

# Translating Children's Literature

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Odjel za anglistiku

Preddiplomski sveučilišni studij engleskog jezika i književnosti (dvopredmetni)

**Marta Ivanković**

**Translating Children's Literature: The Gruffalo,  
The Gruffalo's Child, Room on the Broom, and The  
Smartest Giant in Town**

**Završni rad**

Zadar, 2016.

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Završni rad

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Zadar, 2016.



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Zadar, 22. rujan 2016.

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**Translating Children's Literature: *The Gruffalo*, *The Gruffalo's Child*, *Room on the Broom*, and *The Smartest Giant in Town***

Marta Ivanković

Abstract

Children's literature is often underappreciated and placed in the peripheral position. This widespread thinking is not in accordance with the benefits that picture books have on children. This paper discusses the problems of translating children's literature, which is primarily associated with the age factor. Other topics include the position of children's literature, the specific readership, and the translator's aims. The focus is also on the importance of illustrations, readability, and rhyme and rhythm. Lastly, a case study of four translated picture books, *The Gruffalo*, *The Gruffalo's Child*, *Room on the Broom*, and *The Smartest Giant in Town*, is presented at the end.

Key words: translation of children's literature, issues in translation, the readers, picture books, illustrations, Julia Donaldson

## 1. Introduction

Picture books are the first medium of literature children are exposed to. It is their parents and the older people around them who arrange this meeting since they are too young to choose themselves. Therefore, it is important to find quality written and, more importantly, well-translated books for children. Translation of children's literature is a field of its own, just like the genre of children's literature itself. It shares properties of children's literature and of literary translation. The translators of children's literature have a demanding task because they have to meet most of the challenges of literary translation but they also have to take a specific age of their audience into account.

This thesis will therefore focus on challenges and problems one can encounter when translating children's literature. These include special issues of translating children's literature, such as, the role of the translator as a mediator between the author and the reader. The translators are the ones who offer the audience new pieces of literature and the view into other cultures and this is why they should have both knowledge of theory and practice. The thesis will also offer an overview of the history of children's literature translation.

Julia Donaldson, the author of picture books that are the focus of this thesis, is a notable English author. Her works have been translated into many languages, including Croatian. She feels that rhyming stories is her "own specialty and area of expertise" (Donaldson 55) and leaves novels out of her range.

Donaldson wrote numerous children's picture books out of which the most popular is *The Gruffalo*. Because it became a beloved book amongst children, it is considered a modern classic for which she has also received many awards. Following the success of *The Gruffalo*, Donaldson published a sequel to the story – *The Gruffalo's Child*. *Room on the Broom* and

*The Smartest Giant in Town* are two of her other successful books which will also be included in this thesis. The translator of these picture books is Krešimir Krnić. The Croatian titles are: *Grubzon* for *The Gruffalo*, *Grubzonovo dijete* for *The Gruffalo's Child*, *Mjesta ima na metli svima* for *Room on the Broom*, and *Najotmjeniji div u gradu* for *The Smartest Giant in Town*.

This thesis will offer the analysis and comparison of the English original texts and its translations into Croatian which will try to determine how successful the translations were and what were the translator's aims. As these books are rhymed, special attention will be given to the importance of rhyme and rhythm in the translation.

Another important factor of picture books is illustrations. Illustrations were made by Axel Scheffler and they have stayed the same in the Croatian translations. Although their role in the translation is usually overlooked, they are just as important as the text. Together with the text, they form a comprehensive unity, allowing the reader to rely on them in cases of misunderstandings. They are also valuable to the translator who relies on them for finding the right meaning.

Attitudes towards the authors of children's literature, the translators of children's literature, and children's literature in general will also be discussed. Young readers must be provided with an access to quality literature and this role has to be taken with great responsibility. If children read while they are young, they will likely continue to do so as they get older. This indeed seems as one of the aims that everyone involved in the field of children's literature should be aware of.



## 2. Picture Books

Picture books are aimed at very young, pre-literate children and they are often thought as of little critical importance. They are intended at “the least experienced audience” and are seen as a combination of verbal texts and visual images (Nodelman 128). They are used on the assumption that they communicate more naturally allowing children to understand the text.

They are used for a variety of purposes and influence the readers in a number of ways. The author of *Picture Books for Children*, Patricia J. Cianciolo, says that picture books can “enrich, extend, and expand young readers’ background of experiences, their literary and aesthetic interests, tastes, and preferences by providing a variety of sensory images and vicarious, experiences, plots, characters, and themes” (1). This is why their influence has a tremendous effect on the recipients of the texts, which are not only limited to children. Another characteristic is that literary and visual aspects of picture books form a complete entity of meaning.

The range of picture books is very varied. Some appeal to children as young as six months up to children of three years, who find images of people and object easily manageable (Cianciolo 2). This is important because the images are familiar to them and easy to comprehend. Picture books where illustration have an equally important role, appeal to children as young as three years who cannot read yet, but can listen and understand the story, and to even older groups of adults (Cianciolo 3).

Pictures and illustrations accompany the text and “show us what is meant by the words, so that we come to understand the objects and actions the words refer to in terms of the qualities of the images that accompany them- the world outside the book in terms of the images within it” (Nodelman 131). They are not secondary to the text but have an equally important role in transmitting the understanding to children.

The creator of picture books, Shaun Tan, says that when writing picture books he does not have a particular audience in mind because picture books “do not set out to appeal to a predefined audience, they build one for themselves” (3). Because of this, they can appeal to a wider audience. However, he lists some of the characteristics of picture books and their intended audience: “Picture books are quite large, colorful, easy to read and very simple in their storyline and structure, not very long and (most significantly) produced exclusively for a certain audience, namely children, especially of the younger variety” (Tan 4). They allow the readers to learn how to read, and to explore the relationship with the world. This is why the simplicity of picture books does not understand a lack of complexity. The author compares picture books with other visual media, such as films and television. Tan claims that “there is no reason why a 32-page illustrated story can’t have equal appeal for teenagers or adults as they do for children” (4). The themes and topics in picture books allow the movement of boundaries regarding their readers.

