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Metaphors and Translation

A Study of Figurative Language in the Works of Astrid Lindgren

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to find out if there are any differences in the use of metaphors and similes in children's literature translated from Swedish into English. With two books selected by the same Swedish author, three groups of metaphors were studied -- structural, orientational and ontological metaphors -- as well as two groups of similes -- same image and similar image similes. The result showed that the Swedish versions of the two books contained more metaphors than the English versions, whereas the similes occurred to the same extent in both languages.

Keywords: Lindgren, children's literature, metaphors, similes, translation

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1. Introduction

This essay will be dealing with the translation of books written for children, specifically such translated from Swedish (the source language, SL) to English (the target language, TL). However, translation of books is a broad area no matter what kind of book it is, so this essay will be concentrating mainly on how metaphors and similes are treated when a text changes languages.

The main reason for choosing this area is the ability of such figurative constructions to give life and colour to whichever language they are used in. Yet, since not all languages have the same expressions when referring to and describing a subject, the differences that result from translation pose as an interesting topic of study.

1.1 Theoretical Background

There has not been much research done in the area of translation of metaphors in children's literature, no matter if it comes to metaphors in children's literature or translation of metaphors in that genre. Due to this, there will be no formal presentation of other people's theories on the subject of this essay. However, there are some studies on the translation of children's books and works done on metaphors in general, which I will use for references instead.

As regards metaphors in general, there is, for example, the work by Glucksberg (2001), examining how spoken and written language is portrayed figuratively in different types of text. In this context, he claims that figurative language has the same kind of linguistic and pragmatic operations as regular literal language, and that it therefore should been treated equivalently. Metaphor being a major topic of his work, he puts forward the theory that metaphors create new concepts in the original meaning of a word, and that a word's meaning extends into a wider spectrum than originally intended when a metaphorical expression is used. Another relevant study is by Kövecses (2002), who aims to give an explanatory survey of the different categories of metaphors. In his book, Kövecses presents important central parts of studies done on metaphors, and how the understanding of figurative language impacts on our views on culture. Lakoff & Johnson (1980), ground-breaking study is also topical in this context. In particular, they state that metaphorical usage describes how people view the world and that metaphors add a colourful aspect to our language. An action, emotion or object can thus be viewed differently depending on the expression used in the description of it.

Turning to the subject of translation proper, Newmark (1991), provides a useful overview of the translation of different texts. Among other things, he discusses the role of words and discourse in translation, claiming that there is a difference between cultural and universal aspects of languages. He also argues that translation is critical in exposing a language's culture and literature.

Finally, Klingberg (1986), represents another study on translation, in this case on children's literature, where problems occurring during the translation process are identified, and where examples are given of both good and bad solutions to them.

1.2 Aim

As already noted, the intention of this essay is to study to what extent translation from Swedish to English affects the usage of metaphors and similes as they occur in children's books. To do this in a rational manner I have identified a set of research questions that will provide guidance in the different phases of the work, namely the following:

- what kinds of metaphors and similes does the author use in the target material?
- which English metaphors have been used in the translation to replace the Swedish metaphors?
- does the translation retain the original meaning of the metaphor; if not, how does it differ?
- do the metaphors belong to the same metaphorical group in both languages?

1.3 Method and material

The two books that will be used in the study were written by the Swedish author Astrid Lindgren during the 20th century, the first one being *Pippi Longstocking* (*Pippi Långstrump*, 1945) and the second one *The Six Bullerby Children* (*Alla vi barn i Bullerbyn*, 1946). In order to make a comparison of the two languages, the SL books will be read simultaneously with the TL books. When referring to these books, abbreviations may occur to increase the text flow while reading: *The Six Bullerby Children* – SBC; *Alla vi barn i Bullerbyn* – ABB; *Pippi Longstocking* – ELP; *Pippi Långstrump* – SLP.

2. Background

In this section, a short presentation will be given of the author of the chosen literature and of the analysed books.

2.1 The author Astrid Lindgren

As commonly recognized, Astrid Lindgren and her books have made a significant contribution to the world of children's literature. As such, they have been a part of almost all Swedes' childhood since the publication of Astrid Lindgren's first book *Britt-Mari lättar sitt hjärta* (1944). However, the reason for her worldwide fame is primarily the books about Pippi Longstocking, which came a year later.

Lindgren was born in Småland, a region in the south of Sweden, in November 1907 on a small farm where she spent her youth. At the age of 18 she found herself pregnant, but as she did not want to get married, she moved to Stockholm. She placed her son Lars in a foster family which she regularly visited. A couple of years later she met her future husband, whom she married in 1931, and in connection to that she also brought her son back home. Later on the couple had a daughter, Karin.

