Zombie Gods Seep Goo
A Study on the Translation of Imagery
Abstract

Imagery can be one of the difficulties a translator faces. It can be difficult to transfer the same image in a metaphor, simile, metaphorical adjective or a cultural reference to the target text. The aim of this study is to look at what translation strategies can be used for the translation of said imagery. The method is a quantitative analysis of the source text’s imagery types and a qualitative analysis of the translation strategies used. Since the language pair come from the same language family and have a lot of similarities in terms of culture, literal translations, equivalences and, in some cases, adaptions were suspected to be more frequent.

The results show that for metaphors, similes and metaphorical adjectives literal translations were the most frequent ones, followed by equivalents carrying the same connotations, for metaphors and adjectives. Adaption, which is perhaps not really translation at all, was frequently used for the cultural references due to the target oriented approach. Omission and neutral explanations were used where the loss of information did not affect the presumed understanding of the target text reader. Transference, transposition and calque were used to some extent but not as frequent as suspected.

In conclusion, when two languages are as similar as Swedish and English, a translator can go far by using literal translation or, where applicable, equivalents.

Keywords

Imagery, metaphors, similes, metaphorical adjectives, cultural references, translation strategies.

Thanks

Special thanks to Lina who helped me at the last minute to get this paper together.
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1. Introduction

Caws (2012:38) claims that the best translation is one that is not recognized as a translation by the target text reader. This means that a translator needs to have a great knowledge of both the source language and the target language as well as their respective cultures to overcome translation problems.

One culture specific problem that might cause difficulties for the translator is when translating metaphors and imagery. According to Lakoff and Johnson (2003:147) there is a link between metaphors and our conceptual systems. When dealing with metaphors and the like the translator needs to have a thorough knowledge of the cultural context in both languages and be able to transfer the imagery into what might be a new cultural context. This study will deal with imagery and cultural references. Metaphors are interesting to study since they might offer different kinds of problems and solutions for the translator. When it comes to metaphors and similes, this could be metaphors that lack equivalences or where the equivalence does not fit the cultural context in the target text and where the translator must look for other solutions or expressions. Moreover, cultural references are perhaps not transferable to the cultural context of the target text and may then need to be adapted or omitted.

When translating imagery and cultural references, the translator must identify the target text reader. Is a literal translation possible or should a freer translation be advocated better suit the target text readers? Consider the examples below:

(1) (p.54) On the steps of the hotel drive, the cold bit deep into our bones. The Korean peninsula is ten degrees further south than London, but in winter it is very much colder. The British Isles benefit from the wet, warm winds of the Atlantic beating in from the west; Korea suffers from being at the end of the Eurasian continental landmass. It felt Siberian.

(2) (p.55) First up is Heath Robinson contraption to clean the soles of your shoes.

In the ST of example (1) there is a comparison between the North Korean climate and the British climate. This information is perhaps not ideal for a Swedish target text reader, even though many Swedes have visited the British Isles, but a comparison to the Swedish weather
gives the target text reader a better understanding of the North Korean climate. In example (2) is another cultural reference referring to a cartoonist known for his complicated machines for simple activities (Encyclopaedia Britannica). He is not that well known in Sweden and another reference that suggests a similar image is therefore used: Professor Balthazar a children’s TV show where the professor built complicated machines. The same difficulties occur in the translation of metaphors and similes where there are no exact equivalences in the target language, as in example (3) where Jucheism is likened to food threaded on to a skewer, a likening not that common in the target language:

\[\text{(3) So, too, is Jucheism, neatly skewered by one authority as a 'stodgy jumble of banalities'}\]  

\[\text{Så också Jucehismen, målande beskriven av en auktoritet som en 'mastig röra av banaliteter'}\]

As the examples show, it is possible to transfer imagery into the target language using different translation strategies. This study aims to analyse the strategies used when translating imagery.

1.1 Aim

Descriptive language, such as imagery and metaphors are used to give the reader a better understanding of the cultural context. This imagery might cause problems for the translator since there are several different ways of expressing imagery and similes, and different strategies for translating them.

Therefore, the aim of this study is to investigate some different kinds of imagery and the different strategies for translating them. The imagery elements chosen for this study are metaphors, metaphorical adjectives, similes, and cultural references. What is problematic when translating them? Which strategies can be applied?

1.2 Method

The method used for this study is an analytical comparison of the source text (henceforth ST), and the target text (henceforth TT). The ST is, first, analysed for different kinds of imagery such as metaphors, metaphorical adjectives (see definition below), similes and cultural references. Metaphors are defined as when one entity is used to refer to another entity. Similes contain markers such as ‘as’ or ‘like’. These can sometimes be invisible but are understood by context. Metaphorical adjectives are identified the same way as tropes, see definition below. Furthermore, there are three kinds of cultural references in the ST. First, names and
occurrences from the North Korean culture. Second, comparisons and examples from the British culture and, third, references to other cultures. In this study, only references to British culture are analysed.

The results are presented as a quantitative analysis of frequency. Then each entry is analysed based on the translation strategy used. The results will be presented as a qualitative analysis of the translation strategies used for different types of imagery.

1.3 Material

The primary material used for this investigation is the ST (and in extension, so also the TT), an undercover story about North Korea: *North Korea Undercover – inside the world’s most secret state* by the journalist John Sweeney, published in 2013. Sweeney posed as a university professor going to North Korea with a group of students. However, their real purpose was secretly filming a documentary for the BBC. His experiences and research about North Korea form the content of the book. The chapter chosen for this investigation, *Zombie Gods Seep Goo*, contains a lot of imagery and metaphors and is therefore suitable for this study.

The aim of this text is to inform and amuse. North Korea is a state which very few have visited and it is concealed in mystery and mythology. The undercover story reveals strange facts in a satirical and ironic way. To be able to convey the weirdness of what he experiences, Sweeney uses a lot of similes, metaphors and references to popular culture to give the reader an idea of what it was like and this is problematic when it comes to conveying the same image to the target text.

The target audience of the ST is the average British person with an interest in North Korea and perhaps politics. The text itself aims at describing the North Korean system in a way that anyone can understand. The ironic language, heavy use of metaphors and the personal perspective make the text very informal.

