A Generic Assessment of Persian Translations of English Fairy Tales and Fairy Tales Written in Persian: From a Cultural Perspective

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Abstract—**It is a commonly held belief that fairy tales as a major literary genre play a pivotal role in children's literature. Accordingly, the present study sought to investigate how the generic skeleton of fairy tales influences the quality of their translations into Persian for the children between 6 and 12 years old. To achieve this purpose, from among the English fairy tales translated into Persian, 15 works were selected based on a purposive sampling method. The contrastive analysis of the targeted texts written in both English and Persian revealed insightful facts about the interconnection between translators' consideration of SL text generic sensitivities and the quality of translation. The findings revealed that there were no significant differences between English fairy tales and their corresponding Persian translations, in general. However, the results reflected particular cultural variations existing between SL and TL texts- that is, English fairy tales and fairy tales written in Persian. Notably, the results of the study may have important implications for both translation students and translation trainers.**

Index Terms—**children's literature, fairy tales, generic assessment, cultural variations, genre, contrastive analysis**

I. INTRODUCTION

During the second half of the 18th century, the first serious attempts to discuss and analyze children's literature gained a considerable momentum. Most studies in children's literature have mostly been focused on religious doctrines addressing a sense of morality and the happy sides of life in the minds of children Bingham, 1988). However, in the 20th century, there has been an increasing interest in the field of children's literature whose objectives were greatly influenced by the sociocultural changes brought about by the industrial societies. These objectives addressed children from birth to adolescence, covering a wide variety of themes related to children of those ages through different rhetorical channels such as prose, poetry, fiction and nonfiction (Brown & Tomlinson, 1993). Overall, it is agreed today that children's literature is a significant important area of inquiry both in itself and for the rewarding revelations it brings into the wonderful world of literature.

In recent years, children's literature has attracted tremendous attention and become a popular subject in Iran. Not surprisingly, the rapid pace of development in children's literature has posed a number of interesting challenges to the field of translation in general and translators in particular over the past 30 years .Exemplifying this would be the inevitable limitation to the young reader's knowledge and information concerning the realities of the world – a developmental issue that is of great interest to the translators of children's texts. Clearly, young readers are not cognitively well-developed and cannot cope with the full scope of other cultures, languages and geographies that are otherwise taken for granted by adult readers as a whole (Lathey, 2006).

It is interesting to note that the emergence of the modern children's literature during the 1930s, when several pioneer writers and poets ardently created valuable stories and poems for children had its own repercussions throughout the world so much so the books related to children began to be translated and published in different parts of the world. Judging from the volume of publications such as folktales and fairy tales in Iran, it can be stated that books targeting children are not only highly appreciated in the original context from which they have been recorded but they have also been received by the enthusiastic children in local contexts. Consequently, Ghaeni (2006) rightly asserts that the children's literature in Iran enjoys a very ancient history dating back to more than 3000 years ago, when the first Persian families narrated rich oral literature including lullabies, folktales, and rhythmic fables to children generation after generation. Besides oral narratives, children also enjoyed written stories dating back to the Sassanid's period. This claim was solidly substantiated when a Pahlavi manuscript called *"Asurik Tree"* (the story of palm date and the goat) was found about 2000 years ago.

Recent developments in the field of children's literature also led to an increased interest in a new field of study in translation. Not much has been written about the translation of children's literature in Persian, in general or in the