In 1941 Karin Lindgren came up with the name Pippi, and Astrid Lindgren then started to tell her daughter and friends about the child Pippi. However, it was not until her daughter was 10 years old that Astrid Lindgren wrote down the stories and sent the manuscript to a publishing house. Unfortunately, the publisher refused to publish the book, and Lindgren then started on a new book which would become her debut as a writer, but this time with a different publishing house, Rabén & Sjögren. They also decided to publish the story about Pippi, and suddenly the book had become a success, selling over 20 000 copies in just two week's time.

Ever since then and until her death in 2002, Lindgren wrote over one hundred different stories, and all in all they have been translated into no less than 90 different languages. However, Lindgren was not just a writer. She also took a stand in different issues in society, something that can be seen in some of her books. In her early days, she was engaged in the struggle for children's rights and social justice; later on, she fought for the need to reduce the use of nuclear power in Sweden, and for the importance of animal care, especially farm animals.

2.1.1 Pippi Longstocking

The story about Pippi is one of Lindgren's most famous books worldwide. It is about a little girl that lives all by herself in a big villa in a small town. In the house next door, there are two children, a boy and a girl, who become Pippi's friends and together they do a lot of exciting things. Pippi often runs into trouble because of her manners and her approach to life, which

are not acceptable to the grown-ups in her town. Pippi's life and the things that she does are some of the reasons for the popularity of this book.

2.1.2 The Six Bullerby Children

This book is a portrait of a more idyllic country in a time long gone, in particular for those who read the book or saw the movies in the last twenty or thirty years. As the books title reveals, it is a story about six small children, who are about ten years old. They are neighbours and live in a very small village that contains only their three houses. The reader is given access to the daily lives of these children in a variety of situations and adventures, such as sleeping in the barns and haunting each other, struggling in snowstorms on the way home from school, getting pets and birthday gifts as well as other fun little adventures.

3. Figurative language and translation

Let us next turn to the field of translation, including a brief look at metaphors and similes per se. Thus, the coming sections will deal with the art of translation as such, as well as noted similarities and differences between the two types of figurative language already mentioned, all in order to increase the understanding of the properties of such expression.

3.1 Translation

When it comes to translation of books, no matter what genre, there are clearly some things that the translator needs to be observant of. For example, the translated text should contain basically the same information as the original text, and it should have the same literary qualities as the original. Further, if the language used in the source language (SL) is of a more classy variety, the target language (TL) used should be on the same stylistic level, and if there is a lot of figurative language this should be transferred to the TL (e.g. Lindquist 1989:67).

It was not until the last few decades that translation developed into a linguistic discipline. Newmark (1988:9), for example, states that translation has to follow certain rules with regards to paragraphs, sentences, cultural terms and proper names. In another of his works, he continues by claiming that when translating a text one has to use some sense when it comes to choosing the right word in the target language. In his vein, "content-words (most nouns, adjectives, verbs and adverbs) normally have certain autonomy as units of translation. They cannot, and must not, be translated by words which, when retranslated into the source language, could not remotely reproduce them." (Newmark 1991:25). Thus, all this points to

the fact that translators need to be true to the original text, and keep changes down to a minimum.

Given the fact that the present study will focus on the translation of metaphors for children, it is of interest to note that there are just a few studies available in this field (e.g. Klingberg 1986:7). When translating books for a young audience, the translator is in need of a very good knowledge of both the target language and the source language, since figurative language is common in this type of text. Clearly, the translator has to make the book understandable for the children through the target language, which might lead to some minor changes in the text. Those changes can deal with certain expressed values, but it might also concern cultural aspects. For example, proper names for people and places might be altered to make the book more in tune with the TL culture. This need thus breaks the rules governing the translation of books for adults, where the translation is generally required to stay true to the original.

3.2 Metaphors

A metaphor can consist of a word, an entire sentence, an idiom or a certain collocation. According to the *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictonary* (CALD), it is "a word or phrase which is frequently used with another word or phrase, in a way that sounds correct to people who have spoken the language all their lives, but might not be expected from the meaning". The word itself comes from the Greek word *metphora*, which is derived from the words *meta* 'over' and *pherein* 'to carry' (e.g. Hawkes 1989:1). Thus, 'to carry over' is a good way of describing what happens when one uses metaphorical expressions, basically saying that an object is transferred into describing some other object. In this context, Kövecses (2002) makes the following claim:

> In the cognitive linguistic view, metaphor is defined as understanding one conceptual domain in terms of another conceptual domain […] The two domains that participate in conceptual metaphor have special names. The conceptual domain from which we draw metaphorical expressions to understand another conceptual domain is called source domain, while the conceptual domain that is understood this way is the target domain. The target domain is the domain that we try to understand through the source domain.

