
A STUDY ON KOREAN-CHINESE TRANSLATION OF CHILDREN'S PICTURE BOOKS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF FOREGROUNDING THEORY: A CASE STUDY OF BAEK HEE-NA'S WORKS

 **Ding Jiawei**

Postdoctoral Researcher and Assistant Professor, School of Foreign Languages, Zhejiang Gongshang University, Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province, China

<https://doi.org/10.59009/ijlllc.2025.0165>

Received Date: 27 October 2025 / Published Date: 07 December 2025

ABSTRACT

The handling of foregrounded language in children's literature translation is a key aspect of cross-cultural communication. However, systematic research on the Chinese translation of Korean picture books remains largely unexplored. This study innovatively applies Foregrounding Theory to the analysis of Korean children's picture books translated into Chinese, and for the first time, constructs a dual-dimensional analytical framework based on qualitative and quantitative foregrounding. Focusing on six award-winning picture books by Baek Hee-na, this paper examines the strategies adopted by translators across various linguistic dimensions—including lexis, semantics, syntax, phonology, and script. The study reveals the translators' creative approaches to artistic representation and cultural adaptation, particularly through unconventional practices such as the invention of onomatopoeia and transplantation of neologisms. Innovative techniques such as “defamiliarized transliteration” and “cultural imagery reconstruction” are employed to retain the foregrounded stylistic features of the source texts while effectively aligning with the aesthetic and cognitive expectations of Chinese child readers. This research not only fills a theoretical gap in the Chinese translation of Korean children's picture books but also proposes the “Three Principles of Foregrounded Translation in Children's Literature”—the Principle of Childlike Appeal, the Principle of Phonological Representation, and the Principle of Cultural Adaptation—offering both methodological innovation and practical paradigms for cross-cultural translation of children's literature.

Keywords: Foregrounding Theory; Korean Children's Picture Books; Qualitative Foregrounding; Quantitative Foregrounding; Translation Strategies.

1. INTRODUCTION

In literary creation, foregrounded language achieves specific literary effects by breaking linguistic conventions and manipulating lexical, syntactic, and other linguistic elements (Xu Xiaoxiao & Qi Wenhui, 2024). As interdisciplinary research between stylistics and literary translation deepens, Foregrounding Theory, a core concept in stylistics, has provided a crucial framework for analyzing the linguistic style of literary texts. Originally proposed by the Russian Formalists, this theory emphasizes the artistic value of texts through techniques such as linguistic deviation and repetition (Leech, 1969). In the field of children's literature, foregrounded language is especially vital, as it aligns with children's aesthetic preferences for rhythm, repetition, and defamiliarized expressions (Xu Derong, 2018).

The picture books of Korean author Baek Hee-na have gained widespread acclaim for their unique linguistic style and rich imagination. The Chinese translations of her works must not only preserve the artistic features of the originals but also accommodate the linguistic habits of Chinese-speaking children. However, systematic research on the Chinese translation of Korean picture books remains insufficient, particularly with regard to translation strategies from the perspective of Foregrounding Theory.

This study selects six of Baek Hee-na's picture books—*The Bath Fairy*, *Strange Visitors*, *Jji's Mom*, *I Am a Dog*, *Moon Ice Cream*, and *Last Night*—all translated into Chinese by the experienced children's literature translator Ming Shu. These selections are based on the following considerations: first, they are Baek's most representative and award-winning works, with *The Bath Fairy* winning the Bologna Ragazzi Award in 2016 and *Strange Visitors* receiving the Sejong Book Award in 2019, indicating both literary merit and market influence. Second, the six books exhibit prominent foregrounding features in their linguistic style, including invented onomatopoeia, transplanted cultural imagery, and innovative visual layout. Third, the reliability of their Chinese translations, which have been widely recognized in the publishing industry, provides a solid corpus for analysis.

Combining the concepts of qualitative foregrounding (e.g., semantic and grammatical deviation) and quantitative foregrounding (e.g., lexical and syntactic repetition), this study explores the following research questions: (1) How are the features of qualitative and quantitative foregrounding in Baek Hee-na's picture books reflected in their Chinese translations? (2) How do translators apply foregrounding-based strategies to meet the expectations of the target culture? (3) How can Foregrounding Theory provide methodological guidance for translating children's picture books?

This study is significant in two key respects: theoretically, it demonstrates the applicability of Foregrounding Theory to children's literature translation; practically, it summarizes replicable strategies through empirical analysis, offering useful paradigms for cross-cultural translation of picture books. The following sections will elaborate on the theoretical foundation of Foregrounding and analyze specific examples to examine how foregrounded language is handled in Baek Hee-na's translated picture books.

2. FOREGROUNDING THEORY AND RESEARCH ON PICTURE BOOK TRANSLATION

The term *foregrounding*—also translated as “prominence” or “salience”—originates from Western visual arts, where artists draw viewers' attention to specific elements of a composition by highlighting them against the background through unconventional techniques. Deeply influenced by Viktor Shklovsky's concept of *defamiliarization*, a key principle in Russian Formalism, foregrounding in literature refers to the aesthetic effect achieved by deviating from standard linguistic norms (Wang Zhenping & Feng Xuran, 2023). In literary discourse, foregrounding involves linguistic deviations that make expressions stand out from conventional language systems, thereby generating artistic impact (Mukarovsky, 1964).

As linguistic and stylistic research has progressed, British linguist Michael Halliday defined foregrounding in *Explorations in the Functions of Language* as “motivated prominence,” meaning that only when the linguistic prominence serves a textual function does it attain stylistic value (Zhang Tongtong, 2017). Building on this foundation, Leech (1969) proposed two dimensions of foregrounding in *A Linguistic Guide to English Poetry*: qualitative foregrounding, also called paradigmatic foregrounding, and quantitative foregrounding, or syntagmatic foregrounding. The former involves parallel structures formed through repetition in varied positions, while the latter refers to conventional deviation in linguistic elements. In

Language in Literature: Style and Foregrounding, Leech further categorized foregrounding into eight types of *deviation* (lexical, grammatical, semantic, phonological, graphological, dialectal, register-based, and historical) and two forms of *repetition* (formal and phonemic), thereby constructing a comprehensive analytical framework for foregrounded language (Xia Xiaoyun, 2017).

Foregrounding Theory naturally complements children's literature. As a rhetorical device that consciously breaks linguistic conventions to enhance expressive power, foregrounding aligns well with the stylistic features of children's literature, which center on *playfulness, emotion, and amusement*. As Xu Derong (2018) observed, foregrounded language meets children's unique aesthetic and cognitive developmental needs and plays a crucial role in the realization of the aesthetic function of children's literature. Since children are in a critical stage of language acquisition and cognitive growth, they are highly sensitive to linguistic variation, rhythm, novelty, and emotional tone—making foregrounded language particularly effective in stimulating linguistic curiosity and aesthetic appreciation.

Children's literature often employs repetition of words and sentence structures, rhyme, onomatopoeia, and syntactic variation to enhance rhythm, emotional appeal, and memorability—strategies that are central to foregrounding expression (Tian Hua, 2008). These features are not only entertaining but also support children's comprehension, reflection, and emotional engagement.

However, in translation, neglecting the aesthetic and cognitive function of foregrounded language may diminish the linguistic charm and emotional resonance of the source text. Translators of children's literature must not only convey meaning but also strive to reproduce the original's linguistic style and foregrounding effects, thereby evoking aesthetic responses from the target audience. For instance, Zhao Chuchu (2021), in analyzing the English translations of Cao Wenxuan's works, observed that translators adopted diverse strategies in handling foregrounded language such as phonological, orthographic, dialectal, and semantic deviation, thereby preserving the original style and rhythm.

From the perspective of reception aesthetics, the reader's horizon of expectations and aesthetic experience significantly influence the acceptability of translated texts. In children's literature translation, translators must consider the target audience's cognitive development and aesthetic psychology. Xu Longyang and Zheng Xia (2023), using Ren Rongrong's translation of *Charlotte's Web* as a case study, examined how the translator adjusted linguistic expressions to match children's reading habits and emotional expectations, thus fostering emotional resonance and interpretive alignment between the translation and its readers.