Julia Donaldson herself states that she does not have a particular audience in mind and that she writes for herself (58). Perhaps the success of her books is exactly in her approach to writing which appeals both to children and adults.

### 3. Notion of Childhood

Notion of the child and childhood has changed immensely over the course of time and consequently has had an impact on children’s literature. In her postgraduate diploma in translation “Children’s Translation and its Translations: An Overview”, Thomson-Wohlgemuth, discusses this effect based on the children’s reading materials from the past. According to Thomson-Wohlgemuth, the child of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is in many aspects different from the child of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, let alone the child of the 19<sup>th</sup> century who was protected

from the images of the reality in order not to know the difficulties of life (18). Because of these changes in trends, translators should be acquainted with the contemporary needs of the children in producing quality translations.

Childhood is a stage every adult has been through. It is viewed differently in every country according to their cultural specifications. This is visible in the translations of the children's literature in different countries (Thomson-Wohlgemuth 34). It is up to a translator to know the target-culture the text is being translated into.

Riitta Oittinen, in her book *Translating for Children*, also shares the same view. She says that children were for a long time children considered as "small adults" (42). It was viewed in a negative way and the need for play and the importance of it was not thought as such. Luckily, today's view of childhood and children's needs is much more positive.

#### 4. The Role of Children's Literature

Children's literature is a field on its own with particular characteristics which differentiate it from the adult literature. Barbara Stoodt, the author of *Children's Literature: Discovery of a Lifetime*, says that literature is "thought, experience, and imagination shaped into oral or written language that may include visual images" (4). Moreover, she emphasises education as one of the main tasks of literature because it extends and enriches reader's growing experience. Not only that, the stories enable the continuation of telling stories and listening to them (Stoodt 4). This proves that education has an important role in children's lives, allowing them to find out more about the world and other cultures.

Following this definition, children's literature, as a part of the mainstream of all literature, enables children to learn about life by putting the focus on all aspects of the human experience (Stoodt 4). Children's literature relates to the experience of children and it is told

in a language appropriate for their age. What is more, it takes into account the more limited life experience of children which is the main difference between children's and adult literature. Readers use experience to understand the text and construct the meaning based on their previous knowledge, as well as associations and feelings (Stoodt 5). This is the reason why different readers create different meanings of the same text. Therefore, it is not surprising that each new reading of the same text can result in new experiences.

Stoodt also states that literature affects children's lives in many ways – it broadens their horizons, expands their imagination and enriches them with new experiences (6). Most importantly, it provides them with the understanding of different situations and helps them to be sensitive towards other people by permitting readers to “walk in someone else's shoes for a time, thus giving them a better understanding of another's feelings” (6). This is an important and valuable lesson learned by reading which inculcates positive behaviour.

However, sometimes it is difficult to distinguish the borders of a book written for children and a book written for adults. An example of it is *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, which was originally written for children but some view it as a book for adults (Oittinen 62). She also states that children's literature is seen in two ways: “as literature produced and intended for children or as literature read by children (61). In both cases it is directed towards children. Oittinen also finds illustrations and reading children's books aloud as the specific features of children's literature (4). Both of these concepts will be explained in the following pages.

#### 4.1. Position of Children's Literature

The positive qualities of children's literature given before would mean that it, as a field, is respected and valued. However, that is not the case as the status of children's literature is often questionable, even among the authors themselves who are in many instances faced with the question of why they want to write for children and they are seen as the

beginners in writing (Thomson-Wohlgemuth 3). It is not difficult to conclude that children's literature is often marginalized and thought to be of inferior literary value. Thomson-Wohlgemuth even states that the attitude shown to children's authors is "more than condescending" (3). For these reasons, authors may start their career by writing and translating children's literature. If it is not successful, the justification is that it was only written for children. This approach to children's literature shows disrespect to its audience – the readers who deserve recognition.

Also, it is not uncommon that many authors use pen names to avoid losing credibility. The use of pen names was a common practice for writing children's literature because it was not something to be proud of and it did not enhance reputation (Oittinen 68). Authors of children's literature did not receive the same respect as writers of adult literature. Thomson-Wohlgemuth shares Shavit's quote regarding academic recognition of children's authors: "Only if one is esteemed in a field other than children's literature, does one stand a fair chance of becoming a member of the academic-literary community" (4). This quote sums up the prejudice against the authors of children's literature, as well as translators by giving more prestige to other fields of literature.

Unfortunately, children's writers were inferior even in the award recognitions. Children's writers have never received any prestigious award, including Nobel Prize (Shavit 36). This attitude shows disregard of children's literature. However, if a children's author receives an award, it is because of its educational value and not literary value (Shavit 36). Oittinen says that "the lower status of children's literature is a sign of disrespect for childhood as a whole" (160).

Translation for children does not receive better treatment than children's literature. Oittinen states that unlike the original literature written for children, translation for children is not acknowledged (4). She finds a reason for the neglecting of it in the dominance of women

in it. Women have started writing children's books before males and "since the 1960s children's literature has been the domain of women: most of both authors and translators for children are women" (Oittinen 68). Moreover, female and male writers did not look at children's literature in the same way. Zohar Shavit, the author of *Poetics of Children's Literature*, points to these differences by saying that, while the practice of men was not to sign their name to children's literature, women had "nothing to lose" and they signed their work (39). This has now changed and both female and male writers do sign their work and the 'dishonour' associated with the writing and the translation of children's literature is ceasing.