The source domain tends to be more concrete and is therefore often used to describe more abstract objects. Since some metaphorical statements can not be interpreted literally, the listener or reader must look for a "hidden" meaning, i.e. to try to see what lies behind an expression. This can cause a considerable problem for second language learners, since most

metaphorical expressions are idioms tied to a certain language, and may not be easily translated into another language.

As with most things, metaphors can be divided into smaller categories such as structural/conceptual metaphors, orientational metaphors and ontological metaphors, all of which are categories that will be studied in this essay.

- Structural metaphors are the most common ones (e.g. Kövecses 2002, Hawkes 1989), occurring so often in everyday speech that the usage often goes unnoticed. They typically involve concrete objects describing abstract notions, as in the following example from Kövecses (2002:30):

  > Argument is War: I *defended* my argument.
  > Love is a Journey: We'll just have to *go our separate ways*.
  > Theories are Buildings: We have to *construct* a new theory.
  > Ideas are Food: I can't *digest* all these facts.
  > Social Organizations are Plants: The company is *growing* fast.

- Orientational metaphors deal with spatial orientation (e.g. up-down, in-out, deep-shallow). In this capacity, they are not arbitrary and can differ from culture to culture. As an example of orientational metaphors, consider the following extract from Lakoff (1980:15):

  > CONSCIOUS IS UP; UNCONSCIOUS IS DOWN
  > Get *up*. Wake *up*. I'm *up* already. He *rises* early in the
  > morning. He *fell* asleep. He *dropped* off to sleep. He's *under*
  > hypnosis. He *sank* into a coma.
  > Physical basis: Humans and most other mammals sleep
  > lying down and stand up when they are awaken.

- Finally, there is also the category of ontological metaphor. Common within this sphere is personification, where human qualities are assigned to dead objects, as in the next set of examples (Kövecses 2002:35):

  > Life has cheated me.
  > Inflation is eating up our profits.
  > Cancer finally caught up with him.
  > The computer went dead on me.

One thing that has to be clearly stated when it comes to metaphorical expressions is that they are usually not arbitrary, a fact which can cause difficulties when translating between culturally different languages. More specifically, different cultures have different views on things, potentially leading to a changed meaning of the metaphor. Another thing that is worth

mentioning here is that individual knowledge and earlier experience weigh into our perception of metaphorical usage.

3.3 Similes

While metaphors typically transfer the meaning of an expression, similes rather proposes transference, explaining it by means of terms such as *like* or *as if* (e.g. Hawkes 1989:3). This means that while metaphors use the qualities from one object to describe another object, similes show a more visual relationship between the objects. An illustration of this is found in the following sentences: *She had rosy cheeks* vs. *Her cheeks had the same colour as roses*. Put differently, "a metaphor is an indirect comparison, whereas a simile is a direct comparison" (Glucksberg 2001:29). To correctly understand and interpret a simile, the reader or listener has to understand the ground for the comparison, or as Glucksberg (2001:30) has stated it, the translator has to recognize in which regard two items are alike.

Not surprisingly, also similes can cause problems for translators, in particular when such expressions can differ from culture to culture. This is to say that the target language may have a completely different expression for something as compared to the source language. Newmark (1991:32) states that the meaning of an expression in the source language, which is explained through comparison, can only be translated indirectly and at the same time offers a reason as to why the item is used, unless there exists an item in the TL that can produce a compensatory effect.

Examples of this can be found in expressions in English that do not translate straight off into Swedish. However, there are also a lot of expressions that are the same in the two languages, due to the fact that the two cultures are quite similar.

	English	Swedish
Similar:	As easy as pie	Lätt som en plätt
	As happy as a lark	Glad som en lärka
	As stubborn as a mule	Envis som en åsna
Different:	As old as the hills	Gammal som gatan
	Sleep as the dead	Sova som en stock

As indicated by these pairs, similes based on, for example, animals seem to be the same in both languages.