translation of a literary genre such as fairy tales, in particular. Several studies have documented that Interest in children's literature appeared from a demand to read books from other parts of the globe. Indubitably, literature in translation can enhance a child's world by providing glimpses into the lives and actions of young people in other corners of the world and fostering an understanding of cultural diversity. Hence, translated books serve as windows, allowing young readers to gain insights into other cultures which can be similar or very different from their own; they invite them to what is bizarre and unfamiliar in other cultures. Consequently, it has often been stated that the transfer of literature from one language into another or from one culture into another expands the child's cognitive abilities because they familiarize him/her to various images of childhood in different parts of the world (Lathey, 2006). It is also argued that children's literature tends to be universal because of the educative and acculturating role it has in many societies and since children both biologically and cognitively share much in common. Therefore, children's literature offers a rich source of understanding cultural disparity separating nations from one another. Similarly, Medalled (2003) points out that translation is a type of cross-cultural interaction and that the way we write for children determines to a great extent the way we translate for them. He believes that translation is not merely the literal rendition of linguistic units from one language into another; rather it is a cross- cultural recreation. Therefore, adopting some degree of cultural protectionism, when translating for children, becomes paramount especially if the source and target cultures enjoy very little cultural overlap. Such situations necessitate translators' intervention and their ideological manipulation of culture specific items in a given text. Having said all this, appropriate content encourages the desired values and attitudes in children of particular cultures. Through fairy tales, children can listen to the stories they read and can explore their surrounding world. They can also reach a better understanding about the world in which they live and their relationships to it.

Nevertheless, it seems that the concept of genre always evokes an extremely complicated maze of definitions, approaches and assumptions which are, in many cases, mutually inclusive. Accordingly, it seems that fairy tales are one of the major genres in literature and have their roots in the oral tradition. Fairy tales with very similar plots, characters and motifs are found across many different cultures. These works tend to take on the color of their location, through the choice of motifs, the style in which they are told, and the choice of persona acting and behaving in the local culture. In the same vein, Hurtodo (2001) thinks about genre as a fundamental criterion in translation studies since it provides a useful source by which various modalities and translation types may be identified and used for training novice translators. Overall, it can be claimed that translation as a communicative event is closely related to genre and a translator as a member of a discourse community should be familiar with particular genres in order to accomplish the communicative purpose intended by the author.

It is worthwhile to remark that fairy tales as a literary genre have been attracting a lot of interest and play a pivotal role in modern literature. Apparently, fairy tales have a considerable influence on children's lives what is certain, fairy tales as a literary genre provides children with a suitable ground by which they can progress. This view is supported by Hyland (2003) who states that genre refers to abstract and socially recognized ways of applying language for particular purposes. He holds the belief that it is a way of getting something done to achieve certain purposes through the ap[plication of language in particular contexts. Similarly, it is pointed out that every genre has a specific schemata consisting of a number of goal oriented stages distinguishing it from other existing genres.

A great deal of previous researches into children's literature has focused on fairy tales. It is important to highlight that fairy tales, also known as wonder tales or magic tales, contain elements of magic or enchantment in characters, plots or settings. As a fictional story, a fairy tale may feature folkloric characters (e.g., fairies, goblins, elves, trolls, witches, giants and talking animals) and enchantments, often involving an unexpected sequence of events. They utilize magic objects like talking mirrors or far-fetched events like glass palaces, enchanted forests, thumb-sized dwarfs, fire breathing dragons, etc. to create suspense and hold the interest of the readers.

The Danish writer Hans Christian Andersen maintains that every individual's life can be regarded as a fairy tale designed by the power of God. Each person's life is, in fact, a story and each fairy tale is the reflection of that story. Notably, different studies indicate that fairy tales are stories growing out of the lives and imaginations of the people who live in particular settings. It seems that fairy tales have always been children's favorite type of traditional literature and are enjoyed by children of all ages. Nonetheless, universality has been one of the most interesting and important characteristics of these tales. Surprisingly, the fairy tales of all cultures, regardless of geography or other surface cultural differences, are most interestingly similar. In other words, they may vary in content based on the intended audiences, but schematically they have the same structural skeletons.

