

1 Narrative communication with the child reader

When adults write for children, they instinctively attune the storytelling voice to the sensibilities of a young readership, an act of adult-to-child communication that lies at the heart of all successful writing and translating for the young. Riitta Oittinen (2000) believes that to communicate with a child reader is to enter into an imaginary dialogue with sharper and fresher readers than adults, and that the translator should therefore reach out to children of the target culture by attempting to re-experience the dynamic intensity of childhood. She argues that translators of children's books hold a discussion with the history of childhood, the child of their time and 'the former and present child within themselves' (2000: 26). With reference to Bakhtin's concept of the anti-authoritarian freedom of 'carnival', she therefore advocates an approach to translation that entails both a dialogue with and immersion in the anarchic world of the child. Oittinen's recommendation is a radical one. Not all translators will aspire to the fulfillment of her demands, but an understanding of children's imaginative, spiritual and emotional concerns, whether through direct contact as a parent or carer, as a children's author, or through a revival of childhood memory, is certainly an inestimable advantage to a translator writing for a young audience.

Communication with the child reader takes many forms, and was not always considered to be the two-way process that Oittinen describes. In her historical investigation into the role of the narrator in English-language children's fiction, Barbara Wall (1991) identifies a number of modes of address to the child reader, including the distant, omniscient and didactic narrator of many pre-twentieth century texts. Asides to the child reader or comments on characters' actions set a firm line for social behaviour as part of the enterprise to tame and socialize the young child, much as the Widow Douglas was determined to 'sivilize' Huckleberry Finn. Authors working under the sponsorship of authoritarian or totalitarian regimes, too, have produced texts where the conversation is distinctly one-sided and ideological messages unmistakable. On the other hand, the subversive role of children's literature – its function as an apparently innocuous channel for satirical social observation – has led to a conspiratorial voice that seeks to ally the child with

the author's critical perspective. In fiction of this kind, the narrative voice is persuasive rather than straightforwardly didactic. Wall also offers examples of dual address, where an author either directly or indirectly speaks to adults as well as to children. It is the primary task of the translator to identify the quality of the narrative voice in a children's text, whether overtly didactic, subversive or characterized by duality. Translators with a theoretical interest in the intricacies of the layers of communication in translations for children will find illuminating examples, analysis and representation in diagrammatic form in O'Sullivan's work on comparative children's literature (2000).

This chapter will begin by focusing on the translator's response to variation in narrative voice, beginning with dual address to adult and child. Discussion will go on to focus on the particularities of the narrator's voice in children's fiction, as well as the voice of the child narrator. Examples from texts where the translator's voice is evident in addressing and informing the child reader will lead to suggestions as to where such intervention might be necessary. Next, a discussion of theoretical insights into reader response highlights the role of the third party, the child, in the triangle author–translator–child, with an additional discussion of Oittinen's application of reader response theory to the process of translating for children. Finally, selected linguistic aspects of narrative communication – syntax; the age-related usage of Japanese characters; the use of gendered nouns and varying cultural practices in the use of tense – raise general translation issues as well as those pertinent to specific languages and language pairs.

Dual address in children's literature

Children's authors, as Wall demonstrates, often write for a second, adult readership, either covertly in the form of moral instruction or ideological content that seeks the approval of the adult reading over the child's shoulder, or overtly as in A.A. Milne's *Winnie-the-Pooh*. In this well-known instance of a text designed to appeal to both adult and child, Milne includes sophisticated witticisms that children could not be expected to understand. Any adult who has read Milne's books aloud to children will know how tricky it is to explain sudden fits of laughter, for example, at the existential musings of the gloomy donkey Eeyore. Both layers of meaning should be as apparent in the translation as in the source text, a task requiring considerable finesse on the part of the translator. O'Sullivan's article on the fate of the dual addressee in the first published German translation of *Winnie-the-Pooh* highlights the omission of this strand of adult humour, and acts as a warning to any translator seeking to simplify the sophisticated ambiguity of a classic children's text that is intentionally designed to produce divergent readings. O'Sullivan offers the following example of this change of tone in E.L. Schiffer's first translation, as compared to a subsequent version by Harry Rowohlt (see O'Sullivan, 1993: 116–7; I have added a back translation of the German in square brackets):

Owl lived at The Chestnuts, an old-world residence of great charm, which was grander than anybody else's, or seemed so to Bear, because it had both a knocker *and* a bell-pull.

(Milne, *Winnie-the-Pooh*, 1926: 43)

Eule lebte in den Kastanien in einem alten, schönen Palast, der prächtiger war als alles, was der Bär je gesehen hatte, denn vor der Tür hing ein Klopfer und ein Klingelzug.

[Owl lived in the chestnut trees in an old and beautiful palace that was more splendid than anything the Bear had ever seen, because by the door hung both a knocker and a bell-pull.]

(Milne, 1926; *Pu der Bär*, trans E.L. Schiffer, 1928: 65)

Eule wohnte an einer Adresse namens 'Zu den Kastanien', einem Landsitz von grossem Zauber, wie man ihn aus der Alten Welt kennt, und diese Adresse war grossartiger als alle anderen; zumindest kame es dem Bären so vor, denn sie hatte sowohl einen Türklopfer als auch einen Klingelzug.

[Owl lived at an address with the name 'At the Chestnuts', a country seat of great charm like those in the Old World, and this address was grander than all the rest; at least so it appeared to the Bear, for it had *both* a door knocker *and* a bell-pull.]

(Milne, 1926; *Pu der Bär*, trans Harry Rowohlt, 1987: 54)

Schiffer omits both the parody of estate agent hyperbole in 'old-world residence of great charm' and the nod to the British habit of naming houses in the cliché 'The Chestnuts', both likely to be appreciated by the adult reader. Fortunately, in the later translation, Rowohlt reinstates the italicized emphasis and, as O'Sullivan puts it, gives the German adult reader more to smile about. Unlike Schiffer, Rowohlt attends to both child and adult readers.

Narrative voice

Finding the voice of a children's text in order to replicate it in translation requires particularly careful reading; even the traditional omniscient adult narrative voice assumes a number of guises and may be used ironically. Many authors adopt the voice of the oral storyteller, as is the case in Carlo Collodi's *Pinocchio*, where in the opening lines of the tale Collodi predicts his readers' response in an imaginary dialogue:

C'era una volta . . .