#### 4.2. Aims of the Translation of Children's Literature

Göte Klinberg's aims for the translation of children's literature are presented in Thomson-Wohlgemuth's paper. They are grouped in two sets of two:

- To further the international outlook, understanding and emotional experience of foreign environments and cultures,
- To make more literature available to children,
- To contribute to the development of the reader's set of values, and
- To give readers a text they can understand given their lack of knowledge (quoted in Thomson-Wohlegemuth 29).

The first set is closer to the source text while the other set is characterized by alterations made to the original and the target text for the benefit of children. The first aim is the one which most people agree to be the most important; increasing children's understanding of the foreign culture. Open-mindedness in later life is related to the exposure of other cultures at a young age.

To present a more general overview of the aims of the translation for children, it is worth mentioning Eugene Nida's four basic requirements of a translation. According to Nida, translation should be "making sense, conveying the spirit and manner of the original, having a natural and easy form of expression, and producing a similar response" (164). This serves as a guide for the translators and although it refers to the translating for adults, it can be attributed to the translation of children's literature as well.

## 5. Children's Literature Translation

Children's Literature Translation, or abbreviated as ChLT, concerns authors, translators, children readers, scholars, publishers, and others who take part and have an interest in this process. Children's Literature Translation falls under the category of Translation Studies and it is only recently that it has been studied. For a long time, this area did not receive recognition from theorists, publishers, and academic institutions, which is surprising since children's literature has been widely translated. In her paper "Issues of Concern in the Study of Children's Literature Translation", Elena Xenii states that this interest in ChLT was initiated by the growing demand of scholars to read books from different parts of the world (2). This opened new areas of research in the children's literature translation and resulted in many publications.

In the following chapters, the most represented issues in translating for children will be thoroughly explained. This includes the overview of issues such as language, translating names, illustrations, rhyme and the rhythm, etc. Therefore, what follows here is the presentation of some of the possible challenges and problems translators encounter when translating children's literature.

### 5.1. Issues in Translating Children's Literature

According to Oittinen, the author of the book *Translating for Children*, “a translation is written in another time, in another place, another language, another country, another culture” (9). The emphasis put on ‘another’ shows that this process is complex and that it has many issues. It has virtually the same challenges as translating for adults. It is a field of its own, just like the genre of children's literature. In his book *Literary Translation: A Practical Guide*, Clifford E. Landers states that, besides having to meet most of the challenges of literary translation, translators also have to take age of their readers into account (106). The experience, abilities and expectations of children must be taken into account in translating for children (Oittinen 34). Translation presents a difficult task in having to simultaneously appeal to both audiences – adults and children. Children are intended readers, and parents are in the position to judge the work's quality (Anderson 176).

Landers claims that translators of children's literature face the same challenges as when translating for adults – “fluency, accuracy, register, flexibility, a feeling for style, an appreciation of nuance, and transparency” (106). Because with age the needs of children change promptly, it is crucial to understand diverse interests of children. Even children of different age do not share the same interests. Many problematic terms such as: political correctness, which is concerned with racial, religious and ethnic groups, sexuality, topics such as family feud, divorce, death, and illness, should be avoided (Landers 106/107). All call in for extreme care in dealing with them.

Ritta Oittinen presents new directions of looking at children's literature and its aspects. In the beginning of her book, she quotes Mary Snell-Hornby who explains the relationship between the source text and the culture it is translated into: “The problems do not depend on the source text itself, but on the significance of the translated text for its readers as members of a certain culture, or of a sub-group within that culture, with the constellation of



knowledge, judgment and perception they have developed from it” (3). This quote shows the complexity of every translation and its culture-dependence. Her book focuses on the translator-centered approach and concentrates on “human action in translation” (3). Oittinen continues by saying that there is not one, correct interpretation of the text – meaning is never an object (22). Therefore, meanings should not be forced on children, who should have the right to make their own interpretations.

Similarly, translators also make their own interpretations of the text. In her book, Oittinen has focused on adaptation as one of the most used strategies in translating children’s literature. According to Oittinen, adaptations have validity and they “reflect love and respect for the reading child” (160). They are made for several reasons: for the purpose of education, for children and their better understanding of the text, or the parents to make the book more appealing (Oittinen 77). Oittinen claims that translation is always an adaptation of a text for “certain purposes and certain readers, both children and adults” (84).

Shavit, however, shares a negative consequence of adaptations. In her opinion, the translators of children’s literature have greater freedom regarding the text than writers of adult literature. This means that the translator can “manipulate the text in various ways by changing, enlarging, or abridging it or by deleting or adding to it” (112).

## 5.2. The Task of the Translator

Translators have a difficult task of bearing in mind all the issues they need to be aware. Oittinen says that the translator not only specializes in both languages but also in a visual language and knowing the language of illustrations (114). Translators of picture books are in a specific position. Their task is to translate whole situation which include “the words, the illustration, and the whole (imagined) reading-aloud situation” (75).

Landers, emphasizes that, in the event of clashing between the meaning and the story, the translator should always decide in the favour of the latter (107). Otherwise, the children might not be interested in reading/hearing such story. The role of the translator is, therefore, to know the language suitable for children but, what is also important, the language of children.

Oittinen views the translator as “a reader who travels back and forth both in and between texts, the text of the original and the text of her/his own” (16) highlighting this as a continuing, circular process with many evaluations to the earlier work. The translator writes the translation based on the experiencing the original. In this process, the translator imagines the future readers and the dialogue with the readers, which is yet to occur. Therefore, translators are readers themselves who translate for their readers (Oittinen 5). The translator makes sense of the previous words which influence the words in future passages. (16). Unlike any other readers, the translator has the power to influence readers by her/his own reading.