The target text is also part of the material since this is where the translation problems were revealed. The possible audience of the TT is probably Swedes with similar interests in North Korea. Since North Korea is equally unknown to the Swedish reader as the British, the target text should aim to be as descriptive. However, according to parallel texts, Swedish texts of this sort do not contain foul language to the same extent. The text is therefore somewhat adapted to Swedish standards and the more extreme connotations are replaced with more neutral ones.
Word lists and dictionaries, such as *Nordstedts svensk-engelska ordbok - Professionell*, *Nationalencyklopedin* and *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, have been used to find equivalences for words and phrases as well as parallel texts in Swedish to see how specific landmarks, food courses and names are used. The parallel texts are mainly biographies from North Korean defectors such as *Flykten från Läger 14* by Blaine Harden, but the one mainly used is a Swedish undercover story by Magnus Bärtås and Fredrik Ekman: *Alla monster måste dö*. The authors pose as tourists to go on a group travel while collecting material for their story about a kidnapped movie director. They visit some of the places mentioned in the ST and use translated quotes from some of the sources used in the ST.

The theoretical background contains the definitions of different imagery types, where Lakoff’s and Johnson’s definition of metaphors and metaphorical concepts is further described; Alm-Arvius’ definition of tropes is used for metaphorical adjectives and Ingo’s views on pragmatics is used for cultural references. In the second part of the background translation strategies are presented. The different strategies for this study are selected from Vinay and Darbelnet as well as Olk.

## 2. Background

This section deals with two main elements. First, imagery is described and exemplified. Second, the translation strategies applied are described and explained.

### 2.1 Imagery

Language is the single most distinctive feature of culture and “words only have meaning in terms of the corresponding culture” (Nida, 2001:13). A lack of knowledge of other cultures restricts the translator (2001:73) which might cause serious mistakes in the translation. When looking at semantics, Nida (2001:79ff) proposes that some features of figurative language are important in all types of texts but the translation of such language depends mainly on the translator’s creativity and the presumed knowledge of the intended target text readers. He (2001:81) also concludes that trying to figure out rules for the translation of figurative language can be very time consuming and in some cases unnecessary, since the situations differ. This view is not supported by Toury (2012:295) who argues that “as soon as one accepts the applicability of the scientific method to the complex of problems clustered around translation, there is no reason why the formulation of laws should not be set up as an ideal”. Moreover, the ST and TT cultures share a lot of similarities which suggests that rules might
aid the translator in his/her task of transferring the imagery. Even though the situations differ, translation strategies should be applicable, which will be shown later on in this paper.

According to the glossary in *Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics* (Brown 2006), ‘imagery’ is defined as an overall term for different forms of figurative language and/or “language that invokes sharp or vivid mental pictures” used for poetic or rhetorical reasons. This section aims to describe and define the different kinds of imagery used in the ST and give examples of the problems that might occur during the translation.

### 2.1.1 Metaphors and similes

According to Hellspong and Ledin (1997:140), one part of imagery is the metaphor. They give the example of the sun being an orange where the sun is ‘the thing’ and the orange ‘the image’. Lakoff and Johnson (2003:3) argue that, opposite to general opinion, metaphors are not only poetic and rhetorical or connected to language alone. They claim that metaphors are an important part of our conceptual systems and how we understand and perceive the world. Our conceptual systems play a large part in our understanding of everyday life even though we are not normally aware of it. In fact, most of our conceptions are metaphorical in their nature (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003:4). This leads to the function of the metaphor, which according to Lakoff and Johnson (2003:5) is, “[…] understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another”. This means that even some established expressions (such as ‘banana republics’) are, for this study, identified as metaphors. Similes are closely related to metaphors since they, too, are used for understanding something in terms of something else. Similes often have markers such as ‘as’ and ‘like’ (Brown, 2006). These markers make the similes somewhat easy to identify. They will, however, due to their similarities with metaphors, be analysed together with metaphors.

If the source domain is the concept that needs to be understood then the target domain is the concept in which we will comprehend the source domain. Or, in other words: “Conceptual domain A is conceptual domain B” (Kövecses, 2010:4). This, in its turn, needs to be distinguished from *metaphorical linguistic expressions* which refer to words or linguistic expressions from conceptual domain B. This can be understood in terms of conceptual metaphors being the concepts themselves and the metaphorical linguistic expressions are what indicate which concept is used. This is exemplified by Lakoff and Johnson (2003:4) by the concept *Argument is war* where ‘argument’ is the concept that needs to be understood and ‘war’ is the concept used to encourage that understanding. The expressions linked to this concept can be e.g. “Win an argument”, “He shot down the counterarguments” or “She
defended her opinions”. Kövecses (2010:33f) argues that some metaphors (concepts and expressions) are more conventionalized than others. This means that some metaphors are more frequently used in everyday-language and, therefore, widely recognized by the public. One of the more conventionalized concepts from the ST is the personification of countries, which can be seen in expressions like ‘how has North Korea survived’ and ‘the state that Stalin built was dead’. There are also examples of politics/ideology is war: ‘insights do not conflict’ (p.68) and ‘Kimism was forged’ (p.68) which belongs to war metaphors since ‘forged’ is how you make weapons.

According to Crear-Bromelow (2008:78), conceptual metaphors can “pass over interlinguistic barriers”. By this she means that the concepts are universal and can be shared by different languages. Even though there is, perhaps, no perfect match, identifying the concept in the ST and the expressions used can thereby aid the translator in the process of finding expressions in the TT matching that same concept. Furthermore, she (2008:79) concludes that this allows a greater flexibility for the translator in paraphrasing or explaining metaphors in the target language. As can be seen in the examples above, regarding personification of countries, similar metaphorical expressions can be used in the TT: ‘Hur har Nordkorea lyckats överleva’ and ‘den stat som Stalin byggde [hade] dött’.

