for archetypes or exaggerate traits in ways that are immediately graspable by a young audience. The alliterative, rhythmic, or onomatopoeic memory effects of such names help retain their attention and entertain them—another key strategy for engaging the child reader and leading them into narrative identification. Furthermore, funny or ludicrous names appeal to a child's delight in linguistic play and absurdity, which Nodelman (2008) argues is a defining characteristic of children's literature.

In little consideration of afterward intertextuality and sociocultural experience does much of the weight of the interpretation of names reside with the reader. Many names invoke shared cultural histories or literary traditions. The name Old Aesop, for example, instantly conjures the classical fable tradition, and so Ginger Snap may have culinary and affective associations that rival language barriers. Names, in a sense, become cultural and emotional shorthand, through which the reader is drawn into the cross-talking imaginative world of the text.

However, not all names are overtly distinctive. Some may appear innocuous or somewhat mundane at first sight, yet via context, repetition and characterization, they accrue symbolic weight or emotional energy. This captures the dynamic between language and narrative at play: names-would-be-seemingly mundane-communicate through literary function to become symbols of universal experience.

As a whole, proper names in children's literature are far more than structural necessities; they are instruments of semantic richness and emotional connectivity. They tap into a child's experiences, phonetic intuition, and cultural background to fashion characters and worlds that by turn feel immediate and foreign. Within this framework, a study of names provides great insight into narrative method, cultural transmission, and cognitive mechanisms of literary engagement in early readership.

Table (1)
Categorizes and lists the proper names with their narrative or semantic functions

Proper Name	Type	Possible Connotations / Function
Child of the Everglades	Fictional/Descriptive	Suggests connection to nature, wilderness, or regional identity; evokes a sense of adventure.
Breezy Shoe-Sole	Invented/Nickname	Light, humorous tone; evokes motion, airiness; playful and memorable.
Bloomin' Billy	Nickname	Alliterative and humorous; might suggest cheerfulness or a blossoming personality.
Old Aesop	Historical/Literary	Refers to the ancient storyteller; implies wisdom, moral storytelling.
Little Jack Jumper-a-Dee	Invented/Nursery Rhyme Style	Rhythmic, musical; evokes childlike joy or folklore-like qualities.

| Ginger Snap | Nickname/Descriptive | Refers to a sweet treat; playful, energetic, possibly referencing a fiery personality (ginger). |
| Cousin Jock | Familiar Name | Implies closeness, familial relationship; may suggest regional identity (e.g., Scottish origin). |

3.Children's Literature: A Unique Genre

Children's literature can be defined in many different ways, according to several interpretations by scholars, critics, and even writers from the past till now. For instance, Jakšić (2012) recognizes that children's literature is often characterized thematically, concerning subjects and content that matter to children or appeal to them. Children's poetry is a major genre in this literature, usually written either to be read by the child itself or read aloud to it by adults, with a great deal of attention placed on matters of rhythm, sound, or imagination.

Children's literature is simply written work that brings alive a very young audience-anything, indeed, that children find fascinating or somehow moving. So, from this simple and gross definition, it can be said that it is apparent understanding that a tale is not only different form or intention but among the audience itself in the way it received that story.

Most recently, Perry Nodelman (2008) holds a nice definition that is in general acceptable: children literature is a type of literature written about the world from the child's perspective. It is based upon the child's view that not just the object and purpose differ from those of adults, but this difference is expressed through the content, tone, or narrative structure that might view some children's literature as more relevant compared to others.

It is not necessary for authors to leave adult perspectives behind when writing things for children. In fact, C.S. Lewis declares quite beautifully in England in 1952: "We must write for children out of those elements in our own imagination which we share with children," meaning that the best children's literature usually comes from an adult who, through memory, imagination, and emotional resonance, has learned to reconnect with that inner child. And it has clear implications for translation because translators of children's literature must access such childlike perspectives and values--their simplicity of language within the framework of cultural relevance and literary integrity.