Translators preserve the quality of imagination, and with readers, are in the same position of interpreting author’s text. In the process of the interpretation, they gather a set of different influences regarding the notion of childhood “the history of childhood, the child of their time, the former and present child within themselves – the adult’s childhood and how they remember it” (Oittinen 26). Gillian Lathey, the author of *The Role of Translators in Children's Literature: Invisible Storytellers*, shares the same view of the translator’s task. According to her, translators should “draw on personal childhood experience and an empathy with children just as children’s authors do” (7).

Besides the text, translator needs to pay attention to the interpretation of the illustrator. Therefore, the translator enters a dialogic relationship with “target-language readers with a different cultural background, a new publisher, and even, possibly, a new illustrator participating in a collaborative dialogue with the translator” (Oittinen 144). Translators may

be inclined to convey every part of the original, but they must bear in mind that “translation needs to function alongside the illustrations and on the aloud-reader’s tongue” (Oittinen 5). These two of the Oittinen’s main concerns will be fully explained in the following chapters. Oittinen also refers to the concept of loyalty to the author of the original by saying that it is achieved through the success of the translation, more precisely by being accepted and loved by the audience (84).

### 5.3. The Readers – Children

The most important question when translating for children is indisputably: For whom? Because children have a different way of thinking than adults, they talk and act differently, translators must know this difference. Children’s level of knowledge and skills is not the same as adults. According to Neil Postman, adults know “the secrets and paradoxes, the violence and the tragedy of life” (quoted in Oittinen 42). Children, on the other hand, are innocent and unaware of what the future they will be living in.

Landers says that children do not have preconceived ideas, they are still curious about the world. Adults, unlike children, have learned to correlate the world around them through experience. This is not the case with children who experience their surroundings in a different, unbiased way (Landers 108). Moreover, Landers states that a suitable text for children is anything that they can understand, that meets their needs and interests. (Landers 108). Adults must be aware of the specific needs of children in order not to present them with works which they may find difficult and uninteresting. While reading, young children will first notice what is instantly obvious. Older readers and adults are able to grasp what is hidden (Landers 108). This is another reason why literature for children deserves special carefulness.

One of the qualities that children possess is imagination, the ability to create their own subjective worlds. This quality, sadly, reduces as children grow older and approach

adulthood. Oittinen says that creative imagination, which is always involved in the reading experience, is not just “an innate capability but a complex psychological action, part of the individual’s whole development, and closely connected to the surroundings” (25). Children create imaginary characters and situation in the reading process and they are not interested if they are reading a translation or not. Even more, they are unaware of it but they experience it and give new meaning to it (Oittinen 34).

Children are similar to adults in the way they internalize the world around them. What they read influences their daily life, along with their earlier experiences. This shapes their identities because they compare themselves to the characters they read about by wanting or not wanting to be like them (Oittinen 50).

One of the most recognizable problems of translating children's literature is the age and concepts connected to a certain age which are different for every country. It is important to be aware of the fact that what a seven year old can understand is beyond the grasp of a four year old. In her article “The Translation of Proper Names in Children’s Literature”, Elvira C. Aguilera presents a classification of proper names divided according to the readers’ age:

1. Pre-reading children (0 to 6 years old),
2. Children capable of reading and writing (from 6 to adolescence),
3. Adolescence and youngsters. (Aguilera 5)

The differences among these groups are related to the target reader’s knowledge of the world and their intellectual capabilities. Younger children do not react in the same way to foreign elements as older ones. Aguilera claims that “the lower the age the lower the capability of understanding, therefore, the acceptability of foreignizing elements” (5). This is why translators must have a different approach in translating for different age groups.

Translators have a demanding task of deciding how much unfamiliarity children can take. As Lathey puts it: “Translators have also sought to compensate for the child’s inevitable

lack of life experience, or to strike a balance between filling gaps in children's knowledge and the need to stimulate curiosity and enhance a tolerance of the unfamiliar" (7). This dilemma follows the translators in every part of their translating process.

Children, as the recipients of picture books, are different from adults in their knowledge of the world. They are "in need of learning how to think about their world, how to see and understand themselves and others" (Nodelman 132). This is why the influence of picture books on the creation of the children's perception of the world is important.

#### 5.4. Language

One of the challenges of translating children's literature is also the use of language. This is especially difficult to tackle when the original is written in a certain regional dialect or sociolect. This presents a problem for all literary translators. One solution is to choose some kind of a colloquial speech instead of the standard language and the dialect of the target language (Thomson-Wohlgemuth 71).

Translators should also be aware of juvenile language. According to Thomson-Wohlgemuth, children like hearing the protagonist who speaks their own language (72). The characteristic of juvenile language is that it changes rapidly – if the translator uses words that are at the moment 'fashionable', they might limit the life-span of a certain book (Thomson-Wohlgemuth 72). No one can predict which words and expressions will last and which ones will not which makes this problem unavoidable. Again, it is up to the translator to make a decision which language will be used and use it consistently throughout the whole work.

Language presents a problem for authors as well. Donaldson says: "But although I am writing for myself, at the same time it is sometimes frustrating that I know I can't use a particular word, because I just know it would be too grown up for children. So it is much

harder than, say, writing adult songs” (58). Translators should also keep in mind that children have a limited vocabulary which has an effect on the choices made.

Vocabulary is extremely important. For this reason, translators have to consciously reduce their vocabulary range. Landers states that some publishers even provide translators with a list of suitable words they should use (107). For Oittinen, language is an issue of authority (52). Parents, translators and illustrators, among others, have control over the decisions of what is appropriate for children.

