

# Broadening Understanding of the World and Introducing Foreign Culture and Knowledge through Juvenile Literature

(Examples observed from the process of supervising the translation intern works of children's literary and literature works implemented by university students)

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**Abstract:** *Language and culture are intertwined and cannot be isolated from one another while translating culture, particularly in the realm of literature, poses significant challenges. An effective foreign language curriculum ought to encompass cultural subjects. Educators working with children should adeptly infuse the cultural aspects of the language being taught into the educational materials. In the present era of technological advancements, people's lifestyles, communication methods, and sources of information have all shifted towards electronic platforms. However, an excessive reliance on the digital environment for social interactions can have a detrimental impact on the development of young children. While it has become commonplace for modern children to embrace diverse foreign cultures, customs, languages, and traditions primarily through electronic means, this trend carries numerous adverse health consequences. Moreover, it hampers children's ability to socialize, communicate openly and freely with others, and develop essential soft skills necessary to become well-rounded individuals. Furthermore, various health and psychological studies indicate that excessive exposure to technology impedes brain development, hindering a child's capacity to think critically and imagine creatively. Since parents cannot constantly monitor their children's online activities, youngsters may come across inappropriate content from various information sources and imitate them, leading to negative behavioral and psychological issues. However, the most effective way to liberate children from the clutches of technology, such as cell phones, computers, tablets, and televisions, is through the power of storybooks and literary works.*

**Keywords:** The oceanic ecosystem, narratives, diverse cultural perspectives, book education, reading comprehension, critical thinking, and soft skills

## I. INTRODUCTION

This research aims to explore how the culture of a foreign country can be introduced to young children through storybooks containing cultural content. By analyzing the translation process of "Sunny Meadows Woodland School", "Ginger the Giraffe", "Doing my Chores", "Golden bread", "The Fox's Palace" and "The Fox's City," we seek to contribute to the development of children who appreciate literature from an early age. The study will focus on the differences between Western and Eastern cultures, emphasizing the importance of storytelling in shaping children's understanding of the world around them. The primary objective of this research is to investigate how young children can be exposed to different cultures through storybooks. By examining the translation of "The Fox's Palace" and "The Fox's City," we aim to foster a love for reading in children from diverse cultural backgrounds. The study will highlight the significance of comparing characters and learning from their experiences in shaping children's moral development. Through the analysis of the translation process of "The Fox's Palace" and "The Fox's City," this research seeks to explore how cultural values can be conveyed to young children through storybooks. By focusing on the impact of storytelling on children's upbringing, we aim to contribute to the development of future generations who appreciate literature and understand cultural diversity from an early age.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Throughout the history of language, different methods and approaches have been utilized, with communicative language teaching being the most recent. Nevertheless, it asserts the importance of a more intricate and profound understanding of learning a foreign language. Languages and cultures are intricately intertwined, and their instruction and acquisition should reflect this interconnectedness (Celce-Murcia, 2007, pp. 41-57). Learning a new language is a complex process that involves gaining insight into and respect for diverse cultural norms, thought processes, and socio-economic realities. Numerous books and articles have addressed the teaching of vocabulary, grammar, and functions to young learners, yet only a handful have delved into the importance of teaching the target language culture. Educators often struggle with determining the appropriate time to introduce cultural aspects to these learners, believing it to be challenging when learners have limited knowledge of the target language. For instance, when reading and translating kids' English books, it is important to highlight the distinctions in how English and Mongolian cultures are occurred. It is crucial to help learners recognize the differences in behaviour patterns between the two cultures. Peck L. posited that culture encompasses the accepted and patterned behaviors of a specific group of individuals. It includes the learned aspects of human life that result from being part of a particular group. This encompasses not only the group's way of thinking, feeling, and acting, but also the ingrained patterns for carrying out specific tasks in specific ways (Peck, 1984). Therefore, culture provides a framework for cognitive and emotional behavior. Moreover, culture highlights the relationship between language and thought, as cultural patterns can manifest in language (Brown, 1941). For instance, conversational styles may be influenced by culture. Additionally, culture is described as the relatively consistent set of core values and beliefs commonly shared by groups of individuals (Peterson, 2004). It signifies the knowledge required to adhere to societal norms and brings people together. In essence, culture represents the entirety of a way of life.

