

The Translation of Culture-Bound Elements into Finnish in the Post-War Period

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Abstract

Culture-bound elements, such as proper names and food items, not only place the story of a book in a specific culture and period of time, but also imply certain values and create an ambience. These elements also have an effect on how the reader identifies with the story and characters. Thus, it is important to find the most appropriate strategy to translate such elements. This paper considers the Finnish translation (1949) of Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows* (1908), a multi-layered and allusive children's book set in Edwardian England, and some other children's tales translated into Finnish around the same era. The translation of *The Wind in the Willows* dates back to a period of time when British culture was not yet well known in Finland. The paper argues that certain inconsistencies in the translation of culture-bound elements in the book make it difficult for target text readers to understand its layers of meaning and to identify with the characters. Similar inconsistencies in the translation of culture-bound elements are found in other Finnish

translations of children's books from the same period. The findings may be explained by a limited knowledge of foreign cultures in post-war Finland.

Keywords : culture-bound elements, translation norms, foreignization, domestication, children's classics

Résumé

Les éléments de culture en traduction, comme les noms propres et la nourriture, fixent non seulement l'histoire d'un livre dans une culture particulière, mais impliquent aussi certaines valeurs et créent une atmosphère. Ces éléments ont aussi une influence sur la manière dont le lecteur s'identifie à l'histoire et aux personnages. Ainsi, il est fondamental de trouver la bonne stratégie de traduction. Cet article utilise la traduction finnoise (1949) de Kenneth Grahame *The Wind in the Willows* (1908), un livre multicouche plein d'allusions et dont l'histoire se passe en Angleterre pendant la période edwardienne. La traduction réfère à une période où la culture britannique n'était pas encore bien connue en Finlande. L'article montre que certaines incohérences d'éléments culturels dans la traduction rendent la compréhension difficile pour les lecteurs, surtout en ce qui a trait aux personnages. Des incohérences semblables se retrouvent dans d'autres traductions finnoises de livres pour enfants datant de la même période. Ces constatations peuvent s'expliquer par des connaissances limitées des cultures étrangères dans la Finlande d'après-guerre.

Biographie

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