

Katarzyna A. Tunkiel
University of Stavanger (Norway)

Navigating translation of picturebook apps for bilingual kindergarten children

Translating modern picturebooks is challenging in numerous ways. Among other things, the translator should consider the needs of a dual audience and acknowledge the visual dimension of the iconotexts (Oittinen, Ketola & Garavini, 2017). When picturebooks become digital, the affordance of the new medium creates new possibilities for publishers – such as including a language choice option built into an application – but it also may bring new challenges for the translator. In this paper, I will present examples from a series of Norwegian picturebook apps, which I have translated for a research project about shared reading with children whose family language is Polish and who learn Norwegian in kindergarten. The following research questions will be discussed: What dilemmas may the literary translator encounter when translating picturebook apps with the aim of promoting bilingual development in kindergarten children, and how can these dilemmas be tackled? Drawing upon research in translation studies, particularly within the field of children’s literature (Oittinen, 2000; Lathey, 2016), as well as bilingual education (Cummins, 2000), I will focus on difficult choices in the process of adapting the picturebooks for a very young audience with access to the texts both in the source and in the target language. More specifically, I will discuss my dilemmas when considering equivalence at word level, and the issue of domestication versus foreignization when some of the intended readers (bilingual children) are familiar with the source language and culture, while others (children’s parents) need not to be. In the paper, I refer to the creative dimension of controversy since some of the decisions I made in the translation process are not in accordance with existing practice, while others do not reflect the educational aims of the digital publication. This may be viewed as questionable or controversial at two different levels, both pertaining to the art of translation.

Keywords: picturebook apps, literary translation, bilingualism, early childhood education, shared reading

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Katarzyna A. Tunkiel holds a PhD in Norwegian literature from Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Poland. She is affiliated with the Norwegian Reading Centre at the University of Stavanger, where she is working on a postdoctoral project on reading with bilingual children in the home and in the kindergarten. She is also a literary translator and a member of the Polish Literary Translators Association. Her research interests include picturebooks, early bilingualism, as well as urbanity in literature. Most recent publication: Tunkiel, K.A. (2019). *Nature and the City in Three Norwegian Picturebooks*. "Nordic Journal of ChildLit Aesthetics", 10 (01), 1-13.