–Un re! – diranno subito I miei piccolo lettori.

No, ragazzi, avete sbagliato. C'era una volta un pezzo di legno.

(Collodi, *Le avventure di Pinocchio*, 2002: 5)

Once upon a time there was . . .

‘A king!’ my little readers will say straight away. No, children, you are mistaken. Once upon a time there was a piece of wood.

(Collodi, 2002; *The Adventures of Pinocchio*,
trans Lawson Lucas, 1996: 1)

In such instances the translator has to imagine *telling* the story to an audience of children, using the intimacy of spoken language and standard storyteller’s phrases in the target language. A more distant, omniscient and didactic narrative stance may be the subject of parody in modern children’s fiction. C.S. Lewis, for example, warns readers four times within the first three chapters of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* of the dangers of the wardrobe on which his plot depends, inserting a bracketed and tongue-in-cheek comment on Lucy ‘(She had, of course, left the door open, for she knew that it is a very silly thing to shut oneself into a wardrobe)’ (Lewis, 1950: 14) in a reference to the avuncular narrator of the nineteenth century.

Seeking the appropriate voice to replicate, for example, the double-layered address of A.A. Milne, the storyteller’s voice adopted by Collodi or the knowing aside of Lewis is an essential challenge for the translator. This may sometimes involve reading other fiction by the author of the source text or research into his or her biography to gain a stronger sense of that unique voice and the face behind the page. German author Erich Kästner speaks to young readers in a conspiratorial tone that debunks the adult world both in prefaces to the child reader and as his narratives unfold. Knowing that he wrote biting satirical poetry during the Weimar Republic, lived through the Third Reich under a publication ban and placed all his faith in children assists readers and translators to understand the satirical edge to his narratives. Kästner’s famous – if sometimes longwinded – prefaces to children are often missing from translations, as they are from the early Swedish and English versions of his international hit *Emil und die Detektive* (1929). This represents a considerable loss, since a preface of this kind establishes the tone of the rest of the narrative. It is worth noting that a translator’s discussions with editors should therefore include the role of an author’s preface or afterword.

An example of the kind of authorial irony that characterizes Kästner’s prefaces is embedded in the text of his *Das doppelte Lottchen* (literally ‘double Lotte’), the basis of the multiple Hollywood ‘parent trap’ films. The novel was at the time of its first publication in 1949 a groundbreaking, light-hearted tale of the effects on children of parental divorce. Kästner pre-empts criticism of his treatment of this controversial subject by advising his young readers to tell any disapproving adult the following story:

Als Shirley Temple ein kleines Mädchen von sieben, acht Jahren war, war sie doch schon ein auf der ganzen Erde berühmter Filmstar, und die Firmen verdienten viele Millionen Dollar mit ihr. Wenn Shirley aber mit ihrer Mutter in ein Kino gehen wollte, um sich einen Shirley-Temple-Film

anzuschauen, liess man sie nicht hinein. Sie war noch zu jung. Es war verboten. Sie durfte nur Filme drehen. Das war erlaubt.

(Kästner, *Das doppelte Lottchen*, 1949: 64–5)

When Shirley Temple was no more than seven or eight she was already a film star, famous all over the world. And she earned many millions of dollars for the film companies. But when Shirley wished to go with her mother to a cinema and take a look at a Shirley Temple film, she was not admitted. She was still too young. It was forbidden. She could only *make* films. That was *not* forbidden.

(Kästner, 1949; *Lottie and Lisa*, trans Cyrus Brooks, 1950: 52–3)

Kästner trusts his young reader's ability to appreciate an implicit comment on the paradoxical attitude of adults and, fortunately, the English translator follows suit; indeed, Brooks emphasizes the point of the story through the judicious use of italics. Children appreciate such comments on adult inconsistencies, and must learn to appreciate ironic undertones if they are to become sophisticated readers.

Kästner is not the only children's author to point out adult folly, since Swedish author Astrid Lindgren does exactly that throughout her classic story *Pippi Långstrump* (Pippi Longstocking). When Lindgren introduces the children of Pippi's neighbours, who act as foils to the outrageous Pippi, she emphasizes their good behaviour in a dry little comment:

Aldrig bet Tommy pånaglarna, nästan alltid gjorde han det hans mamma bad honom. Annika bråkade inte när hon inte fick sin vilja fram.

[Literal translation by Gunnar Florin: Never did Tommy bite his nails; he nearly always did what his mother asked him. Annika didn't fuss when she didn't get her way]

(Lindgren, *Pippi Långstrump*, 1945: 9)

The translator of the published English version again resorts to italics to assist those reading the story aloud:

Tommy *never* bit his nails, and *always* did what his mother asked. Annika *never* fussed when she didn't get her own way.

(Lindgren, 1945; *Pippi Longstocking*, trans Edna Hurup, 1954: 12–14)

Thus the translator draws attention to the humour inherent in Lindgren's description of behaviour that is too good to be true: the conduct of other real or fictional children is always of burning interest to young readers.

Irony depends on a narrative voice that conspires with the child reader to unmask ridiculous aspects of adult expectations and behaviour. There are,

however, linguistic constraints in some languages that may affect the manner in which the narrating subject conveys this subversive tone. Noriko Shimoda Netley (1992) has analyzed narrative stance in Roald Dahl's *Matilda* (1988) in order to make a comparison with the Japanese translation by Mineo Miyashita. Netley demonstrates how Dahl shifts perspective from the use of 'we' on the first page of the novel, thus aligning the narrator with the child's point of view, to 'I', a cynical adult narrator on the second and subsequent appearances of the narrating subject. A third narrating subject also appears, signalled by the neutral pronoun 'one' that could include the child reader, but is certainly more distant than the inclusive 'we'. Netley found that in the Japanese version, the narrating subjects 'we' and 'one' are eliminated because the subject (especially first and second person) is often omitted in Japanese sentences, and the Japanese first person plural equivalent of 'we' (私達 '*watashitachi*') is lengthy and awkward. Moreover, the Japanese equivalent of 'one' would sound odd. The translator uses only the first person pronoun. Dahl's subtle alterations of narrative perspective are therefore lost. In cases where linguistic differences hinder the replication of an author's narrative stance, a translator may have to compensate in other ways to maintain the shift from distant to cynical narrative voice.