In summary, foregrounding is not only a vital linguistic strategy in children's literature creation but also a crucial aesthetic dimension in translation. Incorporating Foregrounding Theory into the study of picture book translation helps reveal how translators retain and reconstruct the aesthetic tension and linguistic playfulness of the source text, thereby achieving both *functional equivalence* and *aesthetic reproduction*.

3. CASE ANALYSIS

3.1 Lexical Deviation

Lexical deviation primarily manifests through unconventional word choices, neologisms, and the creation of onomatopoeic expressions. These break the normative patterns of word selection and thereby enhance the expressiveness of picture books. This linguistic strategy not only reflects the author's skillful command of language play but also aligns with children's sensitivity to and acceptance of novel linguistic forms (Xu Derong, 2018). In the context of children's literature, lexical deviation effectively evokes emotional resonance and linguistic

engagement among young readers, enriching both the text's playfulness and sensory appeal (Leech, 1969). Through a comparative analysis of the Korean originals and their Chinese translations, lexical deviation is especially prominent in *I Am a Dog*, *Moon Ice Cream*, *Strange Visitors*, and *The Bath Fairy*.

3.1.1 Invented Onomatopoeia

Case 1: *I Am a Dog*



Figure 1. Korean Original: 아우울



Figure 2. Chinese Translation: 啊呜噜

Analysis

In *I Am a Dog*, author Baek Hee-na uses the highly individualized onomatopoeic word “아우울” (*a-u-ul*, a drawn-out howling sound) instead of the conventional Korean dog sound “멍멍” (*meong-meong*, “woof woof”). This distinct expression deviates significantly from standard usage and reveals a strong sense of linguistic creativity. The invented sound not only conveys the character's emotional tone but also showcases the author's unique narrative voice.

The translator similarly avoids the standard Chinese onomatopoeia for a dog's bark, such as “汪汪” (*wang-wang*, “woof woof”), opting instead for the inventive “啊呜噜” (*a-wu-lu*, an elongated, emotional bark). This rendition preserves the onomatopoeic quality of the original while utilizing the rhythmic combination of “啊” (*ah*), “呜” (*woo*), and “噜” (*lu*) to convey the drawn-out, howling tone and emotional intensity of the dog's cry.

This translation reflects a high level of sensitivity to foregrounded language by preserving and reconstructing lexical deviation. As Leech (1969) notes, lexical deviation, as a form of qualitative foregrounding, draws readers' attention to the language itself and enhances the expressive power of literary texts. Among child readers, such creative use of onomatopoeia is more likely to evoke emotional resonance and stimulate linguistic imitation, thereby increasing the participatory and memorable nature of the text (Xu Derong, 2018). Thus, this translation not only faithfully reproduces the stylistic features of the source language but also skillfully addresses the aesthetic expectations of children in the target language culture.

Case 2: *Moon Ice Cream*



Figure 3. Korean Original: 창밖을 내다보니, **Figure 4.** Chinese Translation: 从窗户往外望去, 大大的月亮滴答滴答正在融化.....

Analysis

In this passage, the Korean onomatopoeia “뚝뚝” (*ttok-ttok*, mimicking knocking or dripping sounds) typically imitates auditory effects and is classically categorized as an auditory mimetic expression. However, Baek Hee-na creatively applies it to describe a visual scene—the moon melting—which results in a striking cross-sensory metaphor and a clear instance of lexical deviation. This unconventional usage links sound imagery to a visual event, intensifying the dreamlike and poetic atmosphere of the narrative.

The Chinese translation, “滴滴答答” (*di-da di-da*, or 滴滴答答, mimicking the sound of ticking or dripping), faithfully reproduces the foregrounded effect of the original expression. This phrase, commonly associated with ticking clocks or dripping water, conveys rhythm and a sense of temporal progression in Chinese. Through this repetitive form, the translator reconstructs the auditory rhythm of “뚝뚝” while preserving the visual implication of “melting.” This dual-layered rendering exemplifies the integration of both deviation and repetition—two key techniques in Foregrounding Theory—thus amplifying the linguistic tension and artistic expressiveness of the target text (Leech, 1969; Xia Xiaoyun, 2017).

Moreover, as Xu Derong (2018) points out, children are particularly sensitive to linguistic variation and rhythm. The creative use and re-creation of onomatopoeia can not only spark their linguistic curiosity but also facilitate immersive reading experiences. In this instance, the translator’s strategy—grounded in a respect for the source text’s stylistic identity and a keen awareness of the resources available within the Chinese onomatopoeic system—successfully extends meaning and recreates the emotional tone of the original.

3.1.2 Invented Words (Transliteration-Based)

Case 3: *Strange Visitors*



Figure 5. Korean Original: “너, 넌 누구니?” **Figure 6.** Chinese Translation: 你，你
“천달록, 집에 가고 싶어.” 千月露。我想回家。”

Analysis

In this case, the Korean name “천달록” (*Cheon Dallok*) is a neologism with evident fantastical connotations, deviating from conventional Korean naming patterns. Composed of “천” (*cheon*, meaning “sky” or “heaven”) and “달록” (*dallok*, meaning “mottled” or “colorful”), the name carries strong visual and abstract imagery. Its unusual structure accentuates the character’s strangeness and mystery, making it a symbolic focal point in the narrative.

In the Chinese translation, the name is rendered as “千月露” (*Qiān Yuè Lù*), which retains the phonetic elements of the original while adding layers of poetic imagery. Specifically, “千” (Chinese: *qiān*, meaning “thousand”) corresponds phonetically to “천,” evoking vastness and infinity, subtly suggesting the character’s ethereal or otherworldly nature. “月” (Chinese: *yuè*, meaning “moon”) reinforces a connection to “달” (*dal*, “moon”), intensifying the mystical atmosphere, while “露” (*lù*, meaning “dew”) imparts a sense of freshness and fluidity, echoing the visual nuance of “달록.” The name “千月露” not only preserves the exotic and fantastical flavor of the original but also enhances readability and appeal through a skillful blend of transliteration and semantic adaptation, making it more aligned with the aesthetic preferences of young Chinese readers.

This translation strategy reflects the principles of lexical deviation and the use of neologisms as forms of linguistic foregrounding. As Halliday (1994) notes, linguistic innovation and deviation can endow literary texts with heightened artistic value. Through the use of invented words, the translator conveys the character’s uniqueness while adapting the name to better suit the cultural and aesthetic expectations of the target audience. Compared to literal translations such as “Sky Mottle” or culturally assimilated names like “Xiao Yun” (小云, “Little Cloud”), “千月露” better captures the magical realism characteristic of children’s fantasy literature. It stands out not only as a foreignized name but also as an imaginative construct that resonates emotionally and symbolically with readers.

Summary

As a foregrounding strategy, lexical deviation—realized through the creation of onomatopoeia, neologisms, and transliterated expressions—significantly enhances the phonological, semantic, and cultural expressiveness of Korean picture books in their Chinese translations. In the case of onomatopoeic expressions, the translator must not only consider phonetic resemblance but also adjust for contextual compatibility to ensure that the emotional and aesthetic impact of the source language is preserved in the target language. For invented words, the translator faces a dual challenge: balancing cultural adaptation with a sense of estrangement. Effective translations retain the exoticism of the original while increasing readability and accessibility for child readers in the target culture. Through these means, lexical deviation enriches the artistic texture of picture book translation, achieving both cultural recreation and linguistic diversity.

3.2 Syntactic Deviation

Syntactic deviation refers to the deliberate departure from conventional grammatical structures to achieve specific expressive effects. In Baek Hee-na’s picture books, the Korean source texts frequently employ elliptical sentences, repetitions, and inversions to enhance the oral quality and playfulness of the narrative, which are particularly appealing to young readers. During the translation into Chinese, these syntactic deviations are sometimes preserved and other times adapted due to the constraints of the target language. Such syntactic irregularities contribute not only to maintaining the rhythm and stylistic uniqueness of the original text but also guide young readers to focus more intently on emotional expression and interactive elements within the narrative. In the translation of children’s literature, syntactic deviation plays

a crucial role in crafting vivid and cognitively engaging language forms that align with the linguistic sensibilities and reading habits of child audiences.

