

“It beseems me not to say”: Irony as a device to design a dual audience in translations for children

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the use of the definition of irony offered by relevance theory in its capacity as a strategy to address two different audiences in translations for children. Given that one of the main aims of children’s literature is the socialization of the target audience, translations for children are governed by dominant social, cultural and educational norms. To communicate their awareness of those norms, translators not only address child readers but also adult mediators in their translations. They convey their attitudes toward both the text and its new audience with inter- and intratextual jokes going over the heads of the child readers. On the basis of English and Dutch translations of the medieval beast epic *Reynard the Fox*, three ways of using irony as audience design will be demonstrated: (1) irony to expurgate the story, (2) irony to reverse the moral message of the tale, and (3) irony to comment on the discourse surrounding the source text.

KEYWORDS: audience design, children literature, irony, literary translation, relevance theory.