Child narrators

When the narrator of a children's book is a child, the translator has the task of recreating the illusion that a child is speaking directly to his or her peers. This is a necessary skill because of the marked increase in the adoption of the child's voice in first person and diary narratives in contemporary children's literature. During his presentation speech for the British Marsh Award for Children's Literature in translation in January 2013, professional translator Daniel Hahn touched on this question while identifying a fundamental difference between translating for children and adults:

If the translation process is a two-part thing – reading, writing (inhaling, exhaling) – then working for children seems to me to make the first easier, the second harder. The reading is easier – entering the original text and ascertaining what it's doing. What it means, what it wants, where it's going. So, the reading: '*Je m'appelle Arthur. J'ai sept ans et, l'autre jour, derrière la maison de mes grands-parents, j'ai trouvé un œuf. Un œuf tout blanc . . .*'

But even with my schoolboy French, that's easily read.

But then there's the writing.

I've grappled with some difficult writers in my time – awkward, tricky, famously tangled-up European novelists with Nobel prizes, say – but I'm not sure I've ever been back and forth quite so many times trying to get the words right as I have for that deceptively uncomplicated little opening introducing young Arthur.

I can read the original – easy as falling off a, um, you know, cliché. But writing my own seven-year-old voice . . . It's a skill our best children's writers have.

The Marsh Award recognises that some of the people with that extraordinary and peculiar writerly skill are translators.

(Hahn, 2013)

Hahn refers here to his own translation of French-Canadian children's author Johanne Mercier's *Arthur et le mystère de l'œuf*, published as *Arthur and the Mystery of the Egg* in 2013. His version of these opening lines reads:

I'm Arthur and I'm seven, and the other day, round the back of my grandparents' house, I found an egg. A completely white egg [. . .]

(Mercier, 2007; *Arthur and the Mystery of the Egg*, trans Hahn, 2013: 1)

A child of seven would indeed proudly announce his name, age and what he had to tell all in one breath, as Hahn's punctuation (different from the French) indicates. But would he use the word 'completely'? Possibly, if he had just discovered it and was relishing frequent repetition of the new word as small children do, otherwise 'an egg that was all white' or 'white all over' would be acceptable alternatives.

An example of a child narrator in a more extended piece of fiction is found in Astrid Lindgren's *Bröderna Lejonhjärta* (1973). The story, told by the younger of the two brothers of the title, is punctuated by gasps and exclamations that convey young Karl's excitement or anxiety as events unfold. At a point when Karl remembers his brother's death, the translator has to replicate the rhythms and pace of a highly expressive narrative:

Jag mindes plötsligt hur det var, den där tiden när Jonatan låg i min kökssoffa och inte visste säkert om jag skulle få se honom mer, å, det var som att titta ner i ett svart hål att tänka på det!

(Lindgren, *Bröderna Lejonhjärta*, 1973: 55)

I suddenly remembered how it was, that time when Jonatan was dead and away from me and I lay in my kitchen settee and didn't know for sure if I'd ever see him again, oh, it was like looking down a black hole thinking about it!

(Literal translation by Gunnar Florin)

I remembered suddenly how things had been that time when Jonathan was dead and away from me, and I was lying in my sofa-bed, not knowing whether I'd ever see him again; oh, it was like looking down into a black hole, just thinking about it.

(Lindgren, 1973; *The Brothers Lionheart*, trans Joan Tate, 1975: 47)

Lindgren's 'å' (pronounced as 'o' in the British word 'more') is a characteristic voicing of overwhelming emotion for which words are inadequate, and which overcomes Karl as he lies *inside* his typical (and womb-like) Swedish kitchen settee with its removable lid and sleeping-box. Tate retains the expression of feeling, but drops the additional impact of Lindgren's exclamation mark and, through the addition of punctuation in the form of commas and a semi colon, reduces the breathless effect of Karl's outburst. A translator attempting to take on the voice of a young child narrator needs to bear in mind ways in which an author harmonizes syntactic and emotional rhythms in a passage such as this one.

How, then, is it possible to achieve an apparently effortless transition to the words and sensibility of a child, that 'peculiar writerly skill' that Hahn identifies? Spending time with children and talking to them certainly helps but – as Hahn points out – the skill is a literary one: in other words child narrators have stylized voices that convince without actually being authentic. A good test of the difference is to read a children's novel in diary form and an actual child's diary (possibly your own from childhood days!) to see how – in all likelihood – the latter is far too awkward or dull to warrant an audience beyond its author and his or her family. The best strategy by far is to read as many children's novels featuring child narrators as possible in the language into which you intend to translate. Note down specific phrases, vocabulary and narrative techniques that you might adapt or re-use in a translation and, if you have a commission to translate a first person narrative, try to find a published tale with a narrator of roughly the same age. The voice will differ from that of the narrator in the text you are to translate, of course, but that contrast may well help you to pinpoint the idiosyncrasies and idiolect (an individual's own distinctive language use) of the voice in the source text. And, of course, narrative voice naturally varies according to age and social milieu, aspects that will be discussed in the sections on dialect, social register and dialogue in Chapter 4.

To sum up, the following are points to bear in mind when seeking to translate narrative voice in children's fiction:

- Maintain dual address to the adult and child when this is integral to the style and tone of the narrative.
- Read other works by the author of the text to be translated or undertake biographical research to assist in an understanding of his or her political or ideological perspective in the text in question.
- Discuss with editors the translation of an author's preface or afterword when this is in your opinion an essential element in the work as a whole and likely to be read by children.
- The use of italics in a translation is often an effective strategy for conveying an ironic tone present in the source text.
- When translating a child narrator's voice, spend time with children of the same age if possible, but also read children's fiction narrated by a child

in the language into which you are translating to familiarize yourself with the stylized, fictional child's voice; make a note of phrases, vocabulary, expressive use of punctuation (cf. the example from Lindgren's *Bröderna Lejonhjärta* above) and narrative techniques.