4. The Challenges of Translating Proper Names

Proper names are considered to play an important role within literary works, and as a result, they also require particular care from the translator. These names are personal, familial, geographical, or social; they are not mere labels; they are integral parts of the structure and theme of the text. Therefore, the translator should view both linguistic and extra-linguistic factors in dealing with proper names from the source language (SL) into the target language (TL). Berezhna (2007) states that translating a proper name does not only imply finding an equivalent linguistic form in the TL but also lacking referential and, if possible, semantic and connotative qualities of the original.

Proper names are among the toughest cases to translate-their cultural embedding is so deep that most of what a proper noun might bear as meaning usually needs reference to a culture-specific. Jackson said proper names are untranslatable, that is, to be retained in their original forms in both SL and TL. But, that assumption is challenged more and more, especially with children's literature where names are found rich in layered meanings, sound patterns, and

imaginative cues that are of great importance in engagement and comprehension of the narrative.

Children's literature is a different kettle of fish. An analysis carried out on the translation of phraseological proper names in children's fairy tales shows that such names might have a significantly positive effect on children's cognitive and linguistic development (Pieciul-Karmińska, 2017). These texts bring to mind an imaginative, playful, and highly emotional atmosphere, and proper names might often be an important factor specifying a child's reality or that of fiction. These too significant names and phrases, if omitted or not properly translated, might confuse a child's understanding of narrative logic, world-building, or even the identity of a character.

Further, names are often acoustically important in their reception by children. Contrary to the common belief that children do not make finer distinctions in phonetic elements, scientific evidence has shown that children actually perceive the nature of language in alliterations, rhymes, and rhythm. Proper names are patterned, typically, in children's stories to be memorable, playfully, and meaningful. However, in all these languages, the sound interface will be widely different, hence complicating the direct translation. The name's soundscape will elicit an understanding of what usually is background knowledge, emotional nuance, and acquaintance-all of which rarely occur as exact equivalents in the TL.

Proper names, in summary, are more than mere substitutive languages in children's literature translation; they require creative equivalence where semantic, phonetic, cultural, and imaginative functions are necessarily preserved, thus assuring the literary value and cognitive impact of the original.

5.Proper Names in Literature

Nomenclatures, much like humans, can shape, transform, and sometimes liberate themselves in the reproductive life of storytelling. Thus, there is an inherent symbiotic relationship between names and narrative as beyond their sheer labeling of characters, events, or places (Pieciul-Karmińska, 2017). In literature, especially in children literature-wild entities and play-minded barbarisms by which proper names are enlisted-proper names would serve as markers of identities and distinctiveness; they become the very essence in the architectural design of literary text. Titles and narrative voices in children's literature frequently foreground names, emphasizing their importance in shaping meaning and guiding interpretation. Leads to understanding in this context provide as semantic access to the wider understanding of the text.

Names hold what it is to be understood as identity. People are nominally related to and therefore differentiated from one another; naming amounts to defining. The philosophical past, especially those influenced by the philosophy of language, has long debated the meaning and functioning of proper names. Common nouns denote meanings that in general might specify categories, but proper names also are denotating devices-functioning differently.

Some are, in fact, names that are purposely created out of reference to their root meanings, either symbolically or descriptively: it is suggested rather than said, so to speak, that the character to be introduced will have attributes or roles even before he or she is present in the narrative. Others are names that may appear devoid of inherent meaning but acquire implications through their role in the story, shaped by the narrative world and the character's actions or destiny. This gives most literature's proper names a certain duality-denotative labeling for the character, place, or event allowing that entity entry into the narrative space

and connotative encapsulation of pre-textual dimensions-hinting at personality traits, symbolic functions, or eventual outcomes.

All things considered, proper names do not just serve as identifiers but as narrative tools that are heavily laden with cultural, emotional, and semantic weight, especially when they are in children's literature where imagination, personal identity, and language play coincide.

6. Strategies for Translating Proper Names

Researchers and linguists have developed different translation methods for proper names, arguing that cultural knowledge is paramount in producing accurate and meaningful translations. Therefore, a translator needs to possess good knowledge of these two cultures to be able to translate proper names correctly, and this cultural knowledge contributes a great deal to the translators' very activity. Besides linguistic competence, cultural knowledge aids in keeping proper names from a total loss of name contextual-symbolic significance.