### 5.5. Rhyme and Rhythm

Both rhyme and rhythm contribute to the overall success of the translation of picture books aimed at very young readers. Since picture books are usually read aloud to young children, the importance of these two aspects is momentous. Rhythm in picture books can be heard when reading aloud but even if it is not, “texts have an inner rhythm that the reader can feel” (Oittinen 109).

Oittinen says that grammatical punctuation is less important than the rhythm, which children need to hear (35). Translators can study the rhythm of the original by reading aloud in order to achieve the same rhythm in the translation. This also allows the translator to get a view into the tone and intonation.

The importance of rhyme cannot be stressed enough. According to Landers, young children should not be subjected to blank verse or free verse purely for the reason that at that age they cannot appreciate it (107). Rhyme can also be used a tool for memorization and, consequently, a tool for learning how to read. It can be humorous and in that case the translator should find an equivalent and opt for the adaptation rather than a close translation (Landers 107).

Donaldson's creative approach to writing children's literature is best visible in the alternation of repetitiveness and varieties. She says that children find security in knowing there is the same pattern while still being surprised with the continuous changes (61). This has turned out as the best combination for Donaldson.

### 5.6. Translating Names

One of the main issues when it comes to translating children's literature is whether or not to translate names of people and places. This issue of localisation<sup>1</sup> must be dealt with extreme caution. If the original names are simply replaced with the names of people and places suitable to the target language, there will be inconsistencies. According to Thomson-Wohlgemuth, names are usually sacred in adult literature but not so much in children's literature (75).

Many authors have different views of this issue. Thomson-Wohlgemuth gives two examples of it. Kurultay, for example, argues that names should not be localised because they represent the cultural identity of the source language (quoted in Thomson-Wohlgemuth 75). While Bravo-Villasante, on the contrary, feels that translators should change only the names which are difficult to pronounce (quoted in Thomson-Wohlgemuth 75). The making of this decision is up to the translator who needs to find an acceptable solution for every individual text she/he translates.

Aguilera, states that we usually think of proper names as anthroponyms – names of persons and toponyms – names of places, but there is more to it (1). The list also includes last names, constellations, religious feasts, sacred books, commercial brands, etc.

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<sup>1</sup> "Localisation involves taking a product and making it linguistically and culturally appropriate to the target locale (country/region and language) where it will be used and sold" (Education Initiative Taskforce of the Localization Industry Standards Association quoted in Pym 29).

Furthermore, Aguilera offers Theo Herman's classification of proper names which states four ways of transferring proper names from one language into other. According to Herman, proper names can be copied – reproduced as they are in the source text, transcribed – changed according to the level of phonology and morphology, substituted or translated if it acquires a specific meaning (quoted in Aguilera 3). These four ways do not exclude each other and combinations of these options are possible.

Oittinen finds the connection between names and sounds. She says that sounds are connected to the pronunciation of foreign names in a way that “how we read them (aloud or silently) depends on whether we know the language (the origin of name)” (110).

Describing how Gruffalo came to life, Donaldson says that in the beginning alternative names for Gruffalo were ‘snargle’, ‘stroog’, ‘tiglophant’. Luckily, Donaldson thought of Gruffalo, which achieved rhyme and it sounded fierce, ended in ‘o’ and had three syllables (59).

### 5.7. Readability

Texts gain a new life with each reading, and they evoke a different response with new interpretations. This is why it presents an issue in translation. Oittinen states her view of reading as an involvement: “It is an emotional, physical state: the more we read, the more we become attached to the text – we smell, taste, and feel it” (16), which gives importance to the internal processes rather than viewing it as a passive state.

This brings on the concept of readability which is difficult to define. However, in her book, Oittinen presents the views of it by multiple authors. One of them, John Spink, states it is the quality of the book, and Stanley Fish says that it refers to making sense rather than “the printed page or the space between the covers of a book” (Oittinen, 33). Another view of Ulla Puranen, who specializes in readability, is that words have emotional value, they carry emotional effect (Oittinen 33). What they all have in common is that they do refer to the



experience of reading. They do not refer to readability in the sense of it being easy or difficult to read but to the reading situation. The child reader must understand and actively participate in the reading of the target text which refers to the readability of the text (Oittinen 5).

It is important who reads the story to children. By hearing the voice of their parents, children know it is not a stranger who is telling a story but it is their parents who approve of the book (Oittinen 35). It means that the parent “repeats, slows down, reacts to the child’s reactions” (Oittinen 35), and here the parent’s presence is important, especially in the latter. Children are the audience of the stories and adults are the performers.

Oittinen discusses another important notion associated to reading – performance. This refers to reading aloud, but essentially is a part of any work of art. Readers involved include the listening child and the adults who are reading aloud. This is the way young children enter the world of literature. Adults, with their reading example, influence children who later become readers themselves. This is why translators should pay special care to the usage of their translations as they will be read aloud to young children. A text should “live, roll, taste good on the reading adult’s tongue” (Oittinen 32). This allows children to understand stories with ease and to imagine them. Reading aloud emphasizes the power of human voice. Oittinen states that when reading, the reader should be “emotionally attached to the story and to the reading situation” (34). All of this shows the benefits of reading aloud to children, as well as the importance of who reads to children, and why translators should pay attention to this aspect.

## 5.8. Illustrations

Illustrations have a vital role in children’s literature. In cooperation with the text, they offer children the full picture of the story by making the words come to life by show the character’s appearance, the setting, etc. In this way children understand and also remember

the story better. There should be no contradiction of the verbal and the visual to make children's understanding of the stories easier.

Oittinen has dedicated a great part of her book to the importance and role of illustrations in the translating process. She says that illustrations are sometimes even more important than words in picture books where words may be omitted, however, just like the translation of children's literature, illustrations have also had the unfortunate role in being of little interest for scholars (5).