3.2.1 Translation of Elliptical Sentences

Case 5: *Strange Visitors*



Figures 7–8. Korean Original: "누나, 나 무서워..., **Figures 9–10.** Chinese Translation: “姐
姐,

같이 있어도 돼?" "누나, 바빠! 혼자 놀아!" 我害怕.....能和你呆在一起吗?” “姐姐在
忙, 你自己玩!”

Analysis:

In the Korean original, “나 무서워...” (*I’m scared...*) is a typical elliptical sentence, an incomplete utterance derived from “나 무서워요” (“I’m scared”), interrupted mid-expression due to the speaker’s fear and emotional disarray. This syntactic truncation not only reflects the character’s psychological state but also intensifies the realism and dramatic tension of the dialogue. Likewise, the second line, “바빠! 혼자 놀아!” (“Busy! Play by yourself!”), omits the subject and verb from the expected full sentence “나는 바빠요” (“I’m busy”), retaining only the imperative “혼자 놀아” (“play by yourself”), thereby conveying the sister’s impatience and emotional distance.

In the Chinese translation, the first sentence is rendered as a grammatically complete expression: “我害怕.....能和你呆在一起吗?” (“I’m scared... Can I stay with you?”). This revision enhances emotional clarity and conforms to the syntactic expectations of Mandarin, which tends to favor complete sentence structures. Similarly, the second line, “姐姐在忙, 你自己玩!” (“Sister is busy. You play by yourself!”) supplements the missing subject and predicate to ensure semantic clarity and coherence.

Although these changes slightly dilute the effect of ellipsis present in the source text, they reflect the translator’s adaptation to the preferences of the target language and audience. Given that child readers benefit from structurally clear expressions, such modifications strike a balance between emotional conveyance and readability. This example demonstrates how the translator navigates between fidelity to stylistic features and the cognitive needs of young readers, a central concern in the translation of children’s literature.

3.2.2 Translation of Repetitive Sentences

Case 6: *Strange Visitors*

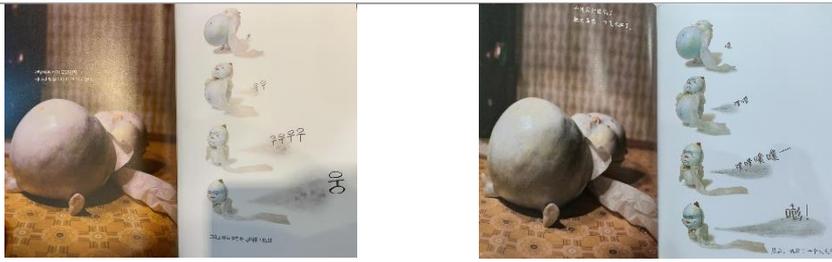


Figure 11. Korean Original: 천달룩은 배가 **Figure 12.** Chinese Translation: 千月露好像
饿

고팠던지, 커다란 빵을 단숨에 먹어 치웠다. 了, 把大面包一口气吃掉了。噗 噗 噗 噗 噗
뿌 우우 우우우우... 웅 噗 噗..... 嘭!

Analysis:

The line “뿌 우우 우우우우...” (ppu uu uuuu...) is a prototypical example of onomatopoeic repetition, where repeated syllables build rhythmic intensity and sensory stimulation. This mimics an exaggerated sound—possibly a fart or an explosion—that emerges humorously after a large meal, thereby engaging children’s auditory imagination and enhancing the comedic effect. The gradually lengthened syllables “우우우우” (“wooooo”) build up momentum, culminating in “웅” (“boom”), a punchy closure that delivers dramatic payoff and phonetic satisfaction.

The Chinese translation faithfully preserves this rhythmic structure using the onomatopoeic phrase “噗 噗 噗 噗 噗 噗..... 嘭!” (“poo poo poo... bang!”), which reinterprets the Korean syllables into a sound combination that fits Mandarin phonological conventions. The final “嘭” (“bang”) mimics a bursting or explosive sound, maintaining the humorous exaggeration of the original. This choice not only retains the original’s rhythm and dramatic buildup but also showcases the richness and adaptability of Chinese onomatopoeia, enhancing the narrative’s expressive power and comic timing.

Repetition in children’s literature carries both pedagogical and entertainment value. As Halliday (1978) argues, language functions not only as a communicative tool but also as a means of re-enacting social behavior. Repetitive structures reinforce memorability through rhythmic and phonological patterns and promote emotional engagement by creating mimetic overlays. They are thus a central stylistic device within the broader framework of linguistic foregrounding in picture book translation.

Summary

Syntactic deviation in Baek Hee-na’s picture books primarily manifests in elliptical and repetitive sentence structures. In translation, elliptical sentences can often be retained to enhance dialogic immediacy and simplicity in Mandarin, while repetitive sentences require careful adaptation to match the prosody and cadence of the target language. These strategies not only preserve the original’s artistic style but also enhance the translated text’s accessibility for Chinese readers. In particular, when addressing child audiences, translators must remain attuned to the emotional and pragmatic functions of language to enhance interactivity and contextual resonance. Ultimately, syntactic deviation serves as a vital foregrounding technique that enables a more faithful and dynamic recreation of the source text’s communicative intentions.

3.3 Semantic Deviation

Semantic deviation is one of the key manifestations of foregrounded language, referring to the disruption of conventional word collocations or logical sequences to create surprising or even absurd semantic effects. In children's picture books, such deviation often takes the form of metaphor, personification, semantic tension, or deliberate logical dislocation to generate humor, fantasy, and childlike wonder. In Baek Hee-na's picture books, such semantic deviations appear frequently, expanding the expressive potential of language and offering children a space for imaginative freedom. In the process of translation, the translator must strike a balance between fidelity and creativity—preserving the defamiliarizing impact of the original while ensuring comprehensibility and cultural acceptability for the target language readers.

3.3.1 Translation of Metaphor

Case 7: *Mommy of Chickie*

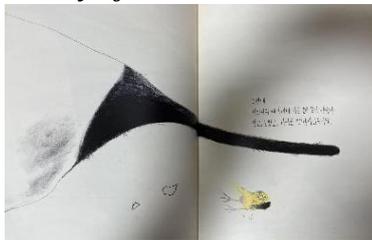


Figure 13. Korean Original: 그런데 니양이의 배속에서 **Figure 14.** Chinese Translation :
나온 것은 똥이 아니라 작고, 노랑고, 구여운 병아 不过，喵呜拉出来的不是便便，
리였습니다. “내가 병아리를 낳았어!!!” 是一只又小、又黄、又可爱的小鸡。
“我生了一只小鸡！”

Analysis

This passage constructs a whimsical and fantastical metaphorical scene through semantic dislocation, transforming the ordinary act of defecation into the miraculous birth of a chick. This expression breaks conventional causality and logic, exemplifying semantic deviation. In Korean, the phrase *병아리를 낳다* (“to give birth to a chick”) is a personified expression full of symbolic meaning, emphasizing the surprise and joy of new life (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

In the Chinese translation, the translator accurately reproduces this metaphorical relationship, preserving the semantic tension of the original with the phrase “what came out was not poop, but a little chick,” which maintains the humorous and absurd effect.

The sentence “我生了一只小鸡！” (“I gave birth to a chick!”) merges animal behavior with human reproductive language, creating a defamiliarized semantic effect. The translator does not domesticate the expression into something more logical, such as “I found a chick” or “I picked up a chick,” but instead retains the verb “gave birth,” thereby preserving the integrity of the metaphor and the fairy-tale atmosphere.

Such translation aligns with children's cognitive tendency to “rename the world” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), and demonstrates the translator's nuanced understanding and skillful use of semantic deviation. As Halliday (1978) emphasized, metaphor is not only a form of linguistic expression but also a way of cognitive and cultural construction. Retaining these deviations helps preserve the linguistic charm and emotional depth of the original work.