However, there are perhaps some metaphors that are less conventional (Kövecses, 2010:33f) where the translator might have to be more creative. Furthermore, not any concepts can be used for creating a metaphor, there has to be a similarity between the two entities and their meanings for a metaphor to be created (Kövecses, 2010:77). One example of conceptual metaphor, which is not conventional, from the ST is: “the great Zombie” (Sweeney, 2013:53) which refers to North Korea. ‘North Korea’ is then domain A, the source domain, and ‘the great Zombie’ is domain B, the target domain by which we should understand ‘North Korea’. The reason for using the expression ‘the great Zombie’ is partly because North Korea worship the dead president as a God and partly (probably) because of the control the regime has over its people which makes them seem lacking a will of their own – much like zombies. As described in the example, ‘the great Zombie’ is probably not widely recognized to the public. However, there are similarities between the two entities and their meanings and it is therefore identified as a metaphor.

The conceptual distance between languages and culture, and in its turn understanding, depends on various factors such as the extent of common values, customs, habits and activities (Trim, 2012:217). The closer the language systems are in terms of this, the bigger
the chance of understanding the concepts of the metaphors. However, different languages that share conceptual systems may have different variants of the metaphors due to underlying conceptual structure. This, then, has to be considered when translating metaphors: the conceptual systems might be the same but the metaphorical expressions may differ. In the case of the ST and the TT in this study, the source culture and the target culture are somewhat similar since they are geographically close and both belong to the Germanic language family. That suggests that there might be similarities in the conceptual systems but the metaphorical expressions are perhaps more diverse.

Schäffner (2004:1255) points out that metaphors, traditionally, have been considered as “an individual linguistic phenomenon […] which can become a translation problem”. This is due to the loss of image in TT because the image, or expression, is unknown in the target language or that the associations might get lost in the target language (Schäffner, 2004:1256). Moreover, she (2004:1264) claims that the culture-specificity is relevant for the translator. If the source culture is relevant also for the target text readers then it is better to reproduce the ST expression and add an explanation. Furthermore, if the text is target reader oriented it is better to choose an expression from the target culture or paraphrase the expression. Next, metaphorical adjectives will be defined.

2.1.2 Metaphorical adjectives

Adjectives are descriptive in their nature and should, hence, be used frequently when describing something. One of the main questions for this study is to look at metaphorical adjectives since they are, probably, more likely to cause problems for the translator than “normal” adjectives. They are also separated from metaphors since metaphors are usually a phrase or a sentence. Metaphorical adjectives are distinguished from metaphors since they can be more difficult to spot and are most often single phrases, whereas metaphors are more often longer expressions. Therefore, a definition of metaphorical adjectives will be given.

Tropes is a cover term for traditional rhetoric language use with some kind of secondary meaning, which means that a figurative shift occurs (Alm-Arvius, 2003:9). In this study, metaphorical adjectives are identified as a kind of trope where the adjective used contains a figurative shift and is not necessarily literally used. When a figurative meaning is identified there must also be a literal, concrete meaning (Alm-Arvius, 2003:64) and it is this connection between source meaning and figurative shifts that define figurative language (Alm-Arvius, 2003:65). In order to find these metaphorical adjectives the ST is scanned for adjectives that
might carry a figurative meaning as well as a literal meaning. These are then compared to the definitions given in an English dictionary\textsuperscript{1} and then identified as used figuratively or not.

Sakamoto and Utsumi (2014:2) describe adjective metaphors as where the adjectives “serve as the vehicle to modify nouns as the topic of the metaphor” (2014:2). This means that an adjective denotes the perception of some sense modality modifying the modality of a noun. Rocklage and Fazio (2014:216) studied the emotional values of adjectives since they are descriptive in their nature. They found that there are substantial differences in the connotations of different adjectives. This suggests that the adjectives used to describe something is also reflecting the attitudes of the author (Rocklage & Fazio, 2014:224). See for instance this example: “Grey on grey” (p.55), from the ST, that has the literal meaning of ‘nuances of grey’ and the figurative meaning, according to Urbanictionary [electronic source] “articles of clothing worn by sexually deviant adults attempting to lure younger people to come 'play' with them” which is a very negative connotation and the phrase has no equivalence, or nearby-equivalence, at all. Another possible meaning could be just “several nuances of grey” which carries the connotations of ‘sadness’ and ‘dullness’. This might also reflect the author’s negative opinion about the looks of a building. In the TT the solution also alludes to popular culture: “50 shades of Grey”, a book famous for its erotic content.

The aspect of meaning is, according to Ingo (2007:168), very important in a translation. The equivalence can be either direct or altered, very often an altered equivalence is better from a pragmatic point of view. He (2007:165) also concludes that if you choose an equivalent you have to consider the emotional value of the word, the connotation. As mentioned in the example in the previous paragraph, ‘grey-on-grey’ has no direct equivalence, and, therefore, an altered equivalence is needed. Even if this is, perhaps, not a common example, there is a wide range of colour adjectives that carry a connotation of emotion, such as “green with envy”, “red with anger”, “have a black heart” which all carry negative connotations. In cases like these, the metaphorical meaning is obvious but in this study all adjectives that carry double meaning, literal and figurative, will be dealt with as metaphorical adjectives. In the next section, cultural references will be given a definition.

\subsection*{2.1.3 Cultural references}

There are several questions the translators must ask themselves. One of them is in which cultural context the translation will be used (Ingo, 2007:16). In the translation the text is

\textsuperscript{1} McMillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners
transferred from its “home environment” to another culture. This means that some terms can be difficult to understand for the reader of the TT and the translator might need to add information, to explain, or omit information that is not necessary in the new context.

According to Ingo (2007:21) *pragmatics* is the language’s contextual meaning, situational meaning and comprehensibility. For the translator this means that the world might look differently in the target context than in the source context and the text might need adaption (Ingo, 2007: 22). In extreme cases, Ingo says (2007:27) that a translator can choose to translate completely within the pragmatic context and that the translation in that case will be very free. Furthermore, Ingo (2007:126) thinks it is of the essence to make sure that the translated text will function in the new cultural environment. Languages are not alike each other as little as cultures and societies are. In the ST the example of “a stay in the mountains” (p.53f) is given. That expression is North Korean slang for ‘gulag’, work camps, and is perhaps not known to readers outside of North Korea. This expression therefore needs additional explanations to suit the readers’ cultural understanding, which also occurs in the ST.