Illustrations go hand in hand with the translation and the original, but they can also be understood as a form of translation (Oittinen 75). Oittinen says that translating books for children is not only an interpretation of verbal, but of visual also. This process is influenced by a number of factors and depends on the perception of a particular situation (100). Illustrations should not be excluded from translations of illustrated texts. Some traditional theories do not see language and situation relevant, and they focus on the exact meaning of words seeing the meaning as fixed (Oittinen 100). They view illustrations as less important. Oittinen does not share this view and feels that illustrations are as important as words, and that they should be included in the translation. Moreover, she says that translators should pay attention to the whole that makes the picture books. They need another ability if they are to write successful translations of picture books: "Translators need to have the ability to read pictures, too, in the same way as they need the ability to read and write foreign written and spoken languages" (Oittinen 101). This is a novel way of looking at translations which equalizes the importance of illustrations and words.

Illustrations are, therefore, not secondary to the text but they have a key role in translations. George Shannon compares the work of an illustrator and the author by saying that "an author uses stanzas and punctuation to emphasize words and sounds surely as an illustrator's use of shadow and light emphasizes visual shapes" (quoted in Oittinen 103).

They are seen as addition to the text. However, illustrations do not only emphasize what is in the text. According to Patricia J. Cianciolo, the author of *Picture Books for Children*, illustrations also “convey other meanings and impressions that the readers would not have envisioned from the verbal information alone” (3). This shows an immense potential that illustrations have in the relationship with the text. Illustrations also have an emotional role in the translation. They give the readers excitement and a hint of wondering what is to come in the following pages (Oittinen 103).

Oittinen also mentions that publishers of children’s literature all too often neglect the importance of illustrations and goes on to say that it is yet “another reflection of the publishers’ attitudes toward children’s literature in general: they find it ‘easier’ than literature created for grown-ups” (114). This again highlights the unfair position of children’s literature as well as the illustrations and shows that despite their importance, illustrations are often overlooked.

Proof of the important relationship between the author and the illustrator is shown by Julia Donaldson in *The Way We Write: Interviews with Award-Winning Authors*. In the book, Donaldson describes her encounter with the illustrator, Axel Scheffler. Scheffler was chosen by the publishers who choose the illustrator based on his suitability for the words and the author’s appreciation of the illustrator’s work. Since then, their partnership has continued with much success, as seen in the presented picture books: *The Gruffalo*, *Gruffalo’s Child*, *Room on the Broom*, and *The Smartest Giant in town*. Donaldson has imagined Gruffalo “a bit more weird” (54) but Scheffler’s illustration is more natural looking, appealing to the younger children. Donaldson continues by saying: “From the start, he got the mixture of scary but stupid just right. That was the most important thing, and he got that just as I had imagined it” (54). This shows that a mutual understanding and communication between authors of picture books results in well thought illustrations and texts. Consequently, the translator, as an author

of translation, has to follow the work of the author and the illustrator in order to interpret both the visual and verbal parts of picture books.

## 6. A Case Study of Picture Books

The focus in this part of the thesis will be put on four picture books written by Julia Donaldson, illustrated by Axel Scheffler, and translated by Krešimir Krnic. Although there are much more similarities than differences in these translations, the emphasis will be put on those cases that were problematic for the translator and the solutions that were made for them.

The Croatian titles are: *Grubzon* for *The Gruffalo*, *Grubzonovo dijete* for *The Gruffalo's Child*, *Mjesta ima na metli svima* for *Room on the Broom*, and *Najotmjeniji div u gradu* for *The Smartest Giant in Town*. It is visible that translated titles have stayed as close to the original as possible. The adjective 'the smartest' from the title *The Smartest Giant in Town* was suitably translated as 'najotmjeniji'. Other instances such as: 'najelegantniji' or, the most usual version, 'najpametniji' are the first options which come to mind. But, bearing in mind the picture book's context, 'najotmjeniji' is the best choice.

There is one proper name in the picture books – George. The name was substituted according to the culture of the target text, in other words, a name children are familiar with was used. Therefore, the translation of the name George into Jura in *The Smartest Giant in Town* is a practical and justifiable solution. In this case, changing a name has foundation behind it. Regarding animal names, in *The Gruffalo*, 'mouse' is translated as a diminutive 'mišić' and 'fox' received the expression 'lija' both of which are better options than the regularly used synonyms 'miš' or 'lisica' (Donaldson 2).

The reason why Gruffalo became Grubzon could be attributed to the purpose of achieving rhyme as in:

'Grubzon? Što je Grubzon?'

‘Grubzon! Zar nije poznat ti on?’ (Donaldson 2)

‘A gruffalo? What’s a gruffalo?’

‘A gruffalo! Why, didn’t you know?’ (Donaldson 2)

As it can be seen from the previous example, these picture books are interspersed with rhyme and it is their main characteristic. Not only does it give a sense of a harmonized whole, but also helps children in memorizing the text. However, *The Smartest Giant in Town* has rhyme only in a few instances. Because of this the translator had more freedom in the translation. Krnic kept the rhyme throughout his translations and, therefore, did not move away from the original. The first example of rhyme is from the beginning of *The Gruffalo*:

A mouse took a stroll through the deep dark wood.

A fox saw the mouse and the mouse looked good.

‘Where are you going to, little brown mouse?

Come and have lunch in my underground house.’

‘It’s terribly kind of you, Fox, but no –

I’m going to have lunch with a gruffalo.’ (Donaldson 2)

Kroz duboku šumsku tminu miš jedan u šetnju krene.

Dopadne odmah se liji, čim vide ga oči njene.

‘Mišiću smeđi, kamo si pošao

Zar ne bi na ručak u moju jazbinu došao?’