3.3.3 Translation of Symbolism

Case 8: Moon Ice Cream

Figure 15. Korean Original: 작은 빛은 점점 점점 자라나 **Figure 16.** Chinese Translation: 小小

커다랗고 노랗고 둥그런 보름달이 되었습니다. 的光越来越大，变成了又大又圆又亮堂堂的月亮。

Analysis

In *Moon Ice Cream*, the symbolic meaning of the moon is subtly woven into the narrative. The Korean original uses a growing “small light” (작은 빛) to symbolize hope, growth, and transformation. Starting from a seemingly insignificant point, this “small light” expands over time and eventually becomes the “보름달” (full moon), a symbol rich in cultural and emotional connotations.

In many cultures, the moon symbolizes completeness, hope, and beauty. In children’s literature, the moon is often seen as a comforting and hopeful presence. The original phrase “커다랗고 노랗고 둥그런 보름달” (“a big, yellow, round full moon”) conveys this symbolic significance directly, embodying the wonder and beauty of the story. By comparing the “small light” to the moon, the text metaphorically expresses the process of growth and the eventual realization of dreams and hopes.

The Chinese translation enhances this symbolism by adding “亮堂堂” (“bright and warm”), which not only describes the moon’s appearance but also conveys a sense of warmth, brightness, and positivity. This adjective resonates emotionally with child readers in Chinese and aligns with the narrative’s tone.

Moreover, the structure “小小的光越来越大，变成了……月亮” (“the little light grew bigger and became... the moon”) faithfully retains the original meaning while vividly conveying the transformation process. In this way, the moon symbolizes not only visual fullness but also serves as a cultural and emotional signifier of beauty and hope.

To summarize, the translation successfully maintains the symbolic depth of the original, using expressions adapted to the target culture and linguistic habits to reinforce the moon’s symbolic significance in children’s literature, while elevating the story’s fantastical and emotional atmosphere.

Summary

In Baek Hee-na’s picture books, semantic deviation primarily manifests through the use of metaphor, exaggeration, and symbolism. In translation, metaphors must be adapted to fit the rhetorical conventions of the target language, ensuring vivid imagery and cultural resonance. Exaggeration should retain the dramatic and humorous tone of the original while conforming to the expressive norms of the target language to enhance children’s immersion and emotional

engagement. Symbolism should faithfully reflect the original meaning while optimizing the poetic, emotional, and visual qualities of the language.

Through these translation strategies, the original playfulness and rich imagination are effectively conveyed, allowing Chinese readers to experience the linguistic charm of the picture books and emotionally resonate with the fantasy worlds within the stories.

3.5 Phonological Deviation

Phonological deviation enhances the expressive power of language through changes or adjustments in phonological form, simulating sound effects and enhancing the rhythm and vividness of the text. This type of deviation is particularly effective in capturing the attention of young readers, helping them better perceive and understand the plot. By mimicking real sounds or inventing new ones, phonological deviation adds fun and interactivity to children's literature. Additionally, the rhythm and repetition of such sound effects create dramatic and emotional tension, making stories more expressive and engaging. Onomatopoeia not only makes the text more entertaining but also allows children to emotionally resonate with the story during reading or aloud recitation.

3.5.1 Translation of Onomatopoeia

Case 9: *Last Night*



Figure 17. Korean Original: 그때 402호 빨랫줄에 **Figure 18.** Chinese Translation: 这时，
站
앉아 있던 참새가 파다닥 날아올랐다. 在402号窗外晾衣绳上的麻雀扑棱棱飞
起来了。

Analysis

In Korean, *파다닥* (*padadak*) is a classic example of onomatopoeia that mimics the sound of a bird's wings flapping, conveying a sense of quick and light motion. This form of phonological deviation enhances the immediacy of the scene and strengthens both visual and auditory perception.

The Chinese translation uses “扑棱棱” (*pu leng leng*), a common onomatopoeia that closely matches the Korean original in rhythm and dynamism. It aligns well with the auditory expectations and linguistic habits of Chinese-speaking children.

Through this translation, young readers can not only “hear” the sound of the bird taking off but also sense the rhythm and vivid imagery of the movement, enhancing the text's immersive and entertaining quality. As Li Chunqing (2004) pointed out, the use of onomatopoeia in children's literature embodies both “linguistic playfulness and sensory guidance,” effectively enhancing the text's sensory appeal and narrative tension.

3.5.2 Translation of Sound Effects

Case 10: *Mommy of Chickie*



Figure 19. Korean Original: 그러자 병아리는 기분 좋게 눈을 감고 "삐약....."하고 대답했습니다. 니양이는 가슴이 웅클해졌습니다. **Figure 20.** Chinese Translation: 然后，又舔了舔。小鸡舒服地闭上了眼睛，“叽叽.....”

Analysis

ㅍㅍㅍ (*ppiyak*) is an onomatopoeia commonly used in Korean to imitate the chirping of a chick. Its short and crisp phonetic quality conveys the youthfulness and liveliness of the chick. The Chinese translation uses “叽叽” (*ji ji*), which closely resembles the original in both sound and rhythm, and naturally evokes the chick’s call for Chinese readers. This word is frequently used in Chinese to represent the calls of small birds, aligning with the cognitive habits of the target-language audience.

Furthermore, ㅍㅍㅍ in Korean often serves a dialogic function, enhancing the interaction between characters. In this scene, the chick responds to the protagonist’s affectionate gesture with a chirp, symbolizing warmth and emotional connection. The translator embeds “叽叽.....” seamlessly into the narrative, preserving this tender atmosphere. Rather than merely reproducing sound, the translation integrates sound into the narrative’s emotional context. Combined with the internal emotional reaction described—“Meow felt a flutter in her chest”—the translation merges auditory and psychological expression, reinforcing the phonological deviation’s narrative resonance and emotive power.

Summary

Phonological deviation enriches the expressive power of a text through the imitation and transformation of sounds, enhancing its rhythmic and acoustic qualities. These strategies attract children’s attention and use auditory stimuli to convey emotion and build atmosphere, making stories livelier and more engaging. During translation, onomatopoeic expressions are creatively reproduced or adapted to align with the phonetic habits of the target language, increasing interactivity and linguistic expressiveness. This allows the translated picture books to effectively convey the original’s emotional tension and artistic charm.

3.6 Graphological Deviation

Graphological deviation enhances the expressiveness and dynamism of text through visual modifications such as font variation and typographic layout. In picture books, this technique strengthens the interaction between text and images, making the narrative more engaging and layered. As Akhtar (2023) notes, visual storytelling plays a vital role in children’s literature by capturing young readers’ attention and enhancing their comprehension and interpretation of the story. Poix (2021) also emphasizes that graphological deviation functions as a creative tool to amplify humor and increase reading enjoyment. These studies suggest that graphological



Figure 23. Korean Original: 구슬이! 이녀석! **Figure 24.** Chinese Translation: 珠珠! 你这个家伙!

Analysis

In *I Am a Dog*, the original Korean text uses “구슬이!” (*Guseul-i!*) and “이녀석!” (*I-nyeoseok!*) to convey endearment and colloquial nuance. “구슬이” is a diminutive form of a name, conveying intimacy and affection, common in Korean speech. “이녀석” is a lightly scolding yet affectionate phrase, often used with a humorous or teasing tone.

The Chinese translation renders “구슬이” as “珠珠” (*Zhu Zhu*), a pet-style nickname that retains the affectionate tone and fits well within Chinese naming conventions for animals or children. “이녀석!” is translated as “你这个家伙!” (*You little rascal!*), a colloquial expression that captures the teasing yet loving tone of the original. This strategy preserves the emotional undertone while maintaining linguistic naturalness for Chinese readers.

Through the use of dialectal nicknames, the translator retains the emotional and cultural layers of the original. The localized rendering allows the Chinese audience to intuitively grasp the tone and context of the dialogue, thereby enhancing the story’s emotional resonance and cultural relatability.

