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# **TRANSLATION OF REALIA FROM A MINORITY LANGUAGE TO A MAJORITY LANGUAGE IN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE**

# ABSTRACT

Riia-Rosa Mattila: Translation of Realia from a Minority Language to a Majority Language in Children's Literature  
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In this thesis, I examine the translation of realia in children's literature from Finnish into English to discover how the culture of a minority language is represented in the English translation. The research data consists of the Finnish children's book *Joulupukki ja noitarumpu* and its English translation *Santa and the Magic Drum*. My objective is to analyse how the realia in the book have been translated and how much of the source culture has been maintained in the translation.

The theoretical background introduces three main aspects: translation from a minority language to a majority language, children's literature and its translation, and the concept of realia. I examine the notions of cultural asymmetry, and foreignization and domestication as translation strategies, as well as review the notions of children's literature and the child audience. Additionally, I explain the definition of realia and its translation strategies.

For the analysis, I gathered the realia from the books and divided them into five categories: food, activities, nature, places, and miscellaneous. In addition, I examined the types of translation strategies that had been used for the translations. In my analysis, I concluded that the translation strategies of realia in the research data were mostly domesticating, which indicates that for the most part, the cultural features of the source culture were faded in the translation. Therefore, the English translation of the book does not give a comprehensive representation of the minority language culture.

Some of the domesticating translations did not retain any connection to the realia in the original text. However, most of the translations that used domestication, did maintain a slight affiliation to the expressions found in the source text. Translations that used a foreignizing strategy were significantly fewer than ones using a domesticating strategy.

Keywords: translation of realia, translation strategies of realia, translation of children's literature, translation from minority to majority language

The originality of this thesis has been checked using the Turnitin OriginalityCheck service.

# TIIVISTELMÄ

Riia-Rosa Mattila: Translation of Realia from a Minority Language to a Majority Language in Children's Literature  
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Tässä tutkielmassa tutkin realioiden kääntämistä lastenkirjallisuudessa suomesta englantiin selvittääkseni miten vähemmistökielen kulttuuri kuvataan englanninkielisessä käännöksessä. Tutkimusmateriaali koostuu suomenkielisestä lastenkirjasta *Joulupukki ja noitarumpu* sekä sen englanninkielisestä käännöksestä *Santa and the Magic Drum*. Tavoitteenani on analysoida sitä, miten kirjan realiat on käännetty ja kuinka paljon käännökset ovat säilyttäneet lähdetekstin kulttuuria. Valitsin tutkimusaineistoksi lastenkirjallisuuden, sillä lastenkirjat toimivat myös oppimismateriaalina.

Tutkielman teoriaosuus esittelee kolme pääkonseptia: kääntäminen vähemmistökielestä valtakieleen, lastenkirjallisuus ja sen kääntäminen sekä realioiden kääntäminen. Tässä osiossa käsittelen kulttuurista epäsymmetriaa sekä kotouttamis- ja vieraannuttamisstrategioita. Lisäksi tarkastelen laajemmin lastenkirjallisuuden käsitettä sekä määrittelen realian konseptin ja realioiden käännösstrategiat.

Analyysiä varten keräsin kirjoissa esiintyvät realiat ja niiden käännökset ja jaoin ne viiteen kategoriaan: ruoka, aktiviteetit, luonto, paikat ja sekalaiset. Tämän lisäksi tutkin mitä käännösstrategioita jokaisessa käännöksessä oli käytetty. Analyysissäni sain selville, että käytetyt käännösstrategiat olivat useimmiten kotouttavia, minkä johdosta lähdetekstin kulttuuriset piirteet olivat suurimmaksi osaksi kadonneet käännöksessä. Tästä johtuen, kirjan englanninkielinen käännös ei anna kattavaa kuvausta vähemmistökielen kulttuurista.

Osassa kotouttavista käännöksistä ei löytynyt yhteyttä alkuperäisessä tekstissä olevaan realiaan, mutta suurin osa kotouttavaa käännösstrategiaa hyödyntävä käännös oli säilyttänyt jonkinlaisen yhteyden lähdetekstin ilmaisuun. Vieraannuttavaa käännösstrategiaa hyödyntäviä käännöksiä löytyi selkeästi vähemmän tutkimusaineistosta kuin kotouttavia käännöksiä. Vieraannuttavissa käännöksissä oli käytetty selittävää käännösstrategiaa, käännöslainaa tai sanasta sanaan käännöstä.