‘Ljubazno od tebe Lijo, no baš mi je žao –

Mene je grubzon na ručak već zvao.’ (Donaldson 2)

From this segment it is noticeable that, regarding the rhythm, in source text, words are short and syllables are repetitive. It is written in rhyming couplets. In the first two lines of the

original, words are monosyllabic. All lines have the same number of syllables – ten. Consequently, it can be read fast and it almost sounds like an enumeration. Krnic’s translation differs in the number of syllables. Understandably, this could not be achieved in the same way it is written in the original. In the translation each line has a different number of syllables varying from eleven to sixteen. That is why it reads more like a prose with the beginning typical for fairytales. Still, rhymed lines are present.

In *Room on the Broom*, every other line is rhymed, with some exceptions, which also makes it easier for the translator to form witty rhymes. This is also the reason why words are kept short and ringing. Some examples that need additional explanation: ‘dog’ is translated into ‘pseto’ which is rather unusual, and carries a negative connotation, but the reason for this is, again, in following the rhyme. However, there is one additional line in the translation:

‘Da’, vještica reče  
 i mjesta da psetu  
 pa potapša štap  
 I već su u letu. (Donaldson 3)

‘Yes !’ Cried the witch,  
 and the dog clambered on.

The witch tapped the broomstick and whoosh! They were gone. (Donaldson 3)

In *The Smartest Giant in Town* there is a repeating motive in the text where inversion was used for the purpose of keeping the rhyme pattern:

My tie is a scarf for a cold giraffe,  
 But look me up and down –  
 I’m the smartest giant in town. (Donaldson 12)

Kravata što moja bila je prije, dugačak sada žirafin vrat grije.

No unatoč tome ne gubim nadu.

da najotmjereniji div sam u gradu. (Donaldson 12)

However, a semantic difference between the two texts can be noticed in this example.

In the original, George is sure that he is the smartest giant in town, while in the translation Jura is 'hopeful' of that, referring to a future action.

In *The Gruffalo*, additional words were used in the translation as in the sentence “‘Kraj jezera ovog, tu najviše mu prija’” (Donaldson 8) for “‘Here, by this lake,’” (Donaldson 8) for the purpose of rhyme. Again, rhyme is very creatively achieved with an addition in “‘Moja omiljena hrana!’ smije se Grubzon od uha do uha. / ‘Ukusan bit ćeš na komadu kruha!’” (Donaldson 12) translated from “‘My favourite food!’ the Gruffalo said. / ‘You’ll taste good on a slice of bread!’” (Donaldson 12). Besides these examples, there are also other cases where addition was used in the translation to keep the rhyme pattern. At one instance, Krnic added ‘blagom’ in the line: “‘Ovdje, na ovom potoku blagom / A omiljena mu je hrana upravo sova sa šlagom.’” (Donaldson 5). This expression is not found in the original “‘Here, by this stream, / And his favourite food is owl ice cream’” (Donaldson 5). It is visible that ‘ice cream’ was not translated as ‘sladoled’ and that spirit of the story is placed before keeping the same meaning. At one instance, in *The Smartest Giant in Town*, the translator added new words in brackets to keep the rhyme. This is the case in “‘Cipela moja (mada bez ključa), mišici bijeloj postade kuća.’” (Donaldson 18) for the line “‘My shoe is a house for a little white mouse.’” (Donaldson 18).

Moreover, there are also some peculiar vocabulary choices which, at the first reading, strike as unusual but which are later given explanation for. For example, the diminutive ‘Grubzončica’ is a good choice in that particular instance, replacing the previous use of ‘Grubzonovo dijete’ in: “‘Sve je to varka’, Grubzončica će u očajanju / sjedeći na hrpici

snijega na jednom panju.” where ‘Grubzonovo dijete’ would be just too long (Donaldson 14). The following phrase which may be inappropriate and need an explanation is ‘to stvari su glupe’. Was it possible to replace it with another more suitable word? ‘Glupo’ does imply that it was said in despair. However, the author does not mention any kind of a reaction. But this does achieve the rhyme:

‘Ne vjerujem u Zlog Velikog Miša, to stvari su glupe...

No gle, jedan je mali izašao iz svoje rupe!’ (Donaldson 14-15).

‘I don’t believe in the Big Bad Mouse...

But here comes a little one, out of his house!’ (Donaldson 14-15)

The line that characterizes *Room on the Broom* and appears multiple times is: “Is there room on the broom for a dog like me?” (Donaldson 3) which was translated into “daš mjesta na metli / da uskočim ja?” (Donaldson 3) This sounds less polite and more informal than it is in the original, but more spontaneous and playful.

As far as adaptation is concerned, it can be found in these translations in a few instances. In the last lines of the *The Gruffalo* there is inversion which was most likely chosen to emphasise the word *šuma*. It could have been written in a regular word order as ‘u tamnoj šumi zavladao je mir’, but the translator has chosen the solution “U šumi je tamnoj zavladao mir.” (Donaldson 20).

In this stanza from *Room on the Broom*, there is adaptation of food but the doubling of lines in the translation is also visible:

‘Ja vrlo sam strašan i opak zmaj,

baš sam naumio jesti

VJEŠTICU I ČIPS – uz čaj!’ (Donaldson 10)



‘I am a dragon, as mean as can be,

And witch with french fries tastes delicious to me!’ (Donaldson 10)

The next segment of analysis is concerned with illustrations whose interpretation was also the task of the translator. Firstly, in *The Smartest Giant in Town*, socks are described as “some smart socks with diamonds up the sides” (Donaldson 6). However, they are illustrated with rhombus and translated as “otmjene čarape sa šarama sa strane” (Donaldson 6). In Croatian, the term ‘čarape s dijamantima’ would mean that socks are actually made out of diamonds which is not the case. To avoid this confusion, the translator opted for this solution.