3.7.2 Dialectal Adaptation of Culture-Specific Terms

Case 13: *Moon Ice Cream*

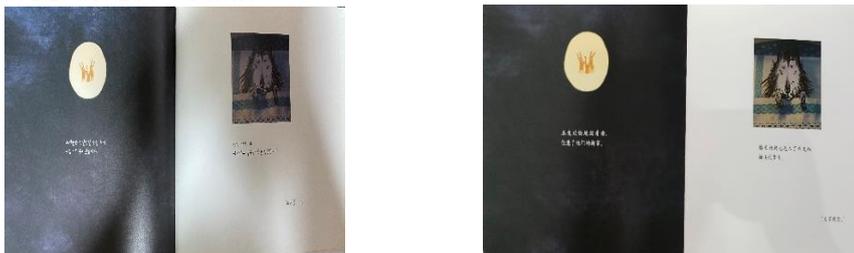


Figure 25. Korean Original: 토끼들은 덩실덩실 춤을 추어 새집으로 돌아갔습니다. **Figure 26.** Chinese Translation: 玉兔欢快地

춤을 추어 새집으로 돌아갔습니다. 跳着舞，住进了他们的新家。

Analysis:

In the picture book *Moon Ice Cream*, the Korean word “토끼” (*tokki*, meaning "rabbit") is translated into Chinese as “玉兔” (*Yutu*, or "Jade Rabbit"). This is a classic example of dialectal adaptation through culture-specific substitution. While “토끼” is a neutral, generic term for rabbits in Korean, the Chinese term “玉兔” carries strong cultural connotations linked to the moon, especially in the myth of “Chang'e Flying to the Moon,” where the Jade Rabbit is a central figure.

This choice reflects not just a linguistic substitution but a cultural alignment: the translator introduces a culturally resonant term from the target language to enhance the symbolic layer of the translation. In doing so, the text becomes more meaningful and evocative for Chinese readers, who are likely to associate “玉兔” with mythology, the moon, and traditional folklore.

From the perspective of **foregrounding theory**, this translation heightens the symbolic visibility of the rabbit character. Instead of merely being an animal figure, the "Jade Rabbit" becomes a foregrounded cultural symbol that evokes mythological depth and emotional resonance. The translation thus transforms a simple noun into a culturally loaded metaphor, enriching the narrative experience for the target audience.

By adapting the culture-specific term “토끼” into “玉兔,” the translator bridges cultural contexts while retaining the emotional and symbolic integrity of the source text. This strategy not only increases the readability and emotional engagement of the translated version but also ensures its cultural coherence within the Chinese tradition of children's literature.

Summary: Dialectal Deviation as Translational Strategy

The translation of dialectal deviation in picture books seeks to strike a dynamic balance between preserving local flavor and aligning with the target culture. Through the adaptation of nickname formations, regional expressions, and culture-specific terms, translators retain the original's linguistic texture while enhancing the accessibility and relatability of the translation.

In children's literature, such strategies are particularly significant. Since child readers may struggle with unfamiliar dialects, moderately adjusting regionally marked expressions ensures greater readability, playfulness, and cultural resonance. By maintaining emotional and symbolic undertones while making them culturally legible, the translator effectively conveys both the surface meaning and the deeper cultural essence of the original.

3.8 Register Deviation

Register deviation refers to the shift in formality or linguistic style that occurs during the translation process to align more closely with the target language's communicative norms. In children's literature, such register adjustments often involve modifications in honorifics, colloquial expressions, and hedging devices to enhance naturalness and readability. Translators may introduce language familiar to children and soften overly rigid or literal expressions to create a more intimate and authentic communicative tone. Additionally, the deliberate use of register mismatch—such as child characters speaking in adult-like language—can introduce humor and cognitive tension, enriching character development and narrative depth.

3.8.3 Colloquial Rewriting

Case 14: *I Am a Dog*



Figure 27. Korean Original: 한밤중 하울링이라도 **Figure 28.** Chinese Translation: 说到 하면 아버지도 빠지지 않는다. 하지만 목소리가 深夜地叫声, 爸爸一点也不差, 不过,

...좀...그렇다.

他的声音.....有点.....不怎么样。

Analysis

The original Korean text is informal and rich in spoken features. In particular, the line “하지만 목소리가... 좀... 그렇다” (*But his voice... is kind of... that way*) employs vague and indirect phrasing, a typical feature of Korean conversational language, which enhances humor and interpersonal subtlety. The Chinese translation mimics this fragmented, slightly hesitant tone with phrases like “有点.....不怎么样” (*kind of... not so great*), capturing both the humorous subtext and the evaluative undercurrent of the speaker’s tone.

This is a clear case of register deviation where a potentially more formal or literal rendering is intentionally rephrased using child-accessible colloquial expressions in Chinese. The use of fillers and vague terms such as “有点” (*a bit*) and “不怎么样” (*not that great*) recreates the implied hesitation and internal commentary, making the character's voice feel natural and relatable.

From a foregrounding perspective, such register shifts highlight the translator’s skillful modulation of voice and tone to fit the socio-linguistic expectations of the target audience. The playful, somewhat self-conscious expression not only foregrounds the character’s personality but also creates an engaging reading experience tailored to children’s linguistic sensibilities.

Summary: The Role of Register Deviation in Translation

Register deviation plays a pivotal role in the translation of children’s literature. By adjusting the degree of formality and stylistic tone, translators make the text more accessible to the target audience’s cognitive and linguistic levels. Strategies such as the downgrading of honorifics, the conversion of written language into colloquial forms, and the standardization of dialectal expressions are commonly used in register adaptation.

These shifts enhance the readability and naturalness of the translation while preserving the emotional tone and communicative function of the original dialogue. Children are thus able to immerse themselves in the story within a relaxed and emotionally resonant linguistic environment. Through this, the translation achieves an effective balance between linguistic transfer and cultural recreation, aligning well with the goals of children’s literature: to communicate with clarity, warmth, and creativity.

3.9 Free Repetition

Free repetition is a common rhetorical device in children's literature, referring to the non-systematic repetition of words or sentence structures within a passage. Such repetition enhances rhythmic quality, reinforces semantic memory, and may produce humorous or emotionally charged effects. When translating, the handling of free repetition requires a delicate balance: maintaining the original’s stylistic essence while adapting to the rhythm and expressive habits of the target language. Effective repetition can boost both the **entertainment value** and **emotional resonance** of the translated text.

3.9.1 Emotional Amplification

Case 15: *I Am a Dog*



Figure 29. Korean Original: "기다린다" × 15 Figure 30. Chinese Translation: "等着" × 15

Analysis

In this case, the Korean source text repeats the verb *기다린다* (“waiting”) fifteen times in a row to vividly portray the character's heightened emotional state—specifically, intense anxiety and impatience. This mechanical, rhythmic repetition evokes a sense of dragging time and psychological turmoil. The Chinese translation mirrors this pattern precisely, preserving both the number and form of repetition. The replication successfully conveys the **emotional tension** of the original and maintains **synchronous rhythm and visual density** on the page.

Moreover, the layout of the picture book magnifies this effect: the repeated word occupies approximately 37% of the page's space, with a repetition density of 1.2 times per line. This **spatial-linguistic resonance** creates a foregrounded “emotional visual landscape,” where the convergence of text and layout intensifies the reader’s immersion in the protagonist’s internal world.

From the perspective of **children's cognitive psychology**, repeated words are easier to perceive and remember. They also help evoke emotional empathy, making the character’s psychological state more comprehensible and impactful. Here, the translator’s choice not only conveys the **informational content** but also recreates the **emotional experience**, demonstrating how repetition can function as a powerful narrative and stylistic tool in children’s literature.