## III. RESEARCH STUDIES AND RELEVANT MATERIALS

The primary objective of fairy tales and stories is to teach children as the readers to differentiate between goods and bads and to foster soft skills such as empathy towards others. Fairy tales play a significant role in shaping a child's upbringing, alongside parental guidance. Stories like Little Red Riding Hood, Pinocchio, and Goldfish instill in children the understanding of moral values and the distinction between right and wrong. These tales emphasize the importance of kindness and honesty, highlighting that these virtues ultimately lead to success. It is crucial for parents to complete the entire story when narrating it to their children, as it ensures a comprehensive upbringing (Gao, 2018). However, it is not accurate to claim that every fairy tale contributes to a child's moral development. Particularly, stories involving fathers killing their children or siblings harming each other should be avoided. Although these tales may conclude with the punishment of the cruel characters, they are not suitable for a child's upbringing. Russian folk tales, in particular, often contain elements of cruelty and should be excluded from children's reading material. Instead, it is recommended to focus on classic fairy tales by authors such as the Brothers Grimm, Charles Perrault, and Hans Christian Andersen. Additionally, Mongolian folk tales, as well as the works of Alexander Pushkin and Samuil Marshak, are worth exploring.

Fairy tales have always captivated the hearts of children, instilling in them the desire to be noble like a prince or princess. Mongolians, in particular, have used stories to teach their children bravery and courage. It is widely believed that stories play a crucial role in helping children achieve their dreams. Despite this, many parents overlook the importance of reading and telling stories to their children (Mozaffari, 2022). Engaging in storytelling with children not only aids in language and cognitive development but also strengthens the parent-child bond. Rather than making demands, parents should focus on educating their children through the power of storytelling. Most children aspire to emulate the qualities of fairy tale royalty, paving the way for them to grow up as courageous and kind individuals. By nurturing this aspiration, children lay the groundwork for their future endeavors. Cultivating a rich vocabulary begins with fostering imagination through storytelling. Role models are vital in shaping a child's character, as they convey moral lessons in a language that children can easily comprehend. Reading stories helps children articulate their thoughts and feelings, fostering open communication. By dedicating time each week to read stories to your child, you not only provide valuable insights but also demonstrate your unwavering support. This practice is instrumental in nurturing critical thinking skills and promoting healthy relationships (Peck, Post-Traumatic Stress and Life-Destructive Behavior, 1984). Young children enhance their cognitive abilities through engaging in conversations with one another. The more