In other words, illustrations have stayed the same as in the original. The main protagonists are drawn unobtrusively, very realistically in bright colours. The background is colorful and drawn without any harsh lines, often with wavy framework. It is visible, and commendable, that the translator kept illustrations in mind while translating. This can be noticed in some parts of the text, so, for example, in *The Gruffalo*, the use of ‘jezičina’ instead of ordinary ‘jezik’ does its role in painting the Gruffalo scarier than he is (Donaldson 8). It is evident that translations follow both the illustrations and the text. More precisely, in *The Smartest Giant in Town*, the sign in the city market that says “NEW! GIANT SIZES!” (Donaldson 4) is translated into “NOVO! VELIKI BROJEVI!” (Donaldson 4). In the same picture book, for the line “It blew away in a storm” (Donaldson 12) the translator used “Otpuhala ga bura” (Donaldson 12), relying on the illustration and keeping in mind the knowledge of the target readers. Furthermore, the line “One of my socks is a bed for a fox” (Donaldson 22) was translated as “Čarapa jedna, takva mi sreća, / lijanu postade vreća.” (Donaldson 22). This line stretches over two lines, adding the adjective ‘sreća’ as an emotion visible from the illustrations.

Taking everything into consideration, it is visible that Krnic put more emphasis on the spirit and into transferring sense to the literary audience than on the semantics. In some cases,

of course, a more appropriate solution perhaps could have been found. Nevertheless, these translations were exceptionally well translated and the harmony of the whole, texts and illustrations, is kept throughout the picture books. There are no words which children will not be able to understand and this certainly contributes to the readability of the texts.

What is more, these picture books leave space for various valuable topics for parents to discuss with their children. Without being consciously aware of that, children learn valuable life lessons. They take on, first and foremost, the power of friendship, generosity, kindness, politeness, selflessness, bravery and other worthy lessons. As long as there are great books and translations, picture books will continue to be a favourite read of young children.

## 7. Conclusion

For a long time, children's literature has not been regarded as real literature and was not given the attention it rightfully deserves. It is, therefore, not difficult to conclude that translators of children's literature, unfortunately, were treated in the same way. Translated children's literature did not have the benefit of being appreciated and the field was seen as unworthy of serious academic inquiry. This is evident even in the distribution of awards which were never awarded to the writers of children's literature. Nowadays, children's literature is receiving the recognition it deserves, but there is still a lot of work to do. Raising future generations of readers should be in the best interest of authors, translators, and parents.

The impact translation has on the readers, and translation of children's literature should not be excluded, is best seen in Steiner's quote: "Translation is the mirror which not only reflects but generates light" (quoted in Oittinen 80). The light refers to knowledge of other cultures which children access best by reading and hearing translated stories. Such stories do not only enrich children's lives, but they also influence their interests, and introduce them to new themes and experiences.

Future translators of children's literature should not be 'fooled' into thinking that this field lacks complexity. By drawing on the work of authors such as Oittinen, Shavit, Landers, Aguilera, Thomson-Wohlgemuth, etc., this thesis has shown some of the criteria that need to be taken into consideration and carefully thought out in order to create good translations. The translation should focus on children and on what they can understand. It is up to the translator to make choices which she/he thinks will be in the best interest of the target readers – in this case, children.

Because language limitations, as well as illustrations, which are all too often neglected as an integral part of picture books, present a problem in translation, they should be carefully thought out. The same goes for rhyme and rhythm, which are not only important for the spirit

of the text, but also serve a tool for memorizing stories. Translation also has to function well when being read aloud. Names, therefore, may be problematic because some say changing them takes something from the original, and for some it is best to change the name. As it has already been said, illustrations are also an essential part of picture books. They should not be seen as secondary because their role is just as important as that of text. Visual and verbal parts of the picture books complement each other and create a harmonic unity. Because of this, children gain a complete insight into the story they are immersed in.

The picture books that were the subject of the analysis conducted in this thesis were translated by Kresimir Krnic, who managed to keep the same spirit while not steering away from the meaning of the original. Krnic's treatment and use of illustrations only added to the quality of the translations. Therefore, it can be said that Krnic's translations have stayed faithful to the original, differentiating only where needed in the slightest way possible, mostly for the purpose of achieving rhyme.

In my opinion, the duality of the readers of children's literature, which includes both the children and their parents or the adults around them, is their greatest characteristic. Authors themselves say that they write for everybody who finds joy in reading, no matter what age. I have also enjoyed reading these books and their wonderful illustrations. Nevertheless, I have enjoyed reading these translations which were entertaining just as the original text, and in some places even more original. Therefore, these picture books will probably find their stable place in many homes and be read over and over again by children and adults.

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**Prevođenje dječje književnosti: *Grubzon, Grubzonovo dijete, Mjesta ima na metli svima i Najotmjeniji div u gradu***

Marta Ivanković

Sažetak

Dječja književnost često je podcijenjena i stavljena u periferni položaj. Ovo rašireno mišljenje nije u skladu s koristima koje slikovnice imaju za djecu. Ovaj rad razmatra probleme u prevođenju dječje književnosti, koji su prvenstveno povezani s dobnim faktorom. Druge teme koje se spominju jesu položaj dječje književnosti, posebno čitateljstvo i ciljevi prevoditelja. Interes je također usmjeren na važnost ilustracija, čitljivost te rimu i ritam. Na kraju predstavljena je studija slučaja četiriju prevedenih slikovnica: *Grubzon, Grubzonovo dijete, Mjesta ima na metli svima i Najotmjeniji div u gradu*.

Ključne riječi: prevođenje dječje književnosti, problemi u prevođenju, čitatelji, slikovnice, ilustracije, Julia Donaldson