In some texts the writer uses examples from the source culture. It could be the colour of taxi cars, the “national dish” or names of famous people. Ingo (2007:170) states that *contextual equivalents* should be used, which consider the target text readers’ needs and the changes postulated by cultural differences. However, equivalents can be problematic (Panou, 2013:2). Historically, equivalence indicates that there is a sameness between ST and TT. Furthermore, Panou (2013:5) concludes that target-oriented translation views the ST as the “point of departure” and is therefore a culture bound phenomenon. The equivalence still functions as a reminder of the problems a translator might face during the translation process. One problematic issue in the ST is the fact that there are two cultures present and referred to: The North Korean, the settings of the story, and the British, the home country of the author. Therefore, the ST contains a frequent use of comparisons to the British country and society. In the TT these might need to be adapted to the target culture to some extent. There is a fine line between adapting the TT to the Swedish setting and changing the setting since the source text is written from a very personal perspective. Some comparisons should perhaps be kept to give the reader a sense of local colour, after all the author is not Swedish. For instance, at one point the author refers to the empty squares of North Korea and makes the comparison to Trafalgar square and other public places in grand cities. Such a comparison will probably not cause any difficulties for the target text reader since many Swedes are familiar with Trafalgar Square.
On the other hand, some comparisons would probably not be recognized by a Swedish reader and should then be adapted. For example, the author compares the width of the Taedong River to the river Thames at Greenwich, which is impossible to know for the target text reader have they not been there themselves. In short, cultural references can be comparisons to source text cultural items, similes containing references to popular culture from the source text culture and culture specific names and places.

2.2 Translation strategies

This section presents the strategies used in the translation of different kinds of imagery. First a general approach to translation is presented and then the specific strategies used for this study are specified and explained.

2.2.1 General approaches to translation

For a reader any text is seen as just a text. For a translator this means that a translation is supposed to be seen as a text among others and not come across as a translation. According to Ingo (2007:338) this brings on a responsibility for the translator to produce a text that is correct regarding structure, variety, semantics (meaning) and pragmatics (situation) in the target language context. How exact a translation should be has been debated for centuries and Ingo (2007:339) encourages translators to ask themselves how exactly or freely they should, can and want to translate the text.

*Word for word* is defined by Munday (2012:30) as a literal translation whereas *sense for sense* would then be a free translation. In other words, a literal translation is close to the source text in terms of terminology, word classes and sentence structure and a free translation is more target culture oriented and adoptions have been made to hide the fact that it is a translation.

Ladmiral (2012:19) uses the terms: “sourcerers” and “targeters” where sourcerers are those who stay close to the source text and see this as the most important of ST and TT. Targeters, on the other hand, are the ones who respect the meaning and value of the word in the target language. He (2012:31) concludes that the targeters will produce the most efficient translations.

According to Olk (2013:345), who refers to Venuti, a translator may choose between staying close to the source reference, (foreignization) and thereby risk that the readers of the TT do not understand, or try to “move” the text into the target culture (domestication) which means
that foreign elements are not translated but exchanged with something characteristic for the target text culture.

For this study a choice had to be made whether to use strategies close to the ST culture and let the text keep some degree of foreignness for the TT reader, or to adapt the text to a more TT reader friendly approach. In general the ST culture and the TT culture have a lot in common which would suggest a word for word translation close to the ST. However, the differences in language structure and some cultural entities would perhaps make the text very difficult to read. Hence, the more target oriented approach was selected and the translation is thereby domesticated to some extent with a few instances of foreignization to remind the TT readers of the author’s British origin.

2.2.2 Translation strategies used for this study

Vinay and Darbelnet (1995:30) claim that the translator faces a fixed starting point, i.e. the ST. The TT is therefore open to be either literally translated, translated freely or adapted to the target culture. Since the translation used for this study is oriented towards the target text readers, the following translation strategies were used:

Transference, neutral explanation, omission, calque, literal translation, transposition, equivalence and adaption. Below a description will be given of each strategy.

Transference, or borrowing as it is also called, occurs when a culture specific item is transferred into the target language and there is no change in meaning (Olk (2013:348), the target text reader is treated exactly as the source text reader. According to Vinay and Darbelnet (1995:32) this technique is mainly used when there is no proper equivalent in the target language and the source expression might be known to the reader, it also offers a sense of local colour to the target text. Since the ST is about North Korea, specific North Korean terms are used in the ST and can thus be transferred into the TL and offer the same kind of local colour to the TT.

Neutral explanation occurs when the cultural item of the source text is not transferred but rather explained with a culturally neutral expression and the similarities between the cultures are emphasized (Olk, 2013:329f). This means that no culture specific knowledge is required from the target text reader. One example of this is the term ‘Whitehall’ (which commonly refers to the British government) which is simply explained in Swedish as ‘regeringen’.

Omission, on the other hand, is where the cultural item is completely left out of the target text which might neutralize the cultural identity of the text (Olk, 2013:351).
Calque, according to Vinay and Darbelnet (1995:32), means that the source expression is borrowed into the target language and then translated literally element for element. This might happen in two ways where the first is lexical and respects the TL structure and thus introduces a new expression, the second is structural and introduces a new construction to the language. Both borrowings (transference) and calque translations often become fixed expressions in the target language.

Literal translation is a word-for-word translation that is idiomatically and grammatically correct in the target language (Vinay and Darbelnet, 1995:33f). This kind of translation is reversible in the two languages and most often occur when the language pair shares both culture and language family. Since SL and TL come from the same language family and have similar cultures, this strategy is expected to be quite frequent.

Transposition means that a word class is exchanged for another in the TL without changing the meaning of the intended message (Vinay and Darbelnet (1995:36) e.g. when a verb phrase in the ST becomes a noun phrase in the TT. Equivalence is frequently used for onomatopoetic sounds, proverbs and idioms (Vinay and Darbelnet, 1995:38). This means that there is an equivalent expression in the target language which is more suitable than a direct translation of the word and this strategy will therefore be somewhat frequent in the translation of established metaphors. Furthermore, some direct translations can also be equivalences.