The translator's voice: interventions

Omissions such as that of the adult addressee in *Winnie-the-Pooh* in Emer O'Sullivan's example indicate a manipulation or rewriting of the source text, and therefore the executive function of the translator that is invisible to all who do not know the source text. Cultural difference between the source and target texts may also call for the visible intervention of the translator to add material or to address the young reader directly. Since the translator is writing for an implied child reader living in different cultural and social circumstances from those of the implied reader of the source text, he or she may omit, rewrite or insert passages of text in order to aid the child's understanding or to follow trends and adhere to norms in children's publishing in the target culture. A translator may even add text to explain a phenomenon that is entirely unfamiliar to young readers in the target culture, and which is important to a full understanding of the story in question, as in the following example.

Cathy Hirano is the translator of Kazumi Yumoto's *The Friends*, a story about three twelve-year-old boys who stalk an old man in order to find out what really happens when someone dies. In an article on her experience of translating young adult fiction from Japanese to English, Hirano (2006) describes the difficulty of translating the concept of *juku* (学習塾), a typical Japanese after-school learning centre. A direct translation such as 'cram school' alone would not convey to American readers the manner in which *juku* affects the rhythm of the boys' daily lives, and therefore the time available to follow the old man. Hirano consulted the author for further details of this aspect of Japanese education, finally agreeing with her American editor that the best solution was to insert explanatory passages into the translation. Hirano reproduces the longest of these:

Every day, Monday to Friday, we have cram school after regular school. We're there from six until eight and sometimes even until nine o'clock at night, trying to cram in everything we'll need to know to pass the entrance exams for junior high school next year. By the time we get out, we're exhausted, not to mention starving.

(Hirano, 2006: 228)

Here the translator's voice blends with that of the young narrator as unobtrusively as possible in a few sentences that give the essential information on the timing and purpose of *juku*. A translator's footnote is another possible solution in such a situation, but footnotes in a text for young readers are both alienating and likely to be ignored.

Translators reveal themselves even more directly in prefaces or afterwords. Historically, translators' prefaces were often addressed to the parent or teacher (Lathey, 2006b), so that Emma Stelter Hopkins, translator of Johann Spyri's *Heimatlos* (Homeless) from German into English in 1912, could express in tight-lipped fashion the hope that Spyri's stories would teach children to appreciate home comforts: 'to which they grow so accustomed as often to take them for granted, with little evidence of gratitude' (Spyri, 1912: iii). Today publishers and editors may encourage translators – or a translator may insist upon the opportunity – to address children directly for a variety of purposes. This is, however, a risky strategy, since children are not keen readers of prefaces. One solution is to spin an enticing story from the translation's origins, as British author Joan Aiken did in her edition of the Comtesse de Ségur's *L'Auberge de L'Ange – Gardien* (published as *The Angel Inn* in 1976). This is how she begins:

When I was five or six my mother decided that it was time I learned French, so she bought a book of French fairy-tales and read them aloud, translating as she went. They were wonderful stories – about a small princess whose carriage was pulled by ostriches, a boy turned into a bear, a little girl lost in a forest of lilacs, wicked queens, good fairies disguised as white cats, marvellous feasts and dazzling palaces. The author of the book was a lady called the Comtesse de Ségur. We enjoyed the stories so much that we bought all the other books of hers that we could find, and soon had half a dozen or so. One of my favourites was *L'Auberge de l'Ange-Gardien*, the Inn of the Guardian Angel . . . Unfortunately I lost the copy I had as a child, but I found another years later, read it again with just as much pleasure, and thought what fun it would be to translate. And so it was.

(Aiken, 1976: 7)

Where appropriate, storytelling of this kind is likely to encourage a younger child to read a preface; it certainly expresses a positive attitude to the stories and indeed towards the process of translation.

Peritextual material may also provide historical or cultural context to a narrative. Patricia Crampton's translation from German of Gudrun Pausewang's *Reise im August* (published as *The Last Journey* in 1996) has an afterword that is not present in the German source text. As the journey of the title is that of a young Jewish girl, Alice, travelling with her grandfather in a cattle truck to Auschwitz, Crampton adds half a page of basic information on the concentration camps which begins thus:

The Nazi regime led by Adolf Hitler came to power in Germany in the 1930s. The regime dealt brutally with all forms of opposition.

In 1938 Hitler declared that 'one of these days the Jews will disappear from Europe' and in Germany and Occupied Europe his regime began systematically to round up Jewish people and transport them to

concentration camps. In the camps, special equipment for mass murder had been set up, including gas chambers disguised as showers.

(Pausewang, 1995; *The Final Journey*, trans P. Crampton, 1996: 153)

Crampton, who began her career as a translator at the Nuremberg trials of Nazi war criminals, goes on to describe the selection process separating those fit for work from those destined for the gas chambers which Alice has just undergone, and to name other victims of the Holocaust including ‘gypsies, homosexuals, people with disabilities and dissidents of all kinds’ (1996: 153). When working with texts of this kind set in the recent past, discussion with editors may be the impetus for the decision to add such information. Its exact placement as a foreword or afterword requires some thought. Crampton or her editor clearly considered that the moment *after* the shock of Alice’s fate (in the final scene she enters the infamous shower room, still believing that she will encounter ‘the water of life’) was the time to present young readers with the facts of what actually took place. Young readers are likely to feel compelled to read Crampton’s bald account of the holocaust following that final shocking scene.

Censorship and ideological messages

Crampton’s insertion of historical information or Hirano’s explanation of *juku* are indicative of the distinction between the implied child readers inscribed in the source and target texts. Both translators have inserted material intended for the child reader in the target culture to explain cultural practices or convey facts already familiar to the young reader of the source text. But what are the implications for the mediating translator of differing expectations of what is appropriate for the child reader, or questions concerning the ideological content of children’s literature?