4. Results and Analysis

In this section, the results of the present investigation will be accounted for. Thus, I will start by discussing some general aspects of the translation of the selected books, and then go on to present the specific findings relating to metaphors and similes

4.1 Translation

While reading the two books, both the Swedish and the English versions, I was struck by the general lack of changes made to the translated book in order to adapt it to the TL's culture. This is especially noteworthy considering Klingberg's (1986) claim that the translation of children's literature is often altered in order to increase the understanding of its readership. If we look at the titles, for example, it turns out that there are only small changes in them.

Example 1	SL	TL
	Pippi Långstrump	Pippi Longstocking
	Alla vi barn i Bullerbyn	The Six Bullerby Children

The change that occurs in the first book is a direct translation from SL to TL, and the change of language does clearly not alter the meaning of the title.

The title of the second book is also altered, but here the change is more significant. While the Swedish title only says that there are several children living in Bullerbyn, the English title actually specifies the number of children in the village, i.e. six.

Turning next to the personal names in *Pippi Longstocking*, we can note that there are several changes made to the names of the different characters in the book. However, these changes do not concern the three main characters, i.e. Pippi, Tommy and Annika. Rather, the name changes that transpire are as follows:

Example 2	SL	TL
	Ville	Willie
	Petter	Peter
	Starke Adolf	Mighty Adolf

Obviously, the first two, *Ville* and *Petter*, are changed to more English-sounding names, but at the same time keep a similar form. *Adolf*, on the other hand, keeps the spelling of the name but changes the descriptive adjective. The translator could have written *Strong Adolf* but the adjective *mighty* stands for *very large* and *powerful* (cf. CALD), which makes the change understandable, but at the same time, in my opinion, the word *mighty* sounds more important, than the word *strong*.

In *The Six Bullerby Children*, there are also a few name changes. The difference here, however, is that the changes occur in the names of the main male characters:

Example 3	SL	TL
	Lasse	Lars
	Olle	Ollie
	Bosse	Pip

As we can see, all the main male characters have got new names. The name *Lasse* is changed to its original form, Lars, although both names are likely to feel strange to an English-speaking child. Arguably, since the change done on the other names is rather significant, Lasse's name could have been changed as well to a more English-sounding name. *Olle*, or *Ollie*, depending on the version, is not subject to a significant change, however. The name subjected to a radical alternation, rather, is *Bosse*. His name, unlike Lasse, did not get its original form, i.e. *Bo*, but was changed into a completely different name, i.e. Pip. Unfortunately, the reasons as to why these major and minor changes occurred during the translation are still unknown.

Abridgements and deletions

Abridgements and deletions in translated books can occur in different ways. These may consist of small changes in the way of writing a dialogue in the TL's culture, or be due to the translator being given certain limiting conditions, such as a set number of pages in the TL book.

In *Pippi Longstocking*, there is one scene that has been abridged with three sentences missing as far as I could distinguish. Other than this, the book seems very close to the original. In *The Six Bullerby Children*, on the other hand, it turns out that, while the chapters that are translated follow the SL text very closely, there are two chapters in ABB that are not included in SBC. The excluded chapters deal with the children's going back to school after the summer, and with them playing dress-up. Even if the exclusion of these chapters is not very noticeable, the readers of the TL book miss out on two of the adventures, and the plot goes directly from high summer to a winter snowstorm.

4.2 Metaphors in Pippi Longstocking

To simplify the presentation of the result from the analysis, this section has been divided into smaller units covering the main types of metaphors studied (cf. Section 3.2)

Thus, after the metaphors data had been collected, they were divided into different groups depending on their qualities. While, according to Kövecses (2002), the most commonly used type in general is structural metaphors, the present study shows that ontological metaphors were in fact more frequent in Lindgren's book.
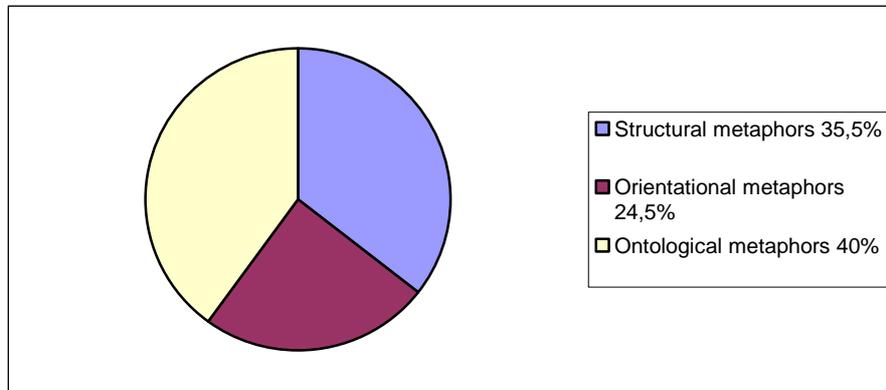