3.9.2 Emphasis on Collective Action

Case 16: *Moon Ice Cream*

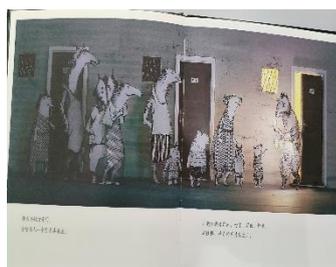
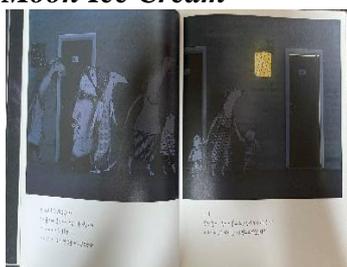


Figure 31. Korean Original: 모두모두 밖으 Figure 32. Chinese Translation: 所有的人都走

로 나왔습니다. 너무너무 어두워서 잘 걸 到外面来，好黑好累，黑色不能走路了。这
을 수도 없습니다. ...모두모두 빛을 따라 时，从楼长奶奶家里透出了淡淡的黄色的亮
할머니 집으로 향했습니다. 光，所有的人都向着光亮，走到了楼长奶奶家。

Analysis

The Korean original uses the phrase *모두모두* (“everyone, everyone”) twice to emphasize the **unity and cohesion** of collective action in a moment of communal difficulty. This type of

repetition is both a **linguistic intensifier** and an **emotional synchronizer**, helping young readers intuitively perceive the **rhythm and imagery of group behavior**.

The Chinese translation, while semantically faithful, omits the formal repetition of “所有的人” (*everyone*). Nevertheless, the narrative coherence and descriptive flow still effectively convey a sense of collective movement. However, from the perspective of **foregrounding theory**, a more rhythmic rendering—such as “所有的人都走出来了，所有的人都向光亮走去” (*Everyone came out, everyone walked toward the light*)—would better preserve the **repetitive cadence** of the original and heighten the synchrony between text and imagery.

In picture books, such repetition often echoes the visual composition of group movement across the page. The **text-image interplay** strengthens narrative pacing and emotional resonance, inviting readers into a shared rhythm of action and response. By slightly enhancing or restoring the repetitive form in the translation, the **narrative cohesion** and **empathic atmosphere** of the original can be more fully maintained in the target language.

Summary: Repetition as Foregrounded Form

Free repetition in children’s literature is a foregrounded linguistic form that plays a vital role in narrative delivery. Whether used to amplify emotional states, emphasize collective dynamics, or build rhythmic structures, repetition functions as a stylistic bridge between linguistic form, cognitive memory, and emotional resonance. In translation, a faithful yet adaptive approach is essential: repetition should be preserved where it enhances the target audience’s engagement and comprehension while also aligning with their linguistic habits. The successful transfer of such structures not only sustains the textual music and movement but also facilitates deeper cross-cultural emotional communication.

3.10 Parallelism

Parallelism refers to the repeated use of similar syntactic, phrasal, or semantic structures within a sentence or paragraph to achieve rhythmical elegance and logical clarity. In children’s literature, parallel structures not only enhance the readability and musicality of the text, but also assist young readers in understanding the development of the story and the emotional changes of the characters through repetition and progression. Particularly in picturebooks, parallel structures often interact with visual layouts, creating a unified rhythm between form and content. Such techniques also support oral reading, helping children internalize language patterns and develop a heightened sense of linguistic aesthetics.

3.10.1 Symmetrical Sentence Structures

Case 17: *Moon Ice Cream*



Figure 33. Korean Original:

모두들 창문을 꼭꼭 닫고,
에어컨을 썩썩, 선풍기를 썩썩 틀며
잠을 청하고 있었습시다.

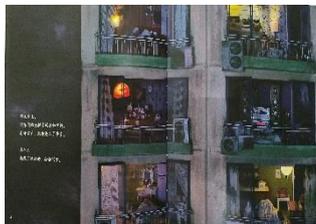


Figure 34. Chinese Translation:

每家每户地窗户关的严严的，
空调开的凉凉的，风扇转得呼呼响，
大家都想快点进入梦乡。

Analysis

The Korean source text constructs a three-part parallel structure: “shutting windows tightly / blasting air conditioners / spinning fans.” Each phrase maintains a symmetrical internal structure and follows a repetitive rhythm, which creates a sense of order, regularity, and fluidity. The use of onomatopoeic words such as *꼭꼭*, *쌩쌩*, and *쌩쌩* further adds vivid sensory detail and reinforces the ambient atmosphere of a sultry summer night.

The Chinese translation preserves this tripartite parallel structure using Chinese-specific rhythmic devices such as reduplicated adjectives—“严严的” (tightly), “凉凉的” (coolly), and “呼呼响” (whirring)—which reflect the stylistic symmetry of the original while aligning with Chinese expressive habits. Furthermore, the additional phrases “每家每户” (every household) and “大家都想快点进入梦乡” (everyone wanted to quickly enter dreamland) introduce semantic progression that builds upon the parallelism, smoothly leading readers from static description to narrative motivation.

From a multimodal perspective, this structure not only enhances the linguistic rhythm but also resonates with visual elements in the picturebook, such as repeated depictions of closed windows, air conditioners, and whirring fans. The combination of parallel sentence structures and synchronized imagery contributes to a foregrounded rhythmic narration, which invites the reader into a unified, immersive textual and visual experience.

Summary

Parallelism serves as a powerful stylistic device in children’s literature by enhancing rhythm, readability, and engagement. For young readers, the consistent structure facilitates cognitive processing and emotional involvement. In translation, maintaining syntactic symmetry is crucial for preserving the original rhythm and tone. Adjustments may be necessary to suit the linguistic aesthetics and cognitive preferences of the target audience, but a well-balanced adaptation can enhance both comprehension and pleasure. Parallel structures also function as a narrative scaffold, supporting the development of atmosphere and story progression, while offering translators a rich site for cross-modal coordination and foregrounding effects.

4. DISCUSSION AND PROBLEM RESOLUTION

4.1 Foregrounded Representation of Language and Visual Elements in the Chinese Translation of Baek Hee-na’s Picture Books

Baek Hee-na’s picture books are distinguished by their linguistic creativity and visual experimentalism. Linguistically, her works are characterized by sensuousness, onomatopoeia, and colloquial expressions, while visually, they transcend the flatness of traditional picture book illustrations by constructing multidimensional spaces through “narrative objects” and “collages of real-life materials.” These foregrounded features in both language and image are vividly recreated in the Chinese translations. For instance, in *The Bathhouse Fairy*, the Korean expression “휴~ 간신히 빠져나왔네!” employs the interjection “휴~” to express tension, with its breathy intonation adding a strong colloquial flavor. The Chinese translation, “呼~总算逃出来了!” successfully retains this emotional tone and rhythm, preserving the phonological foregrounding of the original. Moreover, the contrast between the fairy’s retro bathing costume and the modern bathhouse setting in the original creates a sense of cultural dissonance, which

is softened in the Chinese version by addressing the character as “仙女阿姨” (Fairy Auntie), thus fostering cultural intimacy for the target readership.

In *The Strange Visitor*, the repetitive knocking sound “똑똑똑” is a case of quantitative foregrounding that builds narrative suspense. The translation “咚咚咚” not only captures the rhythmic repetition but also aligns with the auditory sensibilities of Chinese-speaking children. Exclamations and exaggerated expressions such as “으악!” and “어머머머!” are translated into “哎呀呀!” and “啊啊啊!”, preserving semantic deviation and emotional nuance. Visually, *Moon Ice Cream* creates an imaginative scene of scooping ice cream from the moon, with a soft color palette and a night-sky background. The repeated verbal phrase “퍼서, 또 퍼서” (Scoop, and scoop again) is echoed in the Chinese “舀一勺, 又舀一勺,” reinforcing the synergy between text and image and enhancing multimodal foregrounding. These translation strategies enable a faithful and vivid recreation of Baek’s unique linguistic and visual style in Chinese.

4.2 Translator Strategies for Adapting Foregrounding to Target-Culture Reception

In cross-cultural translation, the “salience” inherent in foregrounding may be misinterpreted or diminished due to cultural differences, requiring translators to strike a balance between preserving the original foregrounded features and aligning with target-culture reception norms. Baek’s foregrounded language and visual motifs are deeply rooted in Korean family culture and social psychology, whereas the cognitive habits of children in the target culture may differ significantly. This poses challenges for cultural transformation and reader adaptation.