Naturally, culture is an essential component of the translation process and the more translators are aware of it, the better they will be. While a variety of definitions have been suggested for the term culture, this paper will use the definition suggested by Encyclopedia Britannica. Encyclopedia Britannica 2002 defines culture as the integrated patterns of human knowledge, belief and behavior Therefore, it involves factors such as language, ideas, beliefs, customs, taboos, codes, institutions, tools, techniques, and works of art, rituals, ceremonies and other related components. Translation and culture are deeply interconnected. Nida (1964) asserts that both linguistic and cultural differences between the target and source languages are equally important since the variations between cultures may pose more challenges for the translator than those caused by the differences in language structure. In this perspectivization, cultural, implications are just as crucial for the translators as lexical aspects. As a consequence,

translation becomes a transcultural activity, bridging the gap between two or more cultures. Clearly, the reproduction of thoughts in one language by one social group into appropriate expressions of another social group invariably activates a process of cultural reformulation, de-coding, and/or re-coding.

The findings of this investigation complement those of earlier studies focusing on the translation of fairy tales. As reported by Brown and Tomlinson (1999), fairy tales portray the lives and imaginative worlds of the people or folk. So far, however, no theories have adequately explained the fact that fairy tales enjoy a surprising degree of universality even though they are often rooted in different cultures.Khwira (2010) has demonstrated that works of literature which enter the system of Arab children's literature should be subjected to ideological and cultural constraints governing it simply because Arab children's literature is strongly oriented towards locally defined didactics and educational norms which explain why modifications in terms of omissions and additions dominate the works of translation.

Kronborg (2009) conducted another study and investigated that fairy tales have various things such as escape, consolation and fantasy to offer to the readers of all ages. In other words, fairy tales are potentially able to teach something to both adults and children. The reason is that fairy tales are replete with a rich resource of emotional import introducing their audiences to situations, feelings and actions caused by these feelings.

In addition, the results obtained by Hanoi in (2009) suggest that translating fairy tales for children reflects the art of using language. It can be inferred from the study that translators should take the psychological and linguistic capacity of children into account. Furthermore, they must pay attention to the choice of words, the use of familiar terms and slangs and the choice of translation methods. Only when they understand the nature of the readers can they enter the world of children.

The most interesting results concerning the issue have been offered by Franková and Havířová (2005). Their results revealed that elements in fairy tales reflect the intentions common to folktales. Their function is to enrich the plot, make it unpredictable and by providing exaggerated examples show virtues and vices of our own world. The ultimate objective is to reaffirm the faith of the readers that despite its dark side, the world we live in is good and worth fighting for. In 2009, Haghshenas and Khadish conducted a study which was somehow similar to the present study. With the aim of identifying the structural elements and narrative patterns of Persian tales, one hundred tales were analyzed according to Propp's morphological model. The findings revealed that the functions and allomotifs in Persian tales are influenced by social and religious factors that may be considered as peculiarities of these tales. The allomotifs also differed in relation to the protagonist's gender.

Metcalf (2003) also conducted a research and argued that translation will always be subject to political, moral, social, economic, cultural, religious, ideological, psychological and other pressures that have to be acknowledged. Because of children's literature perceived mission to educate, the young students felt inclined to slip into the role of educator as translator, which seems to be a role not unfamiliar to many translators, editors and publishers of children's literature.

Zhao and Jiang (2013) have demonstrated that an effective translation should be successful in restoring the essence of Chinese children's literature. The difference of understanding a text between translator, target reader and source reader lies in the context dominating their cognitive environment. As such, the change of times, cultural differences and knowledge structures would greatly reduce the efficacy of culture in redefining the intended content.

Yunesi Rostami and Zirak (2013) first reviewed the morphological analysis of fairy tales conducted by Prop and the Majid Tales, and then, the structures and functions specific to Moradi Kermani's tales were determined. The cause and effect elements in such are dominant in Majid Tales. Therefore, it is through the confrontation of Majid actions and other characters that a reader comes to understand the meaning enacted by a particular movement in a tale. From structural point of view, despite the variable elements existing in such tales, there is a fixed element in all of them, that is, a problem posed, and a need is expressed. Then, the hero or other characters through their actions or functions provide a solution or fulfill a need. All in all, a closer look at these tales shows that the initial problems are materialistic needs but the final ones are satisfying needs, solving problems or punishment etc.