Diagram 1. *Metaphors in Pippi Långstrump*

The diagram of Swedish metaphors above can be compared to the diagram that illustrates the relationship between the different groups in the English version of the book.
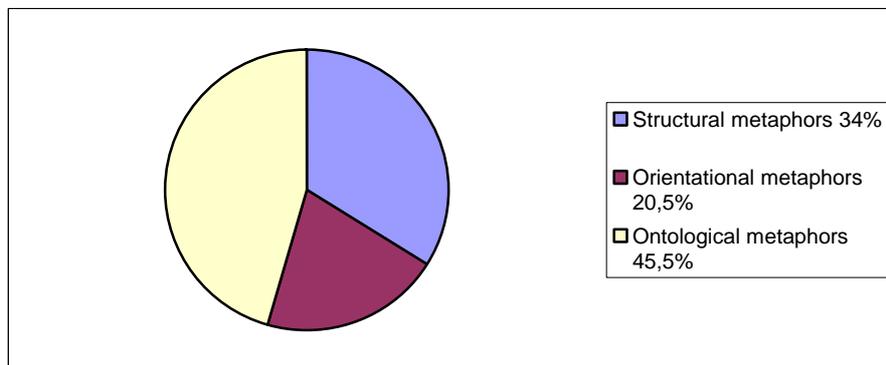

Diagram 2. *Metaphors in Pippi Longstocking*

As we can see, the frequency order is the same for the three types of metaphor in both languages. However, there are differences in the proportions, mainly to the effect that ontological metaphors make up an even larger group in the target language than in the source language.

Group A: Structural Metaphors

As already noted, the structural metaphors can be explained as concrete objects, used to describe abstract notions. In the chapters studied here, the structural metaphors only account for 35,5 % of all the metaphors used. In this group of metaphors, just as in the other ones,

there are some metaphorical phrases that do not have a corresponding expression in the English version. Interestingly enough, there are also phrases in the English version that do not derive from a metaphor in the source language, as in the following example:

Example 4	SL	TL
	…som låg i vaggan och skrek (5)	…lying in her cradle and *howling* (2)

The part of the sentence that is seen in the example above demonstrates that the notion of the sound is emphasised differently in the two languages, which can be explained by differences in culture and idiomatic expressions.

Example 5	SL	TL
	Det var *kolsvart* (123)	It was *pitch dark* (116)
	..som nu äntligen vågade *öppna munnen* (11)	…who at last had *found her tongue* (6)

Even if a metaphorical phrase has been translated into a metaphor in the target language, cultural differences make certain that there are variations in the figurative language that makes up the expressions. However, among the structural metaphors that belong in this group, 35 % have a similar meaning, and one can therefore see a similarity in their cultural background.

Example 6	SL	TL
	…hade de *flockat* sig omkring Pippi (24)	…the whole lot had *flocked* round Pippi. (17)
	…när hon *plöjde* fram genom vattnet (61)	…as she *ploughed* forward through the water (53)

Out of the metaphors found in the chapters studied in *Pippi Långstrump*, only 78 % were translated into a metaphorical expression in *Pippi Longstocking*. There are metaphors in EPL that lack a counterpart in the source language; of the existing English metaphors, 13,5 % do not appear in the SL version of the book. Both version of Pippi contains metaphors that are missing in the other version, although there are still more Swedish metaphorical expressions than there are English.

Group B: Orientational Metaphors

As explained before, most orientational metaphors have to do with spatial orientation (up-down, in-out and deep-shallow). Among the ones that were located in the texts, some were

only metaphorical in Swedish, while others had this figurative nature only in the English version. And quite expectedly, some sentences or phrases had a metaphorical meaning in both languages, as illustrated by the following example:

Example 7	SL	TL
	…hennes mamma nu *satt uppe* i himlen… (5)	…her mother now lived somewhere up in Heaven… (2)

The next example given here portrays differences when it comes to how the respective cultures view unexpected visitors. The English phrase *drop in*, however, can nowadays be seen more frequently in the Swedish society, to an extent, that it has been made into a Swedish slang expression, i.e. *att droppa in*.

Example 8	SL	TL
	Så trevligt att ni tittade in, sa hon (18)	How nice of you to *drop in*, she said (13)

As in the first two examples, and also in the coming one these metaphors all deal with the act of doing things.