In *The Bathhouse Fairy*, the Korean term “목욕탕” (public bathhouse) reflects a familiar experience for Korean children, but may be foreign to Chinese readers. To address this, the translator retains the image of the bathhouse while using the affectionate term “仙女阿姨” (Fairy Auntie) to mitigate cultural unfamiliarity and foster contextual resonance. This “pragmatic softening” strategy preserves the fantasy while easing cultural comprehension. In *The Strange Visitor*, suspense is built through repetition and onomatopoeia. The translator maintains this suspense in Chinese through ellipsis and rhythmic extension, as seen in “奇怪的客人越来越近了……” (“The strange visitor is getting closer...”), where the ellipsis mirrors the original tension and matches the anticipatory reading habits of Chinese children.

In *Moon Ice Cream*, rather than replacing the fantastical “eating the moon” concept with a culturally equivalent metaphor, the translator uses concrete imagery—“他一勺一勺舀着月亮” (“He scooped the moon, one spoonful at a time”)—to transform the abstract idea into a more accessible action. This approach reduces the cultural gap while retaining the original’s fantastical nature. Thus, by flexibly adjusting translation strategies, the translator ensures the successful transmission of foregrounded features within the target cultural context.

4.3 Theoretical and Methodological Implications of Foregrounding Theory in Picture Book Translation

Foregrounding theory not only reveals the mechanisms of textual salience in source texts but also provides a practical framework for translators, particularly in the translation of multimodal texts. In the context of picture book translation, foregrounding theory helps translators identify marked language features such as grammatical deviation, semantic repetition, and sound

symbolism. By categorizing these according to types of foregrounding, translators can formulate appropriate strategies to accurately convey the original's linguistic style and emotional tone.

Given that children are the primary readers, their heightened sensitivity to rhythm, sound play, and visual storytelling must be considered. Foregrounding theory's focus on psychological expectancy enhances the translator's ability to adapt language to children's cognitive and aesthetic preferences, thereby increasing the text's appeal and accessibility. In terms of image-text relationships, foregrounding theory underscores the coordinated prominence of language and visuals, equipping translators with methods to address issues of asymmetry and cultural dissonance. Strategies such as "linguistic supplementation of visual gaps" or "linguistic mitigation of visual conflict" enable narrative balance, allowing language and image to support each other and preserve the artistic and emotional expression of the original.

Thus, foregrounding theory serves not only as a tool for stylistic reconstruction but also as an effective mechanism for rebuilding the multimodal narrative structure of picture books. It offers theoretical insight and operational guidance for translation practice in this genre.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 Dual Representation of Foregrounded Features and Innovative Translation Strategies

This study has demonstrated that both qualitative foregrounding (e.g., semantic deviation, grammatical variation) and quantitative foregrounding (e.g., lexical repetition, parallel structures) can be effectively recreated in the Chinese translations of Baek Hee-na's picture books. When translating features such as onomatopoeia and neologisms, translators adopted innovative methods like the "defamiliarizing transliteration" (e.g., rendering "아우울" as "啊呜噜") and "cultural imagery reconstruction" (e.g., translating "천달록" as "千月露"). These strategies retain the original's unique linguistic artistry while aligning with Chinese children's cognitive habits.

In particular, the translation of onomatopoeia—such as "扑棱棱" to represent flapping sounds—effectively recreates auditory effects from the original. In handling culturally specific items, such as the word "토끼" (rabbit), the translation into "玉兔" (Jade Rabbit) preserves the fantastical quality while embedding elements of Chinese culture. These practices transcend conventional translation paradigms, reflecting the translator's deep understanding and flexible application of foregrounding theory.

5.2 Dynamic Mechanism of Cultural Adaptation

The study reveals that translators employed a stratified approach to cultural transformation. Universally appealing elements such as onomatopoeia and repetition were directly transplanted; culturally loaded items like the bathhouse were moderately contextualized; and core symbolic imagery, such as the moon, was rendered through concrete descriptions to reduce comprehension barriers.

For example, in *Moon Ice Cream*, the abstract imagery of the moon melting is translated into the concrete action of "scooping the moon, one spoonful at a time." This approach maintains the original's fantasy while enhancing its acceptability for Chinese readers. This elastic mechanism of "retention–modification–reconstruction" effectively balances cultural fidelity with reader reception, offering a practical model for cross-cultural children's literature

translation. Moreover, the study highlights the importance of text-image collaboration in mitigating cultural loss during linguistic transfer.

5.3 Expanding the Theoretical Paradigm for Picture Book Translation

Based on empirical analysis, this study proposes three guiding principles for the translation of foregrounded features in children's literature: the Principle of Playfulness Preservation, the Principle of Phonological Reproduction, and the Principle of Cultural Adaptation. These principles are not only theoretically grounded but also offer clear methodological guidance.

Foregrounding theory proves especially useful in addressing multimodal translation issues in children's literature, particularly in analyzing the synergy between text and image. For instance, in *The Bathhouse Fairy*, the colloquial translation “仙女奶奶” (Fairy Granny) resonates with the visual imagery, reinforcing the cultural context. The significance of this study lies in verifying the applicability of foregrounding theory to children's literature translation and in promoting a shift from descriptive to systematic translation theory. Future research may build on this foundation by exploring how foregrounded features are transformed across cultural contexts, thereby contributing to a more comprehensive theoretical framework for the translation of children's literature.

6. DISCUSSION AND PROBLEM RESOLUTION

6.1 Foregrounded Representation of Language and Visual Elements in the Chinese Translation of Baek Hee-na's Picture Books

Baek Hee-na's picture books are distinguished by their linguistic creativity and visual experimentalism. Linguistically, her works are characterized by sensuousness, onomatopoeia, and colloquial expressions, while visually, they transcend the flatness of traditional picture book illustrations by constructing multidimensional spaces through “narrative objects” and “collages of real-life materials.” These foregrounded features in both language and image are vividly recreated in the Chinese translations.

For instance, in *The Bathhouse Fairy*, the Korean expression “휴~ 간신히 빠져나왔네!” (“Phew~ I barely made it out!”) uses the interjection “휴~” (“Phew~”) to express tension, with its breathy intonation adding a strong colloquial flavor. The Chinese translation “呼~总算逃出来了!” (“Phew~ finally escaped!”) successfully retains this emotional tone and rhythm, preserving the phonological foregrounding of the original. Moreover, the contrast between the fairy's retro bathing costume and the modern bathhouse setting in the original creates a sense of cultural dissonance, which is softened in the Chinese version by addressing the character as “仙女阿姨” (“Fairy Auntie”), thus fostering cultural intimacy for the target readership.

In *The Strange Visitor*, the repetitive knocking sound “똑똑똑” (“Knock knock knock”) is a case of quantitative foregrounding that builds narrative suspense. The translation “咚咚咚” (“Dong dong dong”) not only captures the rhythmic repetition but also aligns with the auditory sensibilities of Chinese-speaking children. Exclamations and exaggerated expressions such as “으악!” (“Eek!”) and “어머머머!” (“Oh my, oh my!”) are translated into “哎呀呀!” and “啊啊啊!” (“Oh no!” and “Ah ah ah!”), preserving semantic deviation and emotional nuance.

Visually, *Moon Ice Cream* creates an imaginative scene of scooping ice cream from the moon, with a soft color palette and a night-sky background. The repeated verbal phrase “퍼서, 또 퍼서” (“Scoop, and scoop again”) is echoed in the Chinese “舀一勺, 又舀一勺” (“Scoop a spoonful, then another spoonful”), reinforcing the synergy between text and image and

enhancing multimodal foregrounding. These translation strategies enable a faithful and vivid recreation of Baek's unique linguistic and visual style in Chinese.

6.2 Translator Strategies for Adapting Foregrounding to Target-Culture Reception

In cross-cultural translation, the “salience” inherent in foregrounding may be misinterpreted or diminished due to cultural differences, requiring translators to strike a balance between preserving the original foregrounded features and aligning with target-culture reception norms. Baek's foregrounded language and visual motifs are deeply rooted in Korean family culture and social psychology, whereas the cognitive habits of children in the target culture may differ significantly. This poses challenges for cultural transformation and reader adaptation.