Adaption is of the extreme limit of what might be called translation (Vinay and Darbelnet, 1995:39). This is only used when the situation in the ST is unknown to the TT reader and is therefore adapted into something the reader can relate to. It is a sort of situational equivalence and should be used in order to create a new situation which the TT reader can understand. Olk (2013:352) defines this strategy as where the ST-item is replaced by a culture specific TT-item with similar function or connotation. This last strategy transplants the cultural settings of the text and should therefore be quite frequent when translating cultural items, especially those referring to the British source culture. In the following chapter the imagery types and the translation strategies used will be analysed.

3. Results and analyses

This section will discuss the findings of this study. Both examples from the ST and the TT will be discussed. First some general findings will be presented and then the specifics will be dealt with: the different kinds of imagery and then the translation strategies used. Examples of
different kinds of imagery used will be presented together with the translation strategies used and an analysis of how the examples were translated. See table 1 for an overview.

Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Imagery</th>
<th>Metaphors</th>
<th>Similes</th>
<th>Metaphorical adjectives</th>
<th>Cultural references</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of entries in ST/TT</td>
<td>108/100</td>
<td>18/20</td>
<td>34/32</td>
<td>12/8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transference</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral explanation</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omission</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calque</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literal translation</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transposition</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
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<td>Equivalence</td>
<td>41</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adaption</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As can be seen in Table 1, the number of entries differ between ST and TT. This is partly due to neutral translations where the metaphor is lost in the TT, omission of cultural items in the TT and the addition of simile markers in the TT. The number of translation strategies used for each imagery type may also seem inaccurate since there are some examples where more than one strategy is used. Moreover, some metaphorical expressions exist in the TT where there were none in the ST which affects the numbers to a small extent.

Literal translations are used in about half of the cases, especially regarding descriptions of scenery and events. This might be due to the fact that the source culture and the target culture are very similar and there is no loss in meaning. It may also be due to the similarities in the languages where a literal translation does not cause any difficulties for the target text reader. Equivalences are used where applicable, especially regarding established metaphors. However, the author of the ST seems to have invented several metaphors of his own by creating his own target domains for understanding the source domains. As suspected the more
free translations occurred in the translation of the cultural references where a more target oriented approach was used. In the following sections each imagery type will be analysed separately.

3.1 Imagery types

In the ST several examples of imagery could be found. The ones relevant for this thesis are, as mentioned above: metaphors, similes, metaphorical adjectives and references to cultural aspects. Below the translation strategies used for each imagery type will be analysed.

3.1.1 Metaphors and similes

As mentioned earlier, metaphorical concepts are defined as target domains used in order to understand the source domain. In this particular text a lot of paraphrases are used to refer to the dead leaders of North Korea, e.g. “Fat Man” (p.67), “God the Father” (p.60) etc. All these have for this study been recognized as metaphors according to the definition given by Lakoff and Johnson. All these kinds of metaphors have been translated using literal translations even though other meanings could have been intended. For example “Fat Man” and “Little Boy” could also refer to the nuclear weapons used in World War 2, nicknamed ‘Fat Man’ and ‘Little Boy’ (Cochran, 2014) as well as to the looks of the dictators. In Swedish, if referred to, the English names of the bombs are used. So another possible solution for this translation is transference. Transference is, however, not used in this context since the English nicknames of the bombs are very rarely used in Swedish (24 hits in the Swedish corpus Korp for ‘Fat Man’ and only one of them referred to the bombs, 157 hits for ‘Little Boy’ mainly in an English context and none of them referring to the bomb). Some concepts are more or less established ones such as the personification of countries and ideologies. This can be seen in expressions like ‘North Korea would be no walkover’ (p.54) and ‘North Korea is seized by a political religion’ (p.59).

Several examples of metaphors regarding the people of North Korea being enslaved and/or brainwashed has also led to concepts such as THE MIND IS A MACHINE and THE SYSTEM IS A PERSON which can be seen in: ‘The robotization of your mind begins’ (p.55), ‘Still, the robot conditioning kicks in’ (p.60), as well as in ‘Their baleful influence did not lose its hold over our minds’ (p.63).

Moreover, some more established metaphors have been found, such as: ‘The cold bit deep into our bones’ (p.54), ‘Shoals of fish’ (p.54) and ‘A drop of ink in the ocean’ (p.66) and so on. These have, as far as possible been translated with equivalences: ‘kylan [bet] ännda in i
märgen’, ‘myror i en stack’ and ‘en droppe bläck’. As rendered in the background, Trim (2012:217) suggests that when two language systems are close in terms of values, customs and habits there can also be similarities in the use of metaphors and in understanding the metaphorical concepts. The examples above should, due to the similarities of source and target language, not cause any difficulties in the translation process.

There are also some concepts that are perhaps not as established within different cultures, they might even be made up by the author. However, according to Kövecses (2010:77), if there is a similarity between the two entities new metaphorical concepts can be created. Some examples of such concepts are NORTH KOREA IS A ZOMBIE and THE LEADERS OF NORTH KOREA ARE ZOMBIES/CORPSES. There are also lot of examples of metaphors referring to the corpses of the leaders and the mummification process. The first example, also the title of the ST, ‘Zombie gods seep goo’ refers to the dead leaders of North Korea and the fact that the embalment fluids tend to leak from the mummies. The second example, ‘the cosmic good of bacon and eggs has yet to penetrate the Big Zombie’ refers to the country North Korea as a zombie. The examples of this kind are plenty. Even though literal translations were very frequent for this kind, identifying the concepts were still of great help since it gave a wide range of alternatives for translating the metaphor.

Another concept frequent in the ST is connected to the concept of the LEADERS ARE ZOMBIES and refers to the embalment process. This concept could be called: EMBALMING IS PICKLING. On several occasions the author uses various examples from the pickling process to describe the embalment process. As mentioned earlier, the two domains have to have similarities and embalming and pickling are indeed similar processes even though pickling is perhaps a more humorous way to look at it: “The two Soviet heroes who first kept Lenin pickled” (p.61), “Uniting all six pickled great ones” (p.62) and so on.