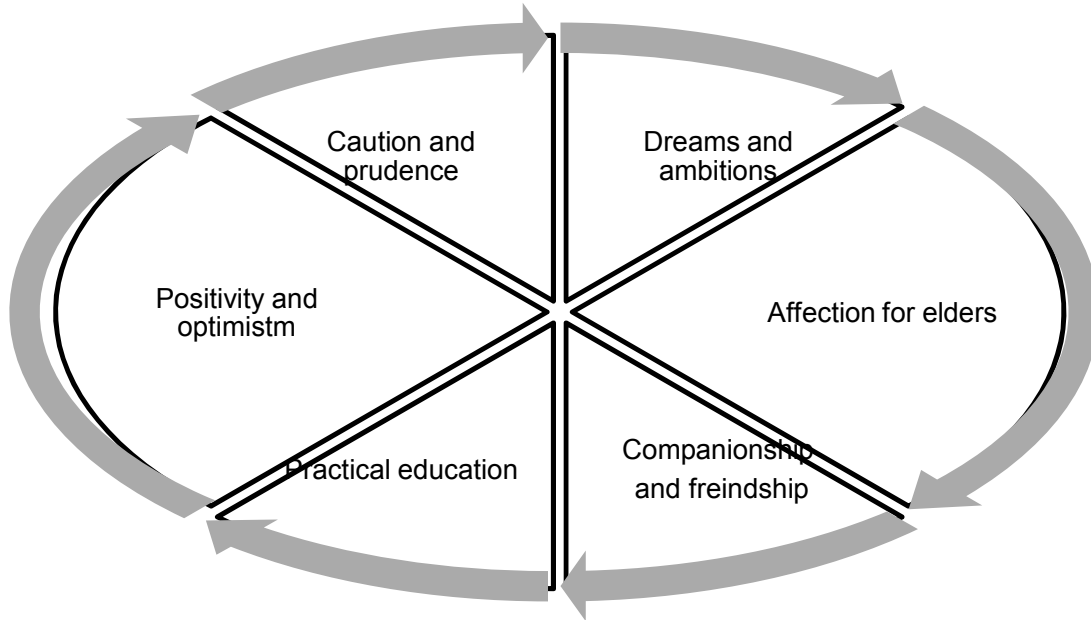
they engage in dialogue, the more their thinking skills are sharpened. Although fairy tales may contain falsehoods, children glean valuable lessons from them, such as the idea that individuals can transform fiction into reality. As fairy tales typically conclude on a positive note, children are instilled with the belief that positive outcomes can be achieved through virtuous actions, fostering an optimistic outlook that their aspirations will eventually materialize (Omane, 2024). By discerning between right and wrong, detesting negative behaviors depicted in fairy tales, and emulating positive traits, children develop a steadfast approach towards various situations and are less inclined to engage in wrongful acts. The compilation of fairy tales, which captivates the child’s attention, serves not only as a source of entertainment but also as an avenue for sharing with friends and engaging in discussions. This practice cultivates a culture of communication through literature. Through the narration and reading of fairy tales, children assume the role of a protagonist in virtuous endeavors, gain the ability to influence the behavior of their peers and family members, pursue their aspirations, and receive encouragement to attain their objectives.



Graphics 1: Cultural expression by semantic networking based on the example of The Tale of the Fisherman and the Fish

The key elements in discussing cultural disparities encompass terms like beach, fishing, and sailor. Due to Mongolia’s landlocked nature, Mongolian youngsters lack familiarity with the sea and its associated lifestyle. However, upon reading the narrative, these children will gain insight into a sea that lies thousands of kilometers away from them. They will envision the life surrounding it and absorb the cultural nuances of that particular nation. As Mongolian children grapple with their lack of comprehension, they will turn to their parents for answers. Consequently, some children will embark on a boat journey across the ocean, gradually comprehending the significance of renting and gradually delving into their own culture (Shola Syairani, 2019). Furthermore, a crucial aspect to consider is that the narrative revolves around a contract, in which a cunning fox deceives a visually impaired badger into signing a counterfeit agreement. This tale holds immense significance for young children, aged twelve and three, who are on the cusp of developing independence from their parents. It addresses a subject matter that is highly pertinent to contemporary life. While history effectively imparts traditional knowledge, there are only a handful of lessons that remain applicable in the present era. Hence, this story imparts a valuable lesson to innocent children, emphasizing the importance of not signing any document they do not fully comprehend and the necessity of reading it attentively.

Children’s dreams hold great significance. Hence, when engaging with multilingual works, it is crucial to refrain from exploiting elements that hold value for children in a negative manner. Consequently, being a reader entails comprehending the material thoroughly, conducting comprehensive research, and acquiring extensive knowledge and experience in structure and composition. Despite appearing as a slim volume, the story not only imparts general and specialized knowledge on various subjects but also incorporates numerous revisions, updates, and enhancements to ensure the accurate and flawless translation of the content. This demanding task requires meticulous attention to detail and precise word selection (Dizdar, 2012). It is crucial to comprehend and adapt the content of foreign language and culture in children’s literature to their own language, culture, and identity. Modern machine translation tools such as Google Translate are inadequate for this task, as they fail to capture the deep philosophical essence hidden within the stories (Brown H. , 2000).