Example 9	SL	TL
	…brukade de ibland *stå och hänga* vid staketet… (8-9)	…they would sometimes *hang* on the fence… (4)

The statistics for this type of metaphor showed that only 24,5 % of the phrases were orientational metaphors. Again, these instances can be divided into smaller groups depending on the type of translation. Of the orientational metaphors that occurred in the investigated chapters, only 81 % of the Swedish metaphors had a counterpart in their English versions. Of these, 27 % of the Swedish metaphors had been translated to a phrase with the same meaning, while 29 % had a very different meaning after the translation.

Group C: Ontological Metaphors

This group of metaphors, as mentioned before, is common with processes of personification. Specifically, human qualities tend to be given to dead objects in this category, but there is also the possibility of qualities of inanimate objects being used to describe animate objects. Somewhat surprisingly, this group was the most frequent type in the chapters studied. These metaphors, just as was the case in the other two groups, show instances that only exist in

Swedish, and others that only exist in English. However, and naturally enough, many of the ontological metaphors cover both languages, as shown in the following example:

Example 10   SL   TL
              …sa Pippi hotfullt och *kavlade*   …threatened Pippi, and rolled
              upp ärmarna… (53)   up her sleeves… (45)

As seen in the example above, there are also qualities of inanimate objects given to human occurrences, such as the Swedish expression *kavla upp ärmarna*, which in essence means to roll up one's sleeves, but the Swedish verb *kavla* derives from *kavel* 'rolling pin' and means that one is prepared to work hard for something. In the following examples, it is shown that many of the metaphorical expressions found have a very similar counterpart in the target language:

Example 11   SL   TL
              Det stod där möblerat och färdigt   It stood there furnished and
              och *väntade* på henne. (6)   ready and *waiting* for her. (3)

              Ibland var det eken som *tog*   Now and then it was the oak
              emot dem (55)   that *caught* them (47)

              Ur Skyskrapans fönster *trängde*   From the windows of the
              flammande lågor (107)   Skyscraper leaping flames
                                                 forced their way (100)

Of the cases that belong to this group, the metaphors with human qualities given to dead objects scored the highest percentage, 75 %. The translated metaphors in the target language covered only 62,5 % of the ones that were found in SPL, implying as many as 37,5% of the Swedish ontological metaphors were not translated. This group of metaphors also had a higher ratio in the chapters that were studied in SPL than the chapters in the TL book. Of the metaphors that were found in EPL, as many as 25 % did not have a SL counterpart. Out of the metaphorical expressions that were found in SPL and had a counterpart in EPL, 66,5 % had a very similar form, while 26,5 % had a very different form.

4.3 Metaphors in The Six Bullerby Children

As with the books about Pippi, the metaphors found in the studied chapters in *Alla vi barn i Bullerby*, as well as the translated version *The Six Bullerby Children*, were divided into different smaller units covering the main types of metaphors studied. Thus, compared with the findings from the Swedish book, this diagram shows that ABB contains fewer orientational and ontological metaphors, but more structural metaphors. Thus, these results are in line with

the theory presented by Hawkes (1989), namely that the most commonly used type in general is the structural metaphor.
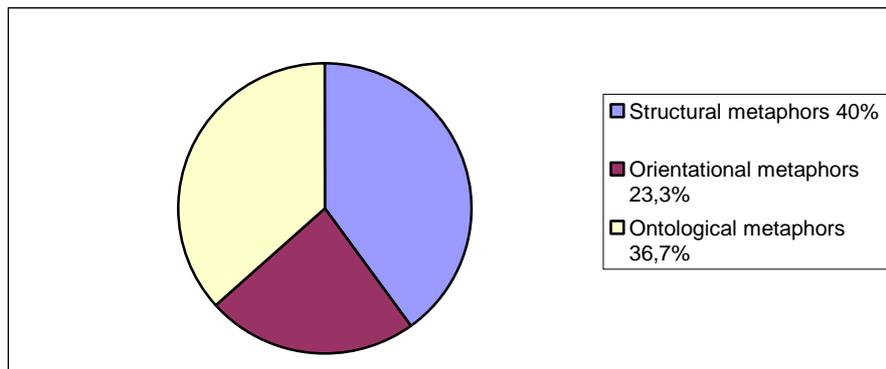