Similes are quite frequent in the text and several of them contain references to cultural items. See for example “[Staying at the hotel] was like staying at a mega-Fawlty towers” (p.53), “…a vast low granite grey-on-grey building, as imposing as a battleship” (p.55), “[The Mercedes’s] radiator grill snarling, [like] Al Capone’s teeth set in chrome” (p.60) and “[Mao] swelled up like a balloon” (p.60). Even though some of these examples lack markers like “as” and “like” they are still identified as similes and contribute to the imagery of the text. The reason for identifying them as similes is that the marker is invisible in the TT but understood by context, see below:
The old dictator lies in a large glass box, \( \textit{like} \) a prize beetle

Miss Jun stood at the edge of the front row, to lead that row’s bow; Mr Hyun stood at the side of the second row to ensure the same-same. It was \( \textit{like} \) a Stalinist stage show, circa 1953, frozen in time

The SL and the TL have a lot in common, when it comes to culture. They also share the same language family. According to Vinay and Darbelnet, (1995:33f) a literal translation that is idiomatically and grammatically correct in the target language is reversible in the two languages, especially when the language pair shares both culture and language family. Consequently, this was the most frequently used strategy for metaphors and similes.

As imposing as a battleship

Like walking around inside an enormous pig’s bladder

North Korea’s veiled ideology

In examples (6) and (7), similes are translated literally and the intended image is kept. This is also the case in example (8) where a metaphorical expression is translated word for word, and the image is the same in both ST and TT.

For metaphors, equivalences were used where applicable. The examples below are taken from the concept EMBALMING IS PICKLING. In Sweden we do have ‘pickles’ but it is more of an imported notion and exists as a noun phrase. When ‘pickling’ in Sweden, the term ‘lägga in’ is used, meaning approximately ‘lay in fluid’ or ‘conserve’.

The two Soviet heroes who first kept Lenin pickled

Zbarsky’s son, Ilya, took over the family pickle factory

Debov described pickling Stalin, no easy task in 1953
The equivalence ‘inlagd’ is used in all three examples, in (9) and (10) with the same structure as in the ST. In (11) a lexical calque also takes place when changing –ing participles such as ‘pickling’ into ‘arbetet med att lägga in’.

Some equivalences were also literal translations as can be seen in examples (12) and (13). They are also defined as both literal translations and equivalences in table 1.

(12) When Kim Jong Il followed him to the grave
(p.55) När Kim Jong Il följde honom i graven
(13) Banana republics
(p. 63) Bananrepubliker

Example (12) is a metaphorical expression based on the concept that LIFE IS A JOURNEY where ‘the grave’ can be seen as a destination. Not all metaphors were as easy to identify. There were some difficulties regarding some expressions and whether they were metaphors or not. Example (13) shows such an instance. The expression ‘banana republic’ was first used in the 1970s for developing countries depending on a single agricultural product for their economy (Nationalencyklopedin). It started perhaps as a metaphor but has become fixed expressions in both SL and TL.

As for neutral explanation, this strategy was only used for 10 of the 108 metaphors in the ST. In (14), the marker for a simile is missing in the ST but the context suggests that it is a simile.

(14) a prize beetle
(p. 57) som en monterad skalbagge

There is no direct translation or equivalence for the expression “a prize beetle”, even though the process of montaging beetles is probably similar in both source culture and target culture. A neutral explanation conveys the intended image and is a suitable solution for this problem. As for neutral explanation as a strategy when translating imagery it was rarely used since the intended image, in many cases, was lost.

Transposition was not that common but was used in some cases, especially for imagery containing verb phrases, as in example (15):

(15) Kim’s face oozes a waxiness that is monstrous
(p. 59) Kims ansikte monströst

The metaphorical expression that ‘Kim’s face oozes a waxiness that is monstrous’ also contains a metaphorical adjective which is kept in the TT. The verb phrase ‘oozes’ is,
however, left out. In example (16) the word class has changed from a verb ‘waiting’ into the noun ‘väntan’:

(16) … like open graves constantly … som öppna gravar i väntan på wait for corpses lik

The strategy of transposition was mainly used as a substitute for the –ing participles where there is no direct equivalence.

Omission and transference were the least used strategies for translating metaphors and similes. Omission was used in one case for metaphors and in zero cases of translating similes. In example (17) the metaphor regarding the politics of Chesterfield are completely omitted in the TT since it would probably confuse the target text reader who is not likely to know which side dominates the politics there.

(17) But also there was a plaque of some kind of Derbyshire County Council, sent in the late 1980s, when the prospect of world revolution made Derby blush and Chesterfield’s spire tilt yet more crookedly off-centre.

Men det fanns också en sorts plakett från landstinget i Derbyshire, något oväntat.

Other things worth mentioning in this section are wordplays, puns and onomatopoeia. They are not literally metaphors or similes, but have for this study been treated as such. When mentioning other dictators that Kim Il Sung met during his reign, the author gives the image of “Tyrants’R’us” (p.56), a wordplay on the toy store “Toys’R’us”. This store is probably well known to Swedish readers since the brand exists in several cities in Sweden as well. According to a google search, at least 16 stores can be found in Sweden. In Korp 31 examples of ‘Toys R Us’ were found in a Swedish context. It is therefore kept in the TT. This is also the only case where transference was used when referring to the British culture and not the North Korean in this study. As for onomatopoetic words, equivalences were used. To sum up, established metaphorical concepts were identified in the search for equivalences. New concepts, invented by the author, were found and have been exemplified. The most frequently used translation strategies were literal translations and equivalences. Neutral explanations were also used to some extent. The strategies of calque and adaption were used in a few instances and will be further discussed below in the section about metaphorical adjectives.

3.1.2 Metaphorical adjectives

As can be seen in Table 1, literal translations was the most common translation strategy also for metaphorical adjectives. Equivalences were not as frequent as suspected. This might be
due to the fact that metaphorical adjectives often carry strong connotations in the source language which might not correspond to the target language. In example (18) the equivalences are also literal translations which was very common for the few instances where equivalences were used.