Graphics 2: Key Concepts through the children’s books

It is essential to note that machine translation overlooks the cultural nuances, emotions, speech patterns, tone, attitude, and perspective of the original author. Only the human intellect can truly grasp these elements. Texts and dialogues rich in social and cultural context are challenging to translate, leading to confusion and misinterpretation for both the translator and the reader. The disparities and similarities in meaning between languages, as reflected in vocabulary and word choice, stem from social and cultural exchanges (Curtain, 1988). In the narrative, the mayor wolf dismisses the fox’s unsuccessful plan as merely a figment of imagination. Despite its seemingly harmless nature in our native tongue, we must exercise caution when using the word “dream.” Children, lacking a discerning filter, readily interpret it as a sign that dreams are unattainable, devoid of substance, and that their own aspirations will remain unfulfilled. Furthermore, this story encompasses various fundamental concepts such as filial love, friendship, respect for others, compassion, interpersonal relationships, perseverance, vigilance, and the importance of honesty. For instance, Franny the fox communicates with her parents through letters, employing concise sentences and sending fabricated photographs of her whereabouts. Nevertheless, her mother remains concerned, as she believes in the notion that parents possess omniscience and that there is no need for secrecy (Pinter, 2011). Respect and love for parents take precedence. Additionally, Franny the fox exhibits unwavering confidence in her abilities, considering herself the most intelligent. However, she does not shy away from failure, teaching children the importance of courage in all endeavors while cautioning against excessive pride and self-absorption. The story as we focused on this research stands out from others due to the fact that the main character is depicted as honest, brave, and kind, yet flawed. Unlike protagonists in traditional fairy tales who are portrayed as flawless individuals always helping and saving others without ever making mistakes, our main character is more relatable to children (Savignon, 2002). Children, like the character Franny in our story, sometimes attempt to deceive their parents and inevitably make errors as they grow. Franny learns from her mistakes when she realizes the consequences of the fox’s deceitful actions, showing that it is acceptable to make mistakes as long as one learns from them and does not repeat them. This story serves as a valuable lesson for children, teaching them that making mistakes is a part of life, but taking responsibility for them and learning from them is crucial.

**IV. DISCUSSION AND LIMITATION**

The foreign language provides an excellent environment for fostering cultural awareness and understanding. When both reading and translating English books with young learners, it is essential to integrate cultural elements into the language comprehension. The most effective way to have good cultural understanding is to read fairy tales and stories by

providing students with firsthand experiences of the culture rather than simply discussing it. Fairy tale and variety of literature help children gain insight into different aspects of the target culture. This approach not only satisfies children's natural curiosity about new things but also helps them establish a closer connection to the foreign culture and language.

## V. CONCLUSION

The study mentioned previously highlights that Mongolian children have a preference for foreign literature and fairy tales due to the exposure to new cultural elements, lifestyles, places, attitudes, and experiences that differ significantly from their own country. By reading Mongolian stories in their native language while residing in Mongolia, children naturally gain insights into the way of life, culture, history, and traditions of their homeland. The study of language cannot be separated from the study of culture. An effective language program should include cultural aspects. These are essential for encouraging learners to use the target language and for enhancing their motivation. When teaching young learners, teachers should skillfully integrate the culture of the target language into the materials. Moreover, delving into stories from various countries worldwide, both from the East and the West, not only enhances geographical and worldly knowledge but also fosters international and cultural connections. Storybooks serve as a valuable resource for children to explore different cultures, learn moral values, such as honesty and integrity, and understand the importance of acknowledging and rectifying mistakes. It is essential to engage children in reading and discussing storybooks to promote their overall development, mental well-being, language skills, critical thinking, and cultural awareness. Children can effectively learn about the foreign culture through meaningful experiences with cultural practices that are appropriate for their age and language proficiency. Being interested in the culture of the target language can enhance language acquisition. By doing so, we can nurture our children, the future generation, to think critically, communicate effectively, distinguish between right and wrong, and embody honesty and kindness through the children's books.

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#### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I express my gratitude to the students who participated in the translation internship courses under my guidance from 2020 to 2024. Your dedication and determination to translate important literary works into Mongolian with my assistance and encouragement are truly commendable.

I would also like to thank all the students who willingly shared their thoughts on fairy tales and responded to the questions in my questionnaire during the writing of this valuable paper.

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