First, there is the issue of censorship. Historically, censorship was widely practiced in the course of translation for children, as demonstrated in international versions of Grimms’ tales (Joosen and Lathey, 2014). One scene commonly mitigated or omitted from translations of *Aschenputtel* (the Grimms’ *Cinderella*) for a child audience is the mutilation of the feet of Aschenputtel’s sisters. In the Grimms’ version, the first sister slices off her toe and the second her heel to make the golden slipper fit, so that the prince only realizes he has the wrong woman when blood overflows from the shoe of one and creeps up the stocking of the other. Translators or their editors frequently alter or omit this drastic act, just as the pecking out of the sisters’ eyes by doves at the end of the tale is missing from many versions. Cruelty and gore are subject to censorship, as indeed are sexual and scurrilous references. Remaining with the Grimms, in English translations the ‘*Pissputt*’ (pisspot) in which the fisherman and his wife live at the beginning of the Grimms’ tale *The Fisherman and his Wife* is often changed to ‘pigsty’

or ‘hovel’. Indeed, the tradition of toning down the more gruesome and scatological aspects of Grimms’ tales continues into the twentieth century in the retellings by Wanda Gág discussed in Chapter 6.

The desire to shield children from aspects of life openly discussed in juvenile literature in one country but deemed to be profane or harmful by another is an issue to which translators and their editors have to be sensitive, but which should not lead to choices contrary to a realistic assessment of child behaviour and understanding. In a well-known example, Stolt (2006: 72) cites an American publisher’s attempt to censor one of Astrid Lindgren’s stories. Young Lotta, desperate as all young children are to grow up, stands steadfastly on a dung heap, knowing that manure makes plants grow and hoping that it will accelerate the process for her. When American editors wanted to replace the dung heap with a pile of withered leaves, Lindgren sent them a caustic observation. If American children really didn’t understand that there were more effective means to hasten growth than withered leaves, she wrote, then she didn’t think much of American agriculture. The editors were duly shamed into reinstating the natural fertilizer. More importantly, from the child reader’s point of view, much of the delight and amusement at a toddler standing on a stinking pile of dung hoping to grow – children hearing or reading this story would be slightly older and would therefore thoroughly enjoy a sense of superior knowledge – is lost if leaves are substituted for manure.

Nonetheless, translators and editors respond to a cultural climate concerning children’s reading material that is powerful, pervasive and persistent. Author and publisher Aidan Chambers (2001: 113–37) relates an incident where a second-year undergraduate student, after browsing through a translation from the Swedish of Maud Reuterswård’s *Noah is my Name* (1991), ventured a negative opinion of the book because of an illustration where seven-year-old Noah sits on the toilet talking to his mother while she is naked in the bath. When asked why this disturbed him, the student replied ‘We don’t do things like that!’ Fortunately Chambers, publisher of the translation, and the translator, Joan Tate, had decided *not* to take account of such objections. Even more recently, the 2010 English translation by Joanne Moriarty of the first volume of the hugely popular series of books by Elvira Lindo about Manolito Gafotas, a young boy living in a working-class area of Madrid, removes references to drug addicts and AIDS, while a syringe found lying on the ground in the Spanish version becomes a knife in English.

As these examples demonstrate, differing cultural sensitivities are particularly acute in relation to children’s reading matter, where there is regular media outrage at authors who seek to break the boundaries of what is deemed to be acceptable in children’s fiction within a given culture or country. Questions of religious and political allegiance, too, have long been significant in children’s literature and ideological control in the form of censorship is at its most transparent when monolithic, totalitarian regimes seek to indoctrinate the young and subject children’s literature, including translations, to varying degrees of manipulation. Fernández López (2006) has examined censorship

in translations during the Franco dictatorship in Spain 1936–75, when references to sex, politics and religion were removed from children’s books. Conservative publishing policies continued into the post-Franco era from 1975 and – in an intriguing example of intercultural ideological difference – Fernández López indicates that, whereas books by Enid Blyton and Roald Dahl were purified of purported racist and xenophobic elements in Britain in the 1980s, Spanish translations of the 1990s reverted to first, ‘unpurified’ editions of the English texts. In the early decades of the post-Franco era, attention in Spain was still focused on the legacy of political censorship rather than on racism, a preoccupation of British publishers at the time. Translators have acted as mediators, either in accordance with contemporary expectations of childhood in the target culture, or by making their own decisions in relation to the transmission, alteration or omission of ideological messages from elsewhere. For anyone new to translating for children, it is important to be aware of potential pressures from publishers, government agencies or religious bodies concerned with children’s welfare or political education, and to make informed and sometimes politically astute decisions on translation strategies.

Discussion of the translator’s voice and presence in translated texts will continue in subsequent chapters, but the following is a summary of preliminary points:

- Integrate contextual explanation (explicitation) into a text as seamlessly as possible (cf. the Hirano example above).
- An introduction to fiction from another country can be written as a story to capture children’s interest (see Joan Aiken example).
- It is sometimes necessary for the translator to add information on the context of a historical novel to aid children’s understanding of the narrative.
- Any suggestion to censor a children’s book requires editorial discussion and debate.

Narrative communication and reader response theory

Narrative communication, as Riitta Oittinen constantly reminds us, is a form of dialogue. In most research to date on translation for children, the child reader has largely been left out of the picture, except as an implied reader inscribed within the text as in the opening of Collodi’s *Pinocchio* cited above, or posited as an ideal or shadowy child reader by academics. Reader response theory, to be introduced briefly here, may assist translators to understand potential responses of young readers and the strategies authors use when addressing them; Chapter 7 takes this discussion further in its focus on evidence of children’s reactions to translations, children as translators and practical strategies translators have developed for engaging with their child audience.

Chesterman’s (1998) plea for the application of the reader response theories of Wolfgang Iser (1974; 1978) and Louise Rosenblatt (1978) to the reception

of translations is of great relevance in exploring children's responses, since both argue that meaning does not reside solely in a text and its author's intentions, but in a dialogue between reader and text. Cristina Sousa (2002) has applied reader response theories in an evaluation of the translator's assessment of receptivity when translating children's literature, and Riitta Oittinen (2000) has adopted Rosenblatt's concepts of the 'efferent' and 'aesthetic' to explain her own practical approach to the translation task. According to Rosenblatt, who regarded reading as a 'transactional' exchange between a text and the reader's expectations and context, there are two kinds of reading: the 'aesthetic' reading that generates associations, feelings, attitudes and aesthetic pleasure; and the 'efferent' reading, where the reader focuses primarily on a particular objective, whether information to be acquired, actions to be carried out or a problem to be solved. A translator's first reading, Oittinen argues, falls into the first category, and the translation process itself into the second. Although translators probably find it impossible to avoid attending at least minimally to potential translation issues during a first reading, Patricia Crampton and Anthea Bell – both highly experienced and respected translators of children's literature into English and recipients of the Marsh Award for Children's Literature in Translation in the UK – refer to their own two-stage reading process. Their first reading (often for a reader's report commissioned by a publisher) gives a sense of the voice and tone of the whole text, and there is a second reading as the act of translation takes place (see interviews in Lathey, 2010). This double reading applies to literature for children or adults, of course, but the first, 'aesthetic' reading is a useful way of engaging with a child's outlook and sensibilities before starting the translation process.