(18) The hotel’s boastful grand rooms and shoddy everything else
(p. 54) Hotellets skrytsamma salar och sjabbiga allting annat

The adjective ‘boastful’ in example (18) is identified as a metaphorical adjective since the basic meaning of the word is something one would normally use about a person. A hotel is not a person and in this sense it is a kind of personification and hence a metaphor. Sometimes it was very difficult to find equivalences with the same connotations. In example (19) the literal meaning is in fact the colour grey which can also signal ‘dull’ and ‘boring’, which probably reflects the author’s emotions towards the building. However, ‘grey-on-grey’ can also be used for describing the colour of clothes of sexually deviant adults (Urbandictionary) which gives that this is a metaphorical adjective. These connotations are not automatically transferred into the ST. According to Rocklage and Fazio (2014:224) the use of metaphorical adjectives might reflect the attitude of the author. In this case, the context suggests that the author has a very negative view on North Korea and that view then needs to be considered when translating.

(19) It’s a vast low granite grey-on-grey building, […] with concrete patches of greyness where the windows used to be
(p. 55) Det är en stor låg, granitbyggnad i 50 nyanser av grått, […] med gråa fläckar i betongen där fönster tidigare suttit

In the TT a wordplay on ‘50 shades of grey’ (Swedish title is ’50 nyanser av honom’) is used in an attempt to transfer the same connotations and still refer to the sad and dull colour of the building.

What is interesting, though, is calque and transposition that were used 6 and 4 times respectively. Calque, only used 7 times for metaphors and once for similes is, thereby, used quite frequently. Consider the example ‘posh-ish’. ‘Posh’ is defined as something looking expensive, whereas the suffix ‘ish’ is normally used with numbers to make adverbs mean ‘approximately’ (Macmillan). ‘Posh-ish’ then gets the approximate meaning “kind of/sort of posh”. However, the context of the text suggests that the cars are not looking expensive at all. Using the calque strategy, then, offers two solutions: one lexical and one structural. See example (20) and (21):
In example (20) the lexicality of the TL is kept, whereas in example (21) the SL structure remains. Both solutions work, but ‘förnämligaktiga’, the solution in example (21), does not work that well as a compound (0 hits on Korp). According to the corpus Korp, simply adding –ish to the TT-word could be another option (1 192 hits for the suffix –ish to any word, however, 0 hits for ‘förnämligish’). Contradictory to MacMillan, several of the hits in Korp are not adjectives or adverbs. The suffix is also added to e.g. nouns (‘bal-ish’, meaning a kind of ‘prom’). Nevertheless, it is not a very common solution in Swedish, at least not yet, and the reader might not get the meaning. This strategy, lexical calque, was used for many of the adjectives, especially the ones the author created by adding a suffix such as –ish and –esque.

There were also two instances where the calque was structural (examples (22) and (23)). This should mean introducing a new structure to the TL, but due to the similarities between SL and TL this was not really the case. The expressions are, on the other hand, not that common in Swedish, thus new expressions are introduced.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(22)</th>
<th>Nazi-esque</th>
<th>nazilíknande</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(23)</td>
<td>Soviet-bosomed</td>
<td>sovjetbarmade</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In examples (22) and (23), new expressions are made up by the author and carry an obvious figurative meaning. ‘Nazi’ is normally referring to a person connected to the Nazi party. The added suffix ‘-esque’ suggests that Nazis share similar traits of appearance which is a figurative meaning. The same goes for ‘Soviet-bosomed’ that suggests that all Soviet bosoms look the same, which they probably do not.

There were also a few occasions where the neutral explanation was applied. What separates those examples, from other cases where neutral explanations were used, is that there is not really an explanation, but rather a more neutral adjective is chosen.

| (24) | [T]he cosmic good of egg and bacon | [D]et fantastiska med ägg och bacon |

In (24) a metaphorical adjective is used to describe how good eggs and bacon are, in contrast to what they were eating in North Korea. ‘Cosmic’ commonly relates to planets, stars and
space. A secondary meaning also exists and is used humorously with the meaning of ‘very big’ or ‘difficult to understand’. A literal translation might have been a good solution, however a target text reader might have found that misplaced and a neutral expression with similar meaning is therefore used.

For metaphors and similes transposition was mainly used for the progressive verb form. For metaphorical adjectives it was used four times for other reasons. In example (25), the adjective ‘dead-eyed’ is metaphorical since their eyes suggest that they are dead, which they are not. In the TT the adjective has changed word class to a noun phrase ‘blick’ with an attributive adjective ‘död’.

(25) guarded by dead-eyed soldiers of abstract, mathematical beauty vakta av soldater med död blick och en abstrakt matematisk skönhet.

There were no instances where the strategies of transference, omission or adaption were used for the translation of metaphorical adjectives. That concludes this section about metaphorical adjectives. In the next section, cultural references used in the ST will be exemplified and analysed.

3.1.3 Cultural references

The author of the ST is from Great Britain which explains the abundant use of references to cultural items in Britain. There are, however, a lot of references to cultural items in North Korea, e.g. Soju, Bowibu and Inminban as well as references to other totalitarian cultures. This analysis will focus on the cultural references to Great Britain since these are the ones the author compares North Korean culture to. The other references used are transferred into the TT as they are.

As can be seen in table 1, there were less cultural references in the TT than in the ST. This can be explained by two cases of omission, examples (26) and (27) and two cases of neutral explanations, examples (28) and (29).
On the steps of the hotel drive, the cold bit deep into our bones. *The Korean peninsula is ten degrees further south than London, but in winter it is very much colder.* The British Isles benefit from the wet, warm winds of the Atlantic beating in from the west; Korea suffers from being at the end of the Eurasian continental landmass. It felt Siberian.

The Tædong river, *a bit wider than the Thames at Greenwich,* which flows through Pyongyang were a mere ‘drop of ink in the Han river’ (*the South Korean equivalence of the Thames*)

It turned out to be an architectural tribute to 1970s Bond-villain kitsch, complete with hot tubs spouting pongy water from an off-bronze tap into an immense, badly tiled Jacuzzi-thing, as inviting as the low-tide Thames at Wapping.

Example (26) is also a case of when the translation strategy of adaption was used, which changed the cultural settings of the text. This strategy was only used for cultural references, or for metaphors and similes containing cultural references. By adapting the text to the TT reader, the scenery is moved from Great Britain to Sweden. This is not always unproblematic.