Diagram 3. *Metaphors in Alla vi barn i Bullerbyn*

When comparing this diagram with the one illustrating the metaphors in the English version of the book, it may be noted that it differs with regards to the type of metaphor used. Hence, while the frequency order is the same for the three types of metaphor in both languages, there are differences in the proportions: in the TL book the structural metaphors are even more common than they are in the source language.
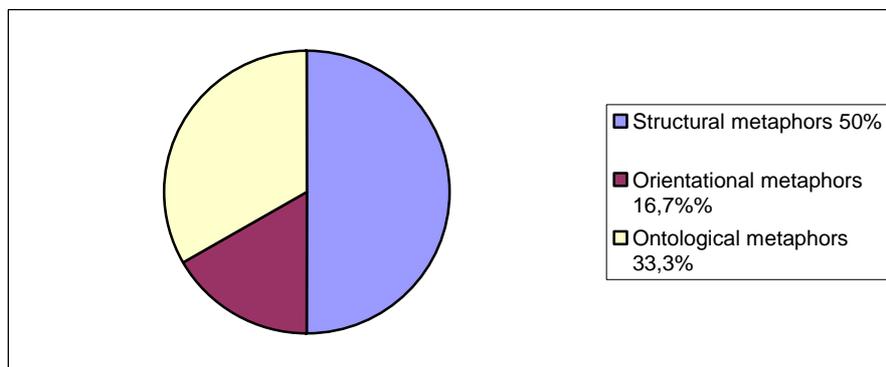

Diagram 4. *Metaphors in The Six Bullerby Children*

The fact that a large part of the original text was removed from the translation adds some difficulties when it comes to the comparison of metaphors in both languages. Many of the original metaphors in ABB thus lack a counterpart in the translated version.

Group A: Structural Metaphors

The structural metaphor is the only group that contains the same proportion of metaphors in Swedish and English. Interestingly enough, this fact does not mean that all the Swedish metaphors were translated into the target language. Rather, closer inspection reveals that only 41,7 % of the Swedish structural metaphors were translated, implying that 58,3 % of the

metaphors in SBC do not derive from a metaphor in the original version, as seen in the second phrase of the following examples:

Example 12	SL	TL
	…trodde att *hjärtat ramlat ner i magen*… (56)	…he thought that his *heart had fallen down into his tummy*… (52)
	…till sist blev Fröken orolig… (98)	…our teacher *grew* anxious… (84)

Group B: Orientational Metaphors

When it comes to the metaphors in ABB, and given that the translator of the book deleted much of the original text, the statistics show that no less than 42,8 % of the orientational metaphors have not been translated. Of the English metaphors that belong to this group, about half do not have a Swedish counterpart.

Example 13	SL	TL
	…och jag *satte i mig* chokladen… (18)	…and I drank my chocolate… (15)
	Dom *satte* jag också i hyllan… (21)	I *stood them up* on the shelf… (20)

Group C: Ontological Metaphors

The statistics for this type of metaphor, finally, show that only 54,5 % of the original metaphors were translated. Out of the translated metaphors, only 33,4 % have a similar form in both languages. One explanation of this can be that these metaphors are more affected by cultural differences. Of the English metaphors found, 25 % did not have an equivalent Swedish entry, but existed only in an idiomatic form. The following examples show metaphors that were not translated:

Example 14	SL	TL
	Linden *sträcker* ut grenarna… (15)	This sentence is not translated
	Det ser ut som om stugorna *trängs*, säger pappa (14)	This sentence is not translated

4.4 Similes in Pippi Longstocking and The Six Bullerby Children

While looking for similes, one thing stood out in particular, namely the low frequency of this type of construction. When it comes to ABB and SBC, there was in fact only one simile in the

entire book. That simile had the same form in both languages, presumably due to similar cultures when it comes to Christmas celebrations.

Example 15   <u>SL</u>   <u>TL</u>
…han har långt, vitt skägg precis som jultomten (51)   …had a long white beard exactly like Father Christmas (48)

Interestingly enough, the situation was not the same in the books about Pippi, where there were a large number of similes in both versions. Thus, after the simile data had been collected, they were divided into different groups on the basis of their qualities and whether or not they had the same image in the two languages. With this done, it was instantly clear that a large number of them had been translated into the same image. In fact, there were only two similes belonging in the second group, and none in the third

Group A; Same image

Example 16   <u>SL</u>   <u>TL</u>
Hennes hår hade samma *färg som en morot* (9)   Her hair was the same *colour as a carrot* (5)

… fjorton meter lång var han och *arg som ett bi* (44)   … he was fourteen yards long and *angry as a bee* (37)

Tommy och Annika som stod ett stycke därifrån *darrande som asplöv* (68)   … who stood at a distance *trembling like aspen leaves* (60)

Group B; Similar image

Example 17   <u>SL</u>   <u>TL</u>
Men Pippi stod *fast som en klippa* (81)   …but Pippi stood as *fast as a rock* (74)

In the latter example above, there is a small difference between the translated simile and the image that it portrays. While the word *cliff* would have been an obvious choice, it would not have been an idiomatically correct choice here, since the English-speaking culture tends to use the word *rock* to portray something solid of this type (cf. CALD).