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Genre in fairy tales plays a pivotal role in children's literature. Evidently, culture has s considerable influence on fairy tales. What is certain, culture provides children with a suitable ground by which they can progress. This study aims to investigate the significance of genre on the quality of translation and the role of culture in English and Persian fairy tales for the children between *6* and *12* years old. This research is one of the few studies to assess the generic foundation of English fairy tales translated into Persian and those originally created in Persian language from a cultural perspective.

III. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The present study was motivated by the following questions:
a) What is the role of genre on the quality of translation of fairy tales?
b) To what extent cultural variations in English and Persian fairy tales impact the quality of their translations in the target language?

IV. METHODOLOGY

A. Materials

From among the English fairy tales translated into Persian, fifteen books were chosen based on a purposive sampling method. Another fifteen fairy tales originally written in Persian for the Persian children aged between 6 and 12 were also selected so that the targeted corpora contained 30 books. In this research, materials were chosen based upon different criteria. First, only the texts concerning children's literature were chosen. Second, the selected texts all contained the key features characterizing fairy tales. In the process of selecting a text unit the main concern was to choose a unit which is clearly representative of the fairy tale genre.

B. Procedures

Prop's (1928) morphology of the folk tale and his categorization as well as Newmark's (1988) taxonomy of culture words served as the point of reference. A generic framework consisting of four moves was used as the required analytical model for specifying variations in the generic patterns between Persian translations of English fairy tales and those originally written in Persian. The specified tokens belonging to the moves were: *Absentation, interdiction, violation, lack, difficult task, provision of a magical agent, punishment, solution, transfiguration,* and *wedding.*

Then, cultural similarities and differences between the targeted fairy tales were compared and contrasted. Initially, cultural items in English and Persian fairy tales plus their rendition into Persian were collected. Newmark's (1988) classification of culture words into different categories; namely, the categories of (a) ecology (flora, fauna, local winds, mountains, plains, ice, etc.), (b) material culture (food, clothes, houses, towns, transport and communication), (c) social culture (work and leisure), and (d) organization, customs, and ideas (political and administrative, artistic, and social activities) were used for   collecting the required data.