In example (30) the author refers to a book by George Orwell, *Animal farm* (italics in the example are only used for highlighting purposes). This book has two Swedish titles. First, it was published under the name ‘Djurfarmen’, but now it is probably better known as ‘Djurens gård’. In order to keep the wordplay, changes had to be made and the first name it was published under was chosen since it offered more opportunities for the allusion.

The next example is reused from the section about similes: “[Staying at the hotel] was like staying at a mega-Fawlty towers”. This refers to a British TV programme about a hotel where
the owner is very unfortunate. This show has also been shown on Swedish television for many years. The decision that had to be made was whether to use the Swedish title ‘Pang i Bygget’ or stick with the British title ‘Fawlty Towers’. Nowadays it is not unusual to keep the original title for TV programmes and the strategy chosen was transference.

Other references were not as easy since they referred to persons or things that are not as known in Swedish. For example “First up is Heath Robinson contraption to clean the soles of your shoes” (p.55) where Heath Robinson is probably not as known to the Swedish readers. As mentioned in the introduction, Heath was a cartoonist famous for his imaginative machines. Since this is not well known to the Swedish readers an equivalence needed to be found. Even though the option chosen is a little bit different, to the Swedish readers ‘Balthazar-maskin’ would probably give the image of something very inventive. This is what Ingo (2007:170) calls a contextual equivalent, as stated in the background. Furthermore, as was also stated in the background, Panou (2013:2) suggests that the use of equivalences can be problematic since it is a culture bound phenomenon and an equivalence needs to function in the same way in the TT as in the ST.

It also seems as though the author really likes Bond movies since many of the cultural references refers to Bond-villains. These were not difficult to transfer into the TT since James Bond is well known in Sweden as well. However, at one point the author refers to a British actor: “I looked around for a one-eyed Donald Pleasance in a Mao suit stroking a large white pussy” (p.56f). Donald Pleasance is probably not that known to the Swedish readers, but he played, among other things, the villain Blofeld in a James Bond movie. This role has also been played by Swedish actor Max von Südow, more recently, which is the item used for the TT. In brief, this section has dealt with different kinds of cultural references. In the translation process of these a variation of strategies were used and omission, neutral explanation and adaption were used more frequently than for the other imagery types.

4. Conclusion

This paper aimed to find translation strategies for the translation of imagery elements, namely metaphors, similes, metaphorical adjectives and cultural references. As a general translation strategy, the target oriented approach was used. This means that the cultural settings of the text are changed to better suit the target text reader and hence, adaption are made to the text. Since source text and target text come from two similar languages, the literal translation strategy was most frequently used.
One of the difficulties in analyzing the language pairs was identifying the items of this study. Some metaphors are so commonly used, it is hard to know whether they are metaphors or not. This problem also occurred for metaphorical adjectives: when is an adjective metaphorical and when is it just descriptive? In brief, metaphors are identified by the definition given by Lakoff and Johnson: one entity referring to another, and all expressions referring to something else are thereby identified as metaphors. The metaphorical adjectives are identified according to the definition: adjectives that carry a literal meaning and a figurative, the same as tropes. When it comes to cultural references the ST contained so many references to several different cultures, delimitations had to be made. References to North Korean culture are kept, as they are, and transferred into the TT. The same goes for cultural references to other cultures, in this case totalitarian cultures and comparisons to other countries than Great Britain. These are kept in the TT but translated. The references regarding the British culture have been either adapted, due to the target oriented approach, or kept depending on the suspected knowledge of the target text reader or what image they convey.

The identification of conceptual metaphors can aid the translator in finding expressions in the target language. By identifying the concept in the ST, a suitable expression can be found in the target language. This proved very helpful, especially when using the equivalence strategy. By identifying the concepts, even the ones made up by the author, it was easier to find suitable expressions within that concept. Moreover, the fact that the author made up metaphorical expressions might have affected the outcome of this study since many of these metaphors were translated literally. If there were more established metaphors, the equivalence strategy might have been more useful.

As for translation strategies, literal translation was the most commonly used one for metaphors, similes and metaphorical adjectives but not for cultural references referring to the author’s culture, Great Britain. This was not unexpected since the source culture and the target culture derive from the same language family and their cultures have a lot in common. Equivalences was the second most useful strategy for the same imagery types, which can also be explained by the similarities between the source and target culture. The concepts are alike in the two cultures but the metaphorical expressions differ a bit. The equivalence strategy was especially useful in those cases where the concept was identified.

Calque was useful to some extent for all imagery types, even though it was not used that many times. In most cases the lexical calque was used, and in only two instances the structural calque was used, both in the translation of metaphorical adjectives. Transposition
did not occur for the translation of cultural references since adaption, omission and neutral explanations change the context of the expressions and transposition is therefore not needed. However, it proved very helpful when translating the progressive verb form which lacks direct equivalence in the TL. Adaption was only used in three cases of the translation of metaphors because it is of the extreme limit of what can be called translation since it changes the cultural setting. On the other hand, it was the most used strategy for translating cultural references in order to stress the differences between the two cultures and make that difference visible for the target text readers.

*Neutral explanation* was used ten times for metaphors which is about 10% of the times. Whereas for cultural references neutral explanations was only used twice, about 17%. The reason for using *neutral explanations* was that a direct translation might have confused the reader, or the cultural references would perhaps be unknown to the target text reader. *Omission* was used a total of three times, once for metaphors and twice for cultural references where no equivalence could be found or when the omission did not change the understanding of the target text.

In brief, for metaphors, similes and metaphorical adjectives literal translation was the most useful strategy and equivalences the second most useful. For cultural references, on the other hand, adaption was the most used due to the target oriented approach. Also, neutral explanations, omissions and calque were quite frequent for the same reason. Moreover, transference was only used once and was the least used strategy.

In this particular source text several metaphors were invented by the author. It might be interesting to research the patterns of how metaphors are invented and used in other journalistic texts. There were also some more established expressions that were difficult to identify as metaphors and another interesting point to study would be the process of a metaphor turning into an established expression.
References

Primary source


Secondary sources


Nationalencyklopedin, ‘bananrepublik’,


**Parallel texts**