Avainsanat: realia, realioiden käännösstrategiat, lastenkirjallisuuden kääntäminen, kääntäminen vähemmistökielestä valtakieleen

Tämän julkaisun alkuperäisyys on tarkastettu Turnitin OriginalityCheck -ohjelmalla.

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## 1 Introduction

Translated literary works are a great medium for learning about other cultures. When a reader steps into the world of a book that is located in a foreign culture, it is like taking a trip to another country where many things appear as unfamiliar and perhaps even strange, as they only exist in that specific environment. These concrete objects that only occur in the framework of one particular culture are called realia, as defined by Ritva Leppihalme (2011).

In this thesis I study how the realia in a children's book have been translated from Finnish into English to discover how the culture of a minority language is represented in the English translation. For the purpose of this thesis, Finnish is considered as a minority language and culture in comparison to English, which is a more dominant language in the global context. More precisely, the English-speaking countries' influence on the global level is far greater than that of Finland, as the influence of Finnish culture remains predominantly within the country borders. In my analysis I study the Finnish children's book *Joulupukki ja noitarumpu* written by Mauri and Tarja Kunnas, and its English translation *Santa and the Magic Drum* to examine how the realia have been translated and how much of the source culture has been maintained in the translation. I am personally interested in the cultural aspect of translation and how translations can convey the original culture of the source material, which is why I chose this topic for my thesis. I am also interested to discover if English translations highlight the cultural aspects of a book or if these aspects have been faded in order to put more emphasis on the story rather than the cultural features. I chose to research children's books because they also act as a medium for learning.

Translation of realia in children's books has been studied before, and the Kunnas books have also been analyzed in other theses. A previous study about the translation strategies of realia in a children's book was made by Otto Kuusikko (2021) in his bachelor's thesis, in which he researched the Finnish children's picture book *Tatun ja Patun Suomi* and its English translation. Furthermore, Elina Rautiainen (2010) studied the translation of realia in the English and Swedish translations of Mauri Kunnas' book *Seitsemän koiraveljestä* in her master's thesis, in which she focused on realia that relate to the Finnish nature, customs, and culture. I did not encounter any studies that had previously researched the book *Joulupukki ja noitarumpu* and its translation. I selected this book for my research material, as I found some of the translations of the realia very interesting.

As the world is becoming increasingly connected through globalization, there is a greater need for understanding different cultures and backgrounds to ensure effortless cross-cultural communication. Therefore, it is important that children are being introduced to different customs and cultures early on, as it will increase their global awareness. This is also the reason why it is essential to pay attention to the translation strategies used in children's literature, as the strategies utilized will affect the transmission of cultural knowledge.

First, I will discuss the theoretical background, after which I will move on to introducing the research material. Then I will provide an analysis of the material and present my findings. The last section of the thesis contains the conclusion.

## **2 Theoretical Background**

### **2.1 Translation from a minority language to a majority language**

As defined by Albert Branchadell (2011, 97), a minority language is a language that has fewer speakers than that of a corresponding majority language's. In addition, one language can be simultaneously a minority and a majority language, but an "absolute minority language" is a language that is not a majority language in any country, which is true for most of the known languages in the world (Branchadell 2011, 97). In this thesis Finnish will be considered as a minority language in the global context where English is a dominant language that is used as a lingua franca in intercultural communication in many countries around the world. Although languages that maintain a minority status are the majority of all the language around the world, there has not been many studies about them in translation studies (Branchadell 2011, 98).

#### **2.1.1 The global and the local**

Globalization is a phenomenon that has shrunk the world in size by connecting people, cultures, and countries through various means and brought these different entities closer together. This also brings attention to local realities that can become diluted in the process of globalization and the dominance of certain cultures. In a global world, the role of translation is essential in terms of cross-cultural communication, as translation contributes to the realization of local realities in the global context (Yifeng 2009, 89).

Yifeng (2009, 91) mentions that globalization is deteriorating the unique features of local cultures, as the use of English is spreading widely. Therefore, when local experiences are globalized through translations, it is important to value the local characteristics in order to restore cultural information and to display it accurately for the target text readers (Yifeng 2009, 98). Translators are thus challenged by the objective of portraying different cultures under the limitations of local realities in the target environment (Yifeng, 2009). Furthermore, translations act as the primary sources through which cultures design impressions of "authors, texts and entire periods of history" (Marinetti 2011, 27). Thus, it is largely dependent on the translator how a culture will be portrayed in a particular text.

Because translation has a considerable influence in the representation of different cultures, it also advances universalism and globalization (Yifeng 2009