Translation procedures and strategies for dealing with proper names vary. One major recommendation is that the original name is kept in the footnotes or in an appendix for the reader's—especially those who appreciate the complexities of the translation of proper names—consideration in comprehension of the source context. Vermes (2001) mentioned transliteration as one possible means of rendering proper names, mentioning two modes: phonetic transliteration and letter transliteration. The phonetic transliteration is held as suitable for transferring names usually from one script to another (e.g., Cyrillic into Latin) and should not be applied in the reverse form when dealing between two languages sharing the same script. He also points out the aspect of translation consistency, favoring, whenever a personal name can be retained or "mirrored" in the target text (TT) for effect, another argument for the same aim.

Newark remarked that personal names are frequently not translated because they are felt to have no meaning in the text, so the rendering of the name to not convey any meaning would constitute a preservation of its national or cultural setting. He noted, however, that this is not the case where, for instance, monarchs, popes, saints, or characters are injuriously named for what stands as either a symbolic or narrative significance. Under such circumstances, a translation or adaptation could be a viable option. Certain names could also be subject to a process of naturalization whereby they are conditioned to fit the phonetic or orthographic standards of the target language. Such types of transliteration extend to brand names, trademarks, and other terms of proprietary nature, which are frequently transferred along modified lines to give local relevance or pronunciation.

Table (2)
Types of Meaning in Proper Names

Meaning Type	Subcategory	Description	Examples
6.1 Semantic Meaning	—	Refers to names that reflect a character's traits, destiny, or narrative role. Common in allegorical literature.	A name that hints at a character's fate or personality.
6.2 Semiotic	—	Evokes cultural, historical, social, or	- *Ginny* (female), *Harry* (male) - *Sir Nicolas De Mimsy-Porpington* (social

Meaning		intertextual associations.	class) - *Padma* & *Parvati Patil* (Indian), *Viktor Krum* (Bulgarian) - *Gabriel*, *Michael* (religious) - *Merlin*, *Minerva*, *Dedalus* (mythological/intertextual)
6.3 Sound Symbolic Meaning	6.3.1 Imitative	Uses **onomatopoeia** to imitate sounds, enhancing the name's vividness.	*Breehy-hinny-brinny-hoohy-hah* (a horse in C.S. Lewis's *Chronicles of Narnia*)
	6.3.2 Phonesthetic	Based on **phonemes** or sound patterns that convey specific meanings or imagery.	The cluster **/gl/** in *glisten*, *glow*, *glimmer*, *glitter*—all associated with light (Oittinen, 2000)

7. Conclusions and Future Directions

Based on research, it can be concluded that proper names refer to a unique individual, place, or things, as they are inherently different from all others. Thus, their meanings are intrinsic and cannot be substituted. Proper names play crucial roles in connecting and bonding narratives, their internal worlds, and their readership or audience members. They are among the key tools in the construction and definition of characters, which are made richer for the reader through those literary experiences.

Translating proper names is inherently problematic. Moreover, because of the culturally historical and linguistic references embedded in the names, it is rarely possible to have a complete equivalence between the source and the target texts. Translators usually have to deal with indirect meanings and cultural implications and thus resort to inferential decisions which deviate from the intention of the author in most cases. Hence, it is contrary to the belief that translation can always fulfill the same role as the source text.

Culture has a valuable influence on the translation of proper names in terms of their specificity to culture; thus, translators must be aware of the worlds they are translating from and to in order to render names properly and adequately meaningful.

Future Research Suggestions:

1. Expanded Corpus Studies: This would entail corpus-based studies into the translation of children's proper names by expanding the scope to include larger languages and cultures.
2. Interdisciplinary Approaches: Exploring insights from cognitive linguistics, semiotics, or cultural studies will deepen understanding of how the children's name's function both semantically and culturally in translation.
3. Reader Reception Studies: How well translated proper names are perceived and understood by child readers will provide valuable feedback on different translation techniques.
4. The Development of Translation Guidelines: Based on empirical evidence, practical rules and frames can be created to guide translators in addressing the unique challenges posed by children's proper names.
5. Technological Integration: Understanding how translation technologies and AI might support the translation of proper names in children's literature may turn out to be a whole new level of efficiency and creativity in translation practice.

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