ADAPTATIONS IN THE AGE OF GLOBALIZATION

Abstract: This article investigates the concept of adaptation in the context of globalization and points to the considerable potential of research into contemporary adaptations. It provides an overview of selected theoretical approaches to the adaptation of children’s literature as well as presents adaptation from a historical perspective. Furthermore, it focuses on selected Disney adaptations of Peter Pan published in Poland at the turn of the 21st century. Of special interest in these Disney adaptations are pictures: identical in different editions, although the accompanying texts differ widely. The visual is thus “recycled,” whereas the textual modifies the style, depiction of characters, use of tenses and culture specific items. The article also introduces the category of glocal adaptations, that is, Disney adaptations retold by Polish verbal masters, such as Jeremi Przybora or Jacek Kaczmarski. Though examples of cultural homogenization, these adaptations are partly indigenized by well-known local figures and may be viewed as glocal texts, where the global and the local overlap.

Keywords: adaptation, globalization, glocalization, children’s literature translation, Total Product, Disney, Peter Pan

Adaptation – selected theoretical perspectives

Though a truly broad, multi-layered and culturally significant notion, adaptation appears to remain on the periphery of Translation Studies. However, as any unchartered territory it offers numerous possibilities for future research. Adaptation – considered a deformed, incomplete, quasi- or unfaithful translation – defies clear-cut definitions; therefore, it is sometimes frowned upon and overlooked by scholars. As Georges Bastin observed:

Generally speaking, historians and scholars of translation take a negative view of adaptation, dismissing the phenomenon as distortion, falsification or censor-
ship, but it is rare to find clear definitions of the terminology used in discussing this controversial concept (2001: 6).

This article investigates adaptations for children in the age of globalization in an attempt to offer an alternative perspective on the “controversial” phenomenon of adaptation within Translation Studies. The article consists of four parts. First, it provides an overview of selected theoretical perspectives on adapting for children. Second, it discusses adaptations for children in Poland, demonstrating how they functioned in the past and how they are functioning in the age of globalization. Third, it presents a textual analysis of selected Polish-language versions of global Disney adaptations. Finally, it offers conclusions on adaptation in the context of globalization.

Literature for children abounds in various adaptations, as texts for young readers are sometimes modified to make them more accessible. Such modifications are differently perceived by researchers of translated children’s literature. Gote Klingberg, for instance, claims that a text for children has already been adjusted to meet the needs of its addressees by the author of the original (“a degree of adaptation”), which is why further adjustments and simplifications in the new cultural context (“context adaptation”) are unnecessary (1978: 86). Thus, Klingberg seems to overlook what appears to be fairly conspicuous, i.e. the fact that some original culture-specific items will not be readily understandable for target readers. Riitta Oittinen (2000), in contrast, points to the active role of translators, who have the right to their own interpretations and textual transformations that will bring a text to life for new generations of readers. Inspired with functionalism, Oittinen’s liberal approach posits that even Andersen’s tales need to be adapted in order to survive (2000: 80).

Yet another perspective on adaptation has been proposed by Cay Dollerup. Having investigated the historical development of Andersen’s and Grimms’ fairy tales, he claims that they have merged into a new literary genre – the international fairly tale, which functions in the form of illustrated, shortened and simplified adaptations on a global scale, practically detached from the cultures in which the original texts were created (1999: x). These adaptations most frequently result from coproduction between publishing houses from various countries; they are produced by one publisher in several language versions at the same time, which lowers production costs. Such colourful, simplified coproductions are, according to Dollerup, a major medium for Grimms’ tales nowadays (1999: 275). Dollerup also notices that the roles of the agents responsible for the creation of tales have