Chesterman (1998) cites studies of comprehension and sociological surveys as sources of information on responses to translations. Indeed existing qualitative studies on children's reading at different ages – for example a set of interviews with children conducted by Fry (1985), a developmental survey such as that of Appleyard (outlined in the Introduction to this book), or indeed a personal account such as that of Francis Spufford in *The Child that Books Built* (2002) – offer insights into children's requirements of and responses to the books they read, as well as a starting point for the design of research projects on children's responses to translations. Quantitative surveys of children's reading habits such as those by Maynard, Mackay, Smyth and Reynolds (2007) are additional, invaluable sources of information. Comparable studies in countries where translations are read far more widely than in the UK or US are likely to yield useful material. Where digests of such studies are readily available – and children's reading material is often the stuff of newspaper headlines and articles – translators can keep themselves informed of trends and controversies in children's reading choices.

Nonetheless, children's responses to translations remain largely a matter of speculation, a knowledge gap that has implications for the translator. Those translating for children for the first time may be tempted to fall back on received

wisdom on questions of readability or contextual adaptation, but they would do well to take note of the work of critics and educators with experience of interacting directly with young readers. A reading of Aidan Chambers' *Booktalk* (1985), which addresses the role of predictability and indeterminacy in texts in educating children to become intellectually and imaginatively active readers, should assist trainee translators to avoid filling in gaps an author has created deliberately. Over-explanation for the child reader is a pitfall to be avoided, as will be demonstrated later in this book, since a child needs stimulating challenges to become an experienced and discerning reader. Indeed, it would be advisable to incorporate sessions on understanding the child reader into the professional training of translators who wish to specialize in children's texts.

Trainee translators and those new to translating for children should therefore take every opportunity to try out their drafts on child readers, whether they are older silent readers or younger children to whom the text can be read aloud. Reading a draft aloud is a good test of any literary translation, but particularly of literature for the younger child that will be read *to* children. Interviews with three translators of children's books (Lathey, 2010) revealed that two of the three use aural techniques, and that even the third, Anthea Bell, who always types her translations, acknowledges a reading aloud 'in my head' as she searches for the new voice for each book (see Chapter 5 for further discussion of this strategy). These are not techniques specific to children's literature. Indeed, Bell insists that, whether translating for adults or children, it is a matter of finding the right voice for each book, but there can be little doubt that when reading aloud a draft translation of a children's book each translator is engaging with an imagined child reader.

To sum up:

- Oittinen's application of Rosenblatt's 'aesthetic' and 'efferent' reading echoes the development of a two-stage reading process adopted by a number of translators.
- Practical applications of reader response theory as outlined in Chambers' *Booktalk* are a useful reminder that a translator should replicate gaps and indeterminacies in a children's text where these have been created deliberately.
- Reading accounts or digests of research on children's reading tastes and histories will assist translators by throwing some light on children's responses to fiction.
- A translator of children's fiction needs to be up to date with children's reading tastes by reading relevant journals, taking note of children's book prizes, publishers' catalogues and websites, book blogs by young people, etc.
- Whenever possible, read draft translations aloud to children or ask children to read drafts of your work.

Stylistic and linguistic issues

In translating for children between languages with different syntactic structures, scripts and modes of communication with young readers, issues arise that may have universal relevance or be specific to one language as already seen in Netley's analysis of the Japanese translation of Roald Dahl's *Matilda*. Since young children are inexperienced readers, authors in any language adapt their written style, vocabulary and syntax to the relevant age group. Three examples – a stylistic point that has broad relevance, the question of gendered animal pronouns and a linguistic feature unique to Japanese – will exemplify the specific linguistic demands of addressing the child reader.

Writing for children requires the ability to express complex ideas with clarity and simplicity. Younger readers may be confused by multiple embedded clauses, non-finite constructions or the use of the passive voice, although none of these stylistic features should be ruled out completely, since there may be instances that warrant their use. Finnish scholar Tiina Puurtinen (1995) has investigated the stylistic acceptability to child readers, and to adults reading the texts aloud, of two translations of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* into Finnish. Results generally confirmed an initial hypothesis that the translation with a more fluent, dynamic style would prove to be more acceptable to child readers and listeners than a version with more complex syntactic constructions. One example Puurtinen cites is the translation of a phrase using the past participle in English:

[. . .] but surely there is no use for a Scarecrow *stuck on a pole in the middle of the river*.

(Baum, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, 1900)

The first translation, by Marja Helanen-Ahtola, reads:

[. . .] *mutta keskelle jokea seipään päähän joutuneella Variksenpelättimellä eitodellakaan ole mitään merkitystä*.

[but in the middle of the river on a pole stuck scarecrow is really of no significance]

The second, by Kersti Juva:

[. . .] *mutta sellaisesta variksenpelätistä, joka roikkuu kepin nenässä keskellä jokea, ei ole mitään hyötyä*.

[but such a scarecrow, which hangs on a stick in the middle of a river, is of no use]

(Puurtinen, 2006: 58; back translations by Puurtinen)

Puurtinen comments that Helanen-Ahtola uses the Finnish premodified participial attribute, thus leading to 'a heavy left-branching structure, unfit for

children's literature', whereas Juva uses a more easily identified relative clause. By examining a corpus of Finnish children's literature, Puurtinen found that overall Juva's translation with its natural, more fluent style was a closer match to the prevailing conventions and expectations of style in Finnish children's fiction than Helanen-Ahtola's with its use of more complex constructions. She did, however, discover in a small-scale test of readability a degree of differentiation according to age group and reader expectation, a result that highlights the need for further empirical research into children's responses to differences in written style. Puurtinen's findings are informative, but should not be misinterpreted. Translators should at all costs avoid the danger of simplifying syntax to the point of monotony in the manner of basal reading schemes. Puurtinen's research shows, rather, that variation in phrasing and rhythm, indications of emphasis and a choice between verbal or nominal constructions are all important factors for both reading aloud and readability. It may indeed be the case that the occasional use of just such a left-branching structure as the one in Puurtinen's example may be appropriate, for example in replicating stylistic experimentation in source texts for young adult readers.