In famous fairy tales, the complication move is materialized by one of the characters who either lacks or desires **to** have something. These instances may be divided according to the forms representing the realization of lacks. Consequently, it is possible to register lacks by such patterns as *lack of a bride* when the hero starts looking for a bride. Exemplifying this will be the story of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves*.
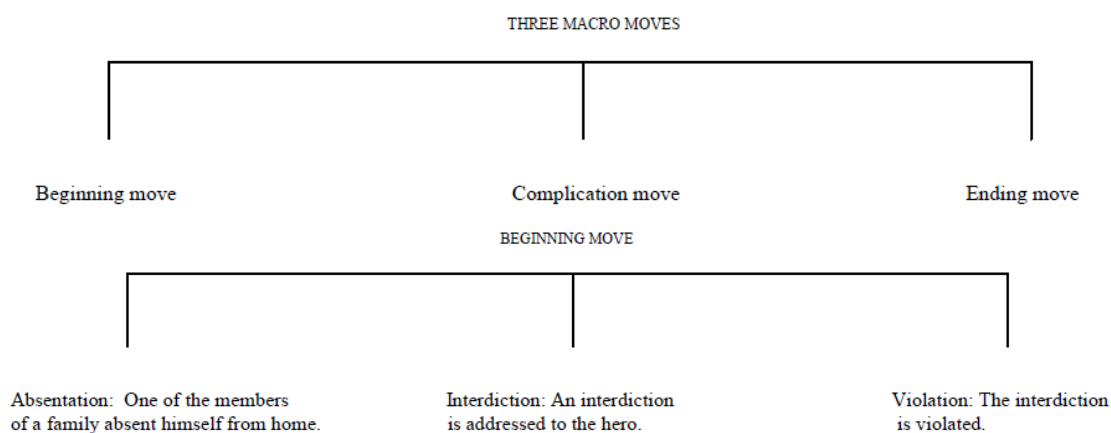
Another case of complication is represented by the use of another important move; namely, a *difficult task is proposed to the hero*. This is one of favorite elements in fairy tales in which certain insurmountable tasks such as riddle guessing, walking on needles, etc. are assigned for the hero to tackle. Another key move depicts the *hero's acquisition and use of a magical agent* in fairy tales. As an illustration, certain things can serve as magical agents: Animals like a horse, an eagle, etc.) or objects possessing a magical property such as cudgels, swords, and balls.
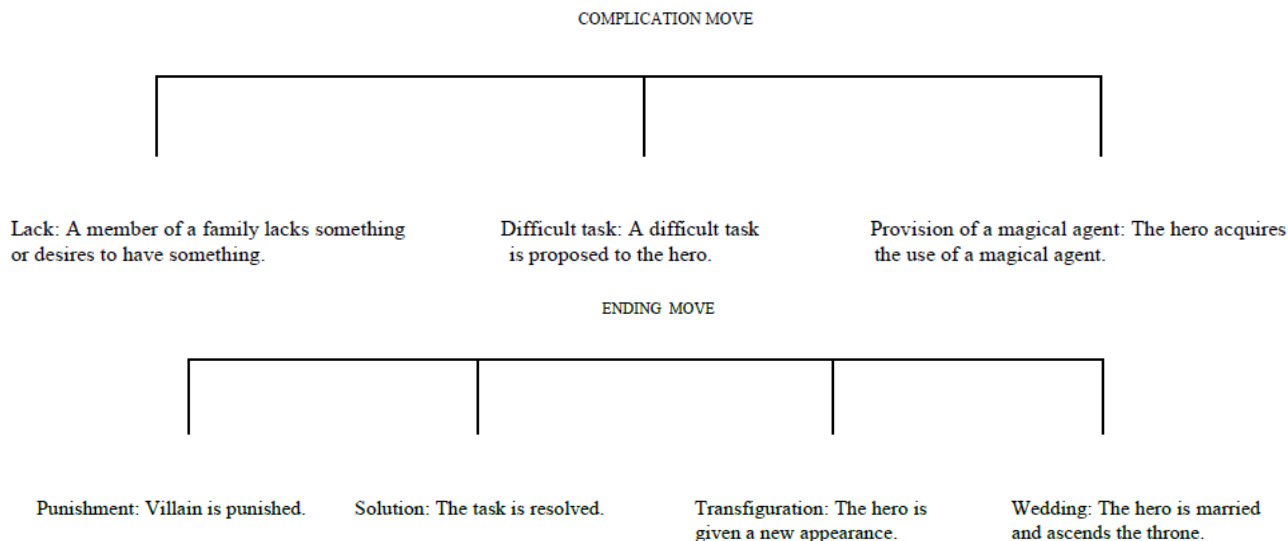
C. Data Analysis

The data of the study, that is, the specified moves and their related tokens were analyzed utilizing frequency analysis and their corresponding percentage values.

V. RESULTS

The generic moves were purposively selected from 31 functions elucidated by Prop (1928). Accordingly, the following moves were specified:

THREE MACRO MOVES

Beginning move   Complication move   Ending move

BEGINNING MOVE

Absentation: One of the members   Interdiction: An interdiction   Violation: The interdiction
of a family absent himself from home.   is addressed to the hero.   is violated.

COMPLICATION MOVE

Lack: A member of a family lacks something
or desires to have something.

Difficult task: A difficult task
is proposed to the hero.

Provision of a magical agent: The hero acquires
the use of a magical agent.

ENDING MOVE

Punishment: Villain is punished.

Solution: The task is resolved.

Transfiguration: The hero is
given a new appearance.

Wedding: The hero is married
and ascends the throne.