In *The Bathhouse Fairy*, the Korean term “목욕탕” (“public bathhouse”) reflects a familiar experience for Korean children but may be foreign to Chinese readers. To address this, the translator retains the image of the bathhouse while using the affectionate term “仙女阿姨” (“Fairy Auntie”) to mitigate cultural unfamiliarity and foster contextual resonance. This “pragmatic softening” strategy preserves the fantasy while easing cultural comprehension.

In *The Strange Visitor*, suspense is built through repetition and onomatopoeia. The translator maintains this suspense in Chinese through ellipsis and rhythmic extension, as seen in “奇怪的客人越来越近了……” (“The strange visitor is getting closer...”), where the ellipsis mirrors the original tension and matches the anticipatory reading habits of Chinese children.

In *Moon Ice Cream*, rather than replacing the fantastical “eating the moon” concept with a culturally equivalent metaphor, the translator uses concrete imagery—“他一勺一勺舀着月亮” (“He scooped the moon, one spoonful at a time”)—to transform the abstract idea into a more accessible action. This approach reduces the cultural gap while retaining the original's fantastical nature. Thus, by flexibly adjusting translation strategies, the translator ensures the successful transmission of foregrounded features within the target cultural context.

6.3 Theoretical and Methodological Implications of Foregrounding Theory in Picture Book Translation

Foregrounding theory not only reveals the mechanisms of textual salience in source texts but also provides a practical framework for translators, particularly in the translation of multimodal texts. In the context of picture book translation, foregrounding theory helps translators identify marked language features such as grammatical deviation, semantic repetition, and sound symbolism. By categorizing these according to types of foregrounding, translators can formulate appropriate strategies to accurately convey the original's linguistic style and emotional tone.

Given that children are the primary readers, their heightened sensitivity to rhythm, sound play, and visual storytelling must be considered. Foregrounding theory's focus on psychological expectancy enhances the translator's ability to adapt language to children's cognitive and aesthetic preferences, thereby increasing the text's appeal and accessibility. In terms of image-text relationships, foregrounding theory underscores the coordinated prominence of language and visuals, equipping translators with methods to address issues of asymmetry and cultural dissonance. Strategies such as “linguistic supplementation of visual gaps” or “linguistic mitigation of visual conflict” enable narrative balance, allowing language and image to support each other and preserve the artistic and emotional expression of the original.

Thus, foregrounding theory serves not only as a tool for stylistic reconstruction but also as an effective mechanism for rebuilding the multimodal narrative structure of picture books. It offers theoretical insight and operational guidance for translation practice in this genre.

7. CONCLUSION

7.1 Dual Representation of Foregrounded Features and Innovative Translation Strategies

This study has demonstrated that both qualitative foregrounding (e.g., semantic deviation, grammatical variation) and quantitative foregrounding (e.g., lexical repetition, parallel structures) can be effectively recreated in the Chinese translations of Baek Hee-na's picture books. When translating features such as onomatopoeia and neologisms, translators adopted innovative methods like "defamiliarizing transliteration"—for example, rendering "아우울" ("Awoo-ool," a neologistic moan) as "啊呜噜" ("Ah-wu-loo")—and "cultural imagery reconstruction," such as translating "천달록" ("Cheondallok," a fantasy character) as "千月露" ("Thousand Moon Dew"). These strategies retain the original's unique linguistic artistry while aligning with Chinese children's cognitive habits.

In particular, the translation of onomatopoeia—such as "扑棱棱" ("flutter-flutter") to represent flapping sounds—effectively recreates auditory effects from the original. In handling culturally specific items, such as the word "토끼" ("rabbit"), the translation into "玉兔" ("Jade Rabbit") preserves the fantastical quality while embedding elements of Chinese mythology. These practices transcend conventional translation paradigms, reflecting the translator's deep understanding and flexible application of foregrounding theory.

7.2 Dynamic Mechanism of Cultural Adaptation

The study reveals that translators employed a stratified approach to cultural transformation. Universally appealing elements such as onomatopoeia and repetition were directly transplanted; culturally loaded items like the bathhouse were moderately contextualized; and core symbolic imagery, such as the moon, was rendered through concrete descriptions to reduce comprehension barriers.

For example, in *Moon Ice Cream*, the abstract imagery of the moon melting is translated into the concrete action of "舀着月亮" ("scooping the moon"), one spoonful at a time. This approach maintains the original's fantasy while enhancing its acceptability for Chinese readers. This elastic mechanism of "retention–modification–reconstruction" effectively balances cultural fidelity with reader reception, offering a practical model for cross-cultural children's literature translation. Moreover, the study highlights the importance of text-image collaboration in mitigating cultural loss during linguistic transfer.

7.3 Expanding the Theoretical Paradigm for Picture Book Translation

Based on empirical analysis, this study proposes three guiding principles for the translation of foregrounded features in children's literature: the Principle of Playfulness Preservation, the Principle of Phonological Reproduction, and the Principle of Cultural Adaptation. These principles are not only theoretically grounded but also offer clear methodological guidance.

Foregrounding theory proves especially useful in addressing multimodal translation issues in children's literature, particularly in analyzing the synergy between text and image. For instance, in *The Bathhouse Fairy*, the colloquial translation "仙女奶奶" ("Fairy Granny") resonates with the visual imagery, reinforcing the cultural context. The significance of this study lies in verifying the applicability of foregrounding theory to children's literature translation and in promoting a shift from descriptive to systematic translation theory. Future research may build on this foundation by exploring how foregrounded features are transformed

across cultural contexts, thereby contributing to a more comprehensive theoretical framework for the translation of children's literature.

REFERENCES

- Akhtar, N. (2023). Visual storytelling and the engagement of young readers: An empirical study of multimodal design in children's picturebooks. *Children's Literature in Education*, 54(1), 45–62. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10583-022-09485-3>
- Halliday, M. A. K. (1978). *Language as social semiotic: The social interpretation of language and meaning*. London: Edward Arnold.
- He, H. L. (2018). Foregrounding and novel translation: A case study of the translation of *The Grapes of Wrath*. *Masterpieces Review*, 34–37.
- Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1980). *Metaphors we live by*. University of Chicago Press.
- Leech, G. N. (1969). *A linguistic guide to English poetry*. London: Longman.
- Leech, G. N. (2001). *A linguistic guide to English poetry* (Chinese ed.). Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching Press.
- Li, C. (2004). Onomatopoeia and language style in children's literature. *Research on Children's Literature*, (2), 45–48.
- Mukarovsky, J. (1964). *Standard language and poetic language*. Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press.
- Poix, G. (2021). Creative language deviations and humor in French children's literature: A multimodal approach. *International Research in Children's Literature*, 14(2), 182–197. <https://doi.org/10.3366/ircl.2021.0381>
- Tian, H. (2008). Syntactic features in children's literature. *Journal of Huainan Normal University*, (4), 77–80.
- Wang, Z. P., & Feng, X. R. (2023). A translation study of foregrounded language of character in *Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out*. *Journal of Qiqihar University (Philosophy & Social Sciences)*, 116–120.
- Xia, X. Y. (2017). Foregrounding features in Joan Didion's *Play It As It Lays*: A quantitative analysis. *Foreign Languages and Translation*, 41–47.
- Xu, L. Y., & Zheng, X. (2023). A study on children's literature translation from the perspective of reception aesthetics: A case study of Ren Rongrong's version of *Charlotte's Web*. *Journal of Hebei Energy Institute of Vocation and Technology*, 23(4), 38–42.
- Xu, X. X., & Qi, W. H. (2024). A comparative study of two Chinese translations of *Charlotte's Web* from the perspective of foregrounding theory. *English Square*, 2024(03), 36–39.
- Zhang, T. (n.d.). Insights from foregrounding theory on novel translation studies: A case study of *Animal Farm* (pp. 18–28).
- Zhao, C. C. (2021). A study on the representation of foregrounding in English-to-Chinese translation of children's literature: A case study of Cao Wenxuan's works (Master's thesis, North China Electric Power University).