A second linguistic point is the use of gendered nouns, particularly in the many children's books that feature animals. From animal fables (Aesop and La Fontaine) to Puss in Boots, the menacing fox and cat in *Pinocchio*, Paddington Bear or the many tales and rhymes for younger children with an entire cast of farmyard, domestic or wild animal characters, children's fiction hums with the sounds of beasts (animal cries are discussed in Chapter 5). Translating between language pairs with and without gendered nouns is tricky when animals are given human characteristics and require, as Anthea Bell – translator into English from German and French – puts it, 'a pronoun more personal than just "it"' (Bell, 1986). Bell gives an account of her translation of a collection of folk and fairy tales featuring cats from German into English. Sometimes the biological sex of the cat was evident, for example when the noun used was '*der Kater*' (tomcat); when humans clearly treated the cat as male or female; when a cat had kittens, or when she was enchanted and ultimately changed back into a beautiful woman. In a third of the stories, however, there was no such indication and 'it was up to the translator to make a choice' (1986: 21). In one instance a dog's behaviour is contrasted with that of a cat, so Bell and her editor agreed to make the dog masculine and the cat feminine in line with conventions of the 'outgoing, straightforward' dog and the 'sly, unpredictable' cat (1986: 21). Yet Bell points to the sexist implications of this decision, and argues that the choice of pronoun makes a much more definite statement in the target than in the source language. Choices should therefore be made with great care, taking into account cultural contexts, social conventions concerning gender in the source language and their acceptability in the target language, and indeed the status of particular animals within different cultures as pets, a source of food or vermin.

For anyone translating children's fiction into Japanese, the Japanese language poses an age-related challenge. Translators need to consider the age

range and level of education of young readers carefully, since this will make a difference to the Japanese characters they use. In addition to Kanji, the adopted Chinese pictograms that form the basis of the Japanese written language, there are two additional sets of characters that are used in books for children. Hiragana is used for indigenous Japanese words and grammatical elements, and Katakana for the phonetic representation of foreign words, names and onomatopoeia. Hiragana is important in children's literature, particularly in picture books for the younger child, since the ideographs are visually less complex than standard Kanji characters. Children learn Hiragana characters first, and then gradually, between the ages of six and twelve, they learn one thousand and five Kanji characters. To assist children in this immense learning task, Hiragana equivalents may be placed above (for horizontal text) or beside (for vertical text) Kanji characters as a pronunciation aid. Children who do not recognize certain Kanji characters will then be able to understand the Hiragana version. Yuko Matsuoka's translation of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (Rowling, 1997; ハリーポッターと賢者の石, trans by Matsuoka, 1999) has standard Kanji characters in vertical lines, but it also has a number of Hiragana characters in a smaller font to the right of some of the vertical lines. Moreover, foreign words such as Harry's name are written in Katakana so that children know how to pronounce them. The use of Katakana to render foreign words or names phonetically is also valuable as a means of representing onomatopoeic sounds in the source text. Other languages also have features that have been adapted across time to the young learner, so that vocalization marks in Hebrew, for instance, assist in pronunciation and the early stages of reading.

Tense

A further linguistic point to which translators of children's fiction and picture books should pay particular attention is the manner in which a writer communicates the unfolding of narrative time to a young audience and, specifically, the varying use of the present or the past tense as a basic narrative mode in children's literature. In many European languages the present tense is commonly used, particularly in writing for the younger child. Anthea Bell has commented on the 'delicate matter' of translating the historic present – that is the present tense as basic narrative mode – of French and German children's stories into English. In Bell's opinion the historic present in English is an exciting, but unusual, narrative strategy:

I am most reluctant to use the historic present in English in a middle-of-the-road kind of children's novel, even if it is the main tense of a French or German original. In English, the historic present seems more a tense for a stylist than is necessarily the case in other languages. I like it myself; I like its immediacy. But I feel it needs to be approached with caution in translating children's fiction.

(Bell, 1986: 17)

Tense in narratives is linked to dominant literary conventions within languages, so the shifting of tenses in the process of translation may be one means by which a text is assimilated into the target culture. Bell is not alone in transposing tenses in children's fiction. Joan Tate changes the basic narrative tense of Maud Reuterswård's *Flickan och dockskåpet* (1979), a Swedish novel with memories aroused by a doll's house as its central theme, into the past in her English version (Tate, *A Way from Home*, 1990). She does, however, retain the present tense for interspersed passages where the dolls air their thoughts about successive owners.

The imaginative and aesthetic effects of the narrative present in children's texts certainly deserve close attention – particularly in the picture book. Even Bell cites visual narratives as an exception to her general wariness of the historic present in English. As co-translator with Derek Hockridge of the Asterix series into English, she regards the strip cartoon as a present tense genre because it resembles: 'a dramatic performance unfolding before the reader's eyes' (Bell, 1986: 17). As the adult reads the text of a picture book, pointing to and commenting on illustrations, the child becomes an equally active participant in a three-way exchange (adult, book, child) that has all the qualities of a dramatic performance that takes place in the present.

A striking example of the role tense plays in the reading aloud of a picture book to a very young child is to be found in the English translations of Jean de Brunhoff's picture book *Histoire de Babar* (1931), a present tense narrative in French that was first published in English in two separate editions. Merle Haas, translator of the American version of 1933, retained the present tense of the original whereas Olive Jones, translator of the British *Babar*, opted for the past tense in an edition that appeared a year later. Two translators, translating into the English language at about the same time, made entirely different choices. Haas aligned her translation with the French cultural practice of using the present tense in children's stories, while Jones appears to have shared the unease Anthea Bell expresses at using the present tense as a basic narrative mode.