Prop's approach was chosen to obtain further in-depth information on the generic structure of fairy tales. Table 1 presents the frequency and percentage values of move patterns obtained from the analysis of moves in Persian translated works of English fairy tales:

TABLE 1.
MOVES IN PERSIAN TRANSLATIONS OF ENGLISH FAIRY TALES

Type of Moves	Move 1	Move 2	Move 3
Frequency	32	42	40
Percentage	2.13%	2/8%	2.6%

From the data in Table 1, it can be seen that move two is frequently used to attract children's attention. It is indicated that that there was a significant similarity among all moves comprising fairy tales. Interestingly, the most striking result to emerge from the data is that of move 1 since both English fairy tales translated into Persian and fairy tales originally written in Persian expose the main theme of the story through this move. Alternatively, Table 2 demonstrates the moves in fairy tales written in Persian:

TABLE 2.
MOVES IN FAIRY TALES ORIGINALLY WRITTEN IN PERSIAN

Type of Moves	Move 1	Move 2	Move 3
Frequency	39	51	33
Percentage	2.13%	3/4%	2.2%

Table 2 provides the breakdown of the moves in fairy tales originally written in Persian according to the prop's model. What is interesting in this data is that like English fairy tales translated into Persian, those originally written in Persian also made the highest use of move #2. A remarkable similarity was found among different moves in used Persian fairy tales with those used in English fairy tales. The single most surprising observation to emerge from the data was that move #1 was more frequent than move #3. Taken together, these results suggest that there exists a high rate of association among the targeted moves in English and Persian fairy tales.

The results obtained from the preliminary analysis of the moves in English and Persian fairy tales are shown in Figure 1. As can be seen in Figure 1, the second move was used more frequently than the other two moves:
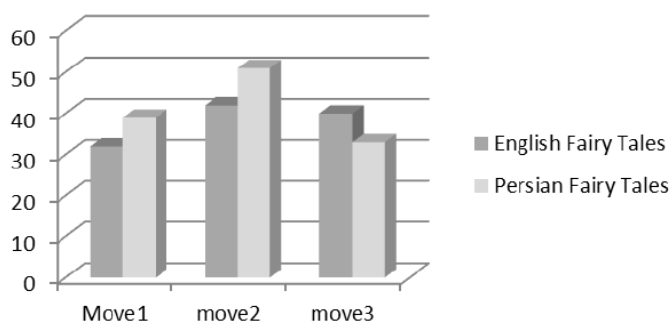
Figure1. Contrasting Generic Assessment of Fairy Tales

Apparently, Table 3 presents some of the main cultural differences existing between the two languages under investigation. As Table 3 shows, there are significant differences between the two groups of fairy tales:

TABLE 3.
CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN ENGLISH AND PERSIAN FAIRY TALES

Universal Cultural	English Fairy Tales	Persian Fairy Tales
Differences	White Rabbit Blond Hair Blue eyes	Black Raven Black Hair Brown eyes

The breakdown of cultural similarities in the selected fairy tales are presented in Table 4. Data from this table shows that some elements in fairy tales are universal:

TABLE 4.
CULTURE IN ENGLISH AND PERSIAN FAIRY TALES

Universal Cultural	English Fairy Tales	Persian Fairy Tales
Similarities	Wolf Red Apple Marriage	Wolf Red Apple Marriage

VI. DISCUSSION

The present study set out to determine the role of genre on the quality of fairy tales translations. Analyzing the data gathered from the specified moves and their related components based on frequency analysis of target moves and their corresponding percentage values provided the researchers with two insightful results. Firstly, the role of genre in specifying the quality of translation of fairy tales was determined. The findings portrayed in Tables 1 and 2 revealed that like English fairy tales translated into Persian, those originally written in Persian made the highest use of move# 2 (i.e. complication move).

Evidently, the findings of this investigation support those of earlier studies. Brown and Tomlinson (1999) strongly believe that fairy tales across cultures reflect a surprising degree of universality. The conclusion is also supported by writers like Matsumota (2008) who acknowledge that expression of emotions across cultures follows a cyclic pattern and schematically moves through certain stages that seem to be universal across different races and cultures. By contrast, like the present study, there are also many studies which focus on the impact of culture on the way emotions are expressed. It is now evident that there are distinct differences between collectivistic and individualistic cultures. Whereas Europeans and North Americans have their own view of self-conceptions and identities in that they regard themselves as autonomous and self-contained individuals, non-westerners like Japanese and Persians view the self as a part of a larger harmonious society where group goals and the consideration of others are important.