The statistics showed that the similes found in the Pippi books deal either with someone's appearance or with an action of some kind. 47 % of all the similes are descriptive similes concerning the look of the characters involved, whereas 35 % of the similes have either flora

or fauna as reference points. Interestingly enough, 17,5 % of the similes compared the appearance of a character with an occupation, as can be seen in the following examples:

Example 18   SL

Hon var *vit som en mjölnare* ända uppifrån och ner (18)

Tommy hade blivit så *svart som en sotare* (122)

TL

She was as *white as a miller* from top to toe (13)

Tommy had become as *black as a chimney sweep* (114)

When comparing the similes with the metaphors, the most interesting thing was that there were as many similes in the translated versions of the books as in the original version, something which was not the case with the metaphors.

5. Conclusions

Concluding the present study, this section will focus on a discussion of the research questions raised previously. However, to make it more accessible, the questions will be discussed separately.

During the translation of *Pippi Långstrump* and *Alla vi barn i Bullerbyn* into English, there were very few changes in the text. The only exceptions were the form of the proper names, which were often exchanged for more English-sounding names in both books, and the deletions in ABB that shortened the book with two chapters. Apparently, the translators, Hurup and Ramsden, followed the rules governing translation without changing too much of the original text. Going back to what Klingberg (1986) claimed about acceptable changes in literature for children, it is noticeable here, except for the change of names, that the two translators did not feel the need to make any significant changes to the texts. So even if these books were written for children, and cultural changes may be viewed as acceptable in these circumstances, that was clearly not an issue in these cases. One reason for this can very well be that there are only minor differences between the Swedish and the English cultures.

Overall, when studying how figurative language was used in the original text, and how it was translated into English, there is one thing that is clear: in both books there are more metaphors in the Swedish versions than in either of the English versions. Another thing that became clear during the research was that none of the metaphors or similes changed category, i.e. if a Swedish phrase was a structural metaphor, the phrase in the translated version also belonged to that group. This, however, is not so strange since the categories in question have rather different qualities separating them from each other. It would therefore be unusual if the

translation would alter an expression so radically, bearing in mind that the meaning of the text still ought to be the same in the end.

Even though the translated metaphors typically belong to the same category, that does not mean that there were no changes in the figurative language. In fact, some of the metaphors were adapted to different idiomatic expressions in the target language. This is understandable in many works of translation, in order for the readers to connect and get a better understanding of the literature. Even if a metaphor or simile refers to an object that is different from the original figurative phrase, it still does not change the meaning of the expression since the image that it gives is still the same. Put figuratively, an object is still white, no matter if it is compared to a lily or newly fallen snow.

The figurative language of Lindgren is quite colourful, and a great number of the expressions are used to describe the appearance of a person. However, the most common expressions are the ones used to emphasize things and actions, thereby giving the reader a more vivid mental picture of the world in the book. As earlier mentioned, the structural metaphor is the most common in general, and usually its existence is something that we do not reflect on in our daily lives. However, in these books, both in Swedish and English, the ontological metaphors seem to be the most popular type. If this is the case in all of Lindgren's books, or if it is particular to *Pippi Longstocking* and *The Six Bullerby Children* is a different matter that needs to be looked into separately.

When it comes to the similes in the books, there were only a few that did not maintain the same object of comparison in the translated text. In addition to this, the usage of similes seems to differ as compared to the usage of metaphors in the texts, at least as indicated by the fact that all the similes in the source language were translated into the target language. This can be compared to the metaphors, which often have not been translated at all, and where there also exist metaphors not deriving from the original text.

Finally, looking at the results of this study, I come to the conclusion that metaphors are more common in the Swedish language, and that similes are used to the same extent in both languages. However, this is not something that I feel confident enough to claim without some hesitation due to the limitation of the research material. To be able to present a more decisive statement, the research paradigm needs to be extended, and more data need to be gathered from a more extensive material covering a wider range of the target literature.

Yet, what I do feel confident in saying is that Lindgren seems to have used a language that was full of figurative images giving life to the stories she told, and that the corresponding translations were less so, at least in the two versions studied.

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