The death of Babar's mother on the fourth and fifth pages of *Histoire de Babar* is one of the most memorable and shocking moments in literature for the youngest children. A child listening to a reading of the French original effectively watches *as the huntsman shoots* thanks to the present tense, 'tire' (shoots):

*Babar se promène tres heureux
sur le dos de sa maman,
quand un villain chasseur,
caché derrière un buisson,
tire sur eux.*

(de Brunhoff, *Histoire de Babar
le petit elephant*, 1931: 10)

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[Babar is riding happily on his mother's back when
A wicked hunter, hidden behind some bushes
Shoots at them.]

(de Brunhoff, 1931; *The Story of Babar the Little Elephant*, trans Merle Haas, 1933: 3)

One day Babar was having a lovely ride
on his mother's back,
when a cruel hunter,
hiding behind a bush,
shot at them.

(de Brunhoff, 1931; *The Story of Babar the Little Elephant*, trans Olive Jones, 1934: 6)

Changing the basic narrative tense of *Histoire de Babar* and the corresponding interplay of tenses, as Jones does, and emphasizing the 'pastness' of events by adding 'One day' distances the narrative perspective on events. It is impossible to establish the exact impact of this change, but the drama and immediacy of the narrative moment for the child who listens and imagines, together with the quickening of images, are enhanced in the case of the French original by use of the present tense. Since the present tense is frequently used in picture books and is the dominant narrative mode in writing for the younger child in many languages, the narrative function and aesthetic impact of tense is an important aspect of translating for children.

Key points from the above examples are:

- Pay close attention to the syntax of the source text and consider the degree of syntactic complexity likely to be tolerated by young readers of the translation.
- Consider carefully the implications of translating gendered nouns and pronouns in animal stories.
- Take careful note of tense in narratives for the younger child.

Communication with the child reader through narrative and stylistic choices is dependent on the harmonization of multiple voices and sensibilities, those of the author, translator and the potential child reader. Questions raised here will be pursued throughout this book, with the reference to Hirano's inserted explanation of *juku*, for example, as an introduction to the next chapter on meeting that child reader's needs in relation to unfamiliar cultural contexts.

Discussion points

- In what manner (insertions in the text, prefaces, afterwords, footnotes, etc.), if at all, should a translator intervene to make a translated text accessible to young readers? Does the age of the target audience make a difference,

i.e. is a translator more or less likely to mediate a text for younger children than for young adults? Or is it the social and political content of the text rather than the target age group that determines the degree of mediation necessary?

- Should a translator ever censor a children's book in the process of translation?
- What are the conditions that might make it appropriate to write a translator's preface to a children's book, and how might a translator address the child reader?
- Is an 'aesthetic' followed by an 'efferent' reading a useful strategy in your opinion? Does a busy translator have time for both? Would you read through a novel first before translating it?

Exercises

- Identify and discuss the qualities of the narrative voice present in the following three extracts. Consider conspiracy with the child reader, didacticism, subversion, irony and dual address. How might an adult's response to the third extract differ from that of a young child? How might you replicate the narrator's voice in each case when translating the extracts?

Diamond learned to drive all the sooner that he had been accustomed to do what he was told, and could obey the smallest hint in a moment. Nothing helps one to get on like that. Some people don't know how to do what they are told; they have not been used to it, and they neither understand quickly nor are able to turn what they do understand into action quickly. With an obedient mind one learns the right things fast enough.

(George Macdonald, *At the Back of the North Wind*, 1984: 141)

But in the streets, where the blades of grass don't grow, everything is like everything else. This is why many children who live in towns are so extremely naughty. They do not know what is the matter with them, and no more do their fathers and mothers, aunts, uncles, cousins, tutors, governesses and nurses; but I know. And so do you, now.

(E. Nesbit, *Five Children and It*, 2004: 3)

It rained and it rained and it rained. Piglet told himself that never in all his life, and *he* was goodness knows *how* old – three, was it, or four? – never had he seen so much rain.

(A.A. Milne, *Winnie-the-Pooh*, 1926: 117)

- Read a children's novel written in your working language and featuring a child narrator. Try to pinpoint the idiosyncrasies and idiolect of the

narrator's voice. Note down specific phrases, vocabulary and narrative techniques that might be helpful when working a translation of your own.

- Translate the following passage into your working language and consider how you might replicate the child's voice. Tracy Beaker lives in a children's home and the narrative is her diary:

My Book About Me.

About Me

My name is Tracy Beaker. I am 10 years 2 months old. My birthday is on 8 May. It's not fair, because that dopey Peter Ingham has his birthday then too, so we just got the one cake between us. And we had to hold the knife to cut the cake together. Which meant we only had half a wish each. Wishing is for babies anyway. They don't come true.

I was born at some hospital somewhere. I looked cute when I was a little baby but I bet I yelled a lot.

I am cms tall. I don't know. I've tried measuring with a ruler but it keeps wobbling about and I can't reach properly. I don't want to get any of the other children to help me. This is my private book.

(Jacqueline Wilson *The Story of Tracy Beaker*, 1991: 1)

- Choose a historical novel for children written in any language to which you have access and set in its country of origin, and consider in what form you, as translator of the novel, might convey information essential to an understanding of the plot and historical context to a young reader of a translation.
- Conduct a small-scale research project on picture books (ten or more books with a few lines of text per page, not illustrated books) or stories for the younger reader written in any language to which you have access. Compare the use of tense in each book and consider its effects and how you might address the issue of tense. (See also Chapter 3 on translating the visual.)

Further reading

- Bell, Anthea (1986) 'Translator's notebook: Delicate matters'. *Signal*, 49: 17–26.
- O'Sullivan, Emer (1993) 'The fate of the dual addressee in the translation of children's literature'. *New Comparison*, 16: 109–19.
- O'Sullivan, Emer (2000) *Kinderliterarische Komparatistik*, Heidelberg: Winter; trans. A. Bell as *Comparative Children's Literature*, 2005, Abingdon and New York: Routledge. See Chapter 5 on 'The implied translator and the implied reader in translated children's literature'.
- Puurtinen, Tiina (1995) *Linguistic Acceptability in Translated Children's Literature*, Joensuu: University of Joensuu.
- Wall, Barbara (1991) *The Narrator's Voice: The dilemma of children's fiction*, London: Macmillan.