Markus and Kitayama (1991), highlighting the distinction between ego-focused and other-focused societies, maintain that the cultures in which such orientations toward the self are practiced are totally different in the way their members express their emotions. As an illustration, the members of an American community are more likely to possess emotions endowed with unique natural tendencies such as pride, contempt, anger, etc. whereas those in a non-western social groups my experience other-focused emotions like loyalty, cooperation , indebtedness and so on (Triandis ,1995).

Not surprisingly, the results of the current study are consistent with those of several writers. For instance, the findings presented by Haghshenas and Khadish (2009) were similar to those in the present research. These authors aimed to identify the structural elements and narrative patterns of Persian tales. For this purpose, they used one hundred fairy tales and analyzed them based on Prop's morphological model. It was found out that the functions and allomotifs in Persian tales are generally influenced by social and religious factors.

The second question in this study was designed to identify whether cultural variations in English and Persian fairy tales impact the quality of their translations in target language. Consequently, the cultural similarities and differences of the selected fairy tales were contrasted. By comparing the data presented in Tables 3 and 4, it can be stated that it is extremely important for the translator to be aware of the differences existing between the source culture and the target culture. Henceforth, one of the translator's tasks is to minimize these dissimilarities and to reconcile the existing differences between the original sender and the ultimate receiver. Khwira (2010) research was somehow similar to the present study. She investigated that any literature entering the system of Arab children's literature should consider the ideological and cultural constraints governing it. This requires of translators to use strategies such as modification, omission, and addition.

The present research also revealed that Children's literature in Iran reflects the Iranian and Islamic cultural and ideological values that are different from those of the foreign cultures. It belongs to both the literary and the social systems as it serves as a tool for both pleasure and education. The idiosyncratic features of emotion in the Persian context make translators to reconcile what is different and bizarre with what is familiar. Therefore, the way we write for Iranian children determines, to a great extent, the way we translate for them.

The results are seemingly significant in at least two major respects. Firstly, further work is required to investigate other moves in fairy tales. Secondly, other studies with a particular focus on culture should be conducted. The findings of this study can be beneficial to the specialists in the field including literary critics and translators by shedding light on the intricacies of children's literature and the way it is rendered from one language into another.

VII. CONCLUSION

This paper has given an account of and the reasons for the pivotal role of genre in children's literature such as fairy tales. In this investigation, the aim was to determine whether translators' awareness of the moves underlying fairy tales can help them improve the quality of their works and how culture as a determinant parameter can influence the whole process of translation. The general findings from this study reveal that moves in English and Persian fairy tales are to some extent cyclic. In other words, the expression of basic emotions in all languages due to biological considerations is universal in general. The current findings add substantially to our understanding of cultural influences on the expression of emotions. As such translating fairy tales presupposes translator's attention concerning the social context in which the events of a given story unfold.

Evidently, the staged goal oriented nature of the genre may invariably involve specific cultural detours which are deeply rooted in the complicated maze of sociocultural factors shaping and governing the lives of the people. Although fairy tales contain similar plots, characters and motifs, they may characteristically be modified across different cultures. The results of this study show that there are some moves in translated English fairy tales which fit the collectivistic traditions of the Persian community which are inconsistent with ego-focused norms of life practiced in western societies. Overall, the generic contrastive assessment of the moves involved in English and Persian fairy tales substantiated the notion of universality dominated by certain inevitable cultural variations. In fact, it was found out that Children's fairy tales in Iran reflect the Iranian and Islamic cultural /ideological values that are different from those of the foreign cultures. Finally, the findings of this study offer a number of important implications for translation trainers and translation students whose interest is directed towards translating children's stories in general and fairy tails in particular.

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