

# FROM FAIRY TALES TO YOUNG ADULT: A REVIEW OF *THE ROUTLEDGE HANDBOOK OF TRANSLATION AND YOUNG AUDIENCES*

LIJUAN XU & JUAN ZHANG

This review evaluates *The Routledge Handbook of Translation and Young Audiences* (2025), co-edited by Michal Borodo and Jorge Díaz-Cintas, a landmark volume that formally establishes Translation for Young Audiences (TYA) as an independent discipline. The authors analyze the handbook's contributions across theoretical, methodological, and practical dimensions. Its primary significance lies in driving a paradigm shift from text-centric to audience-centered approaches, introducing the "agentic reader" and "double dialogue" models. By integrating corpus stylistics, neurocognitive eye-tracking, and multimodal analysis, the handbook propels TYA into a rigorous empirical stage. Ultimately, this work is of profound importance for redefining translation as a creative, intergenerational cultural practice within contemporary media and society.

**KEYWORDS:** TYA; Paradigm Shift; Interdisciplinary; Multimodality; Agentic Reader

## Introduction

Against the backdrop of digital transformation, the cultural consumption patterns of young audiences have undergone a radical metamorphosis. Translation, as a vital mechanism for cross-cultural mediation, must now adapt to these shifting demographics and media environments. *The Routledge Handbook of Translation and Young Audiences* (2025), co-edited by Michal Borodo and Jorge Díaz-Cintas, synthesizes the contributions of 47 scholars from 25 countries. The volume transcends traditional literary translation boundaries, advocating for a "young audience-centered" research agenda. Its publication serves as a formal landmark for the maturation of TYA as an independent academic field.

## Content Overview

The *Handbook* constructs a comprehensive knowledge system organized into five sections and 35 chapters, bridging theory, text, medium, and practice.

Part I (Ch. 1–8) establishes theoretical foundations. It innovatively proposes the "agentic reader" (Ch. 1), breaking the paternalistic view of children as passive recipients. Chapter 2 utilizes Bakhtin's dialogism to build a "double dialogue" model, balancing the translator's fidelity to the author with their responsibility toward the child's cognitive

expectations. Chapter 7 introduces neurocognitive data via eye-tracking experiments, providing empirical evidence for how children process translated content.

Part II (Ch. 9–14) re-examines literary practices. It delves into archival research on ideological interventions in 20th-century Poland and analyzes Indigenous adaptations, such as the Australian Pitjantjatjara version of *Alice in Wonderland*, which utilizes cultural relocation strategies (e.g., replacing the White Rabbit with a kangaroo).

Part III (Ch. 15–21) focuses on Audiovisual Translation (AVT). It contrasts the localization of *Frozen* across 12 languages and explores the “dynamic graded subtitling system” (Ch. 18), which significantly enhances comprehension for D/deaf children by adjusting reading speeds (80–120 words/minute).

Part IV (Ch. 22–29) explores emerging media, including word-image intertextuality in picture books and the complex localization workflows of video games.

Part V (Ch. 30–35) envisions the digital future, discussing participatory translation in *Genshin Impact*, Harry Potter fan communities in China, and the ethical frameworks of “co-creation” where children participate in translation decision-making.

## Critical Evaluation

As a significant milestone in the field of translation studies, *The Routledge Handbook of Translation and Young Audiences* demonstrates groundbreaking scholarly value across three dimensions: theoretical construction, methodological innovation, and practical application. The volume systematically fills a long-standing lacuna in research on translation for children and adolescents (TYA) and promotes a fundamental paradigm expansion from a traditional, text-centric focus to an interdisciplinary, audience-oriented perspective. The following sections evaluate the handbook’s contributions within these three dimensions and discuss the future trajectories it establishes for the field.

## Theoretical Evolution: The Triadic Model

The handbook shatters the adult-centric bias that views children’s translation as a “simplified form” of adult work. Drawing on Oittinen (2000), it asserts that “situation and purpose are inherent in all translation”. This theoretical breakthrough integrates Hermans’ (2019) framework of translation ethics, emphasizing that translators must assume ethical responsibility for the child reader’s cognitive level by adopting a “child-cognitive-development-oriented” strategy. This ethical turn signifies a shift from treating children as “miniature adults” to recognizing their distinct audience needs.

By integrating Bakhtin’s dialogism, the volume proposes a “double dialogue” model, where translators balance the artistic dialogue with the author and the anticipatory interaction with the child reader. This reflects a transition from a binary “Text–Translator” structure to a triadic “Text–Reader–Medium” structure (Bassnett, 2014), highlighting the impact of multimodal elements on children’s meaning construction.

Furthermore, the application of “Third Space” theory (Bhabha, 1994) highlights children’s cultural hybridity. This is exemplified in the Pitjantjatjara Indigenous translation of *Alice in Wonderland*, where the White Rabbit is replaced by a kangaroo to align with the

child's cognitive framework (Malmkjær). The handbook critically expands functionalism, advocating for a "uniquely adaptive approach" (Oittinen, 2000) rather than mechanical equivalence, as seen in Danish Winnie-the-Pooh translations (Malmkjær, 2025) that prioritize narrative expectations over formal fidelity.

### **Methodological Rigor: The Empirical Turn**

The volume pushes TYA toward experimental science. Corpus stylistics (Malmkjær, 2025) quantifies the "readability first" principle, showing a 37% reduction in sentence length and 52% drop in compound sentences in Danish translations. Cognitive science tools like eye-tracking (Lozano, 2025) provide neurocognitive proof that cultural adaptation reduces fixation duration by 19% and increases comprehension accuracy by 23% for children aged 6–8.

Additionally, the multimodal analysis model (Kaindl, 2025; Zanettin, 2014) and ethnographic approaches to fan translation (Chan, 2025; Venuti, 2008) offer a robust toolkit for analyzing how images, typography, and online collaboration reconstruct the translator's role in the digital age.

### **Practical Innovation: Accessibility and Participation**

In practice, the handbook demonstrates that cultural adaptation is a spectrum based on audience cognition (Minutella, 2025). Its humanistic contribution is evident in Zárates's (2025) dynamic graded subtitling, which improved comprehension for d/Deaf children by 55%. Regarding AI empowerment, Fu (2025) and the handbook both emphasize a human-AI collaboration where AI handles linguistic simplification while human translators ensure affective and cultural fidelity. Finally, it highlights inclusive practices like "multisensory translations" for visually impaired children, embodying social inclusion.

### **Limitations and Future Prospects**

Despite its achievements, the handbook's limitations offer insights into future research. First, a regional imbalance persists. As Peng (2024) notes, the demand for localized theoretical shaping in China creates a tension with the handbook's Western-centric focus. While Hou (2025) illustrates that social systems and translation are mutually constitutive, the volume overlooks critical contexts like China's "Double Reduction" policy or Arab religious adaptations. Since translation is a dynamic "knowledge reconstruction" rather than static transfer (Wu, 2019), future studies should employ semiotic methodology to examine how diverse child readers act as "interpretants" (Wang, 2019). This aligns with the "Sublimation (Huajing)" theory, which Li (2025) describes as an open, evolving system—a perspective essential for localized TYA iterations.

Second, technological ethics require deeper engagement. The handbook under-addresses algorithmic bias and data privacy—critical issues for minors in the AI era. Future work must establish ethical frameworks to evaluate AI's impact on children's decoding processes. Finally, theoretical integration remains fragmented. Strengthening the "theoretical

grafting" between semiotics and translation will help build a more cohesive model of translation as knowledge reconstruction (Wu, 2019), facilitating the organic generation of non-Western paradigms in this complex, transmedia field.

## Conclusion

The handbook's primary value lies in its "intergenerational dialogue" model, positioning children as active co-creators. This elevates translation beyond linguistic conversion into a creative ethical practice (Liu & Xu, 2022) of cultural inheritance. By constructing a "Theory–Medium–Culture–Technology" coordinate system, the volume remains an essential compass for understanding the future of cross-cultural communication.

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**Lijuan Xu** is a postgraduate student at Huazhong Agricultural University, specializing in audiovisual translation.

**Juan Zhang**, PhD, is an Associate Professor at the School of Foreign Languages, Huazhong Agricultural University. Her research focuses on audiovisual translation and cultural mediation. She holds a joint PhD from Central China Normal University and UCL Centre for Translation Studies. A visiting scholar at UCLA, Zhang is active in the Translators Association of China and Hubei Translators Association. She has published many papers in top journals and serves as a reviewer for various international publications. Zhang has led multiple research projects, including National Social Science Fund and Hubei Provincial grants. She has received awards for outstanding papers and frequently gives keynote speeches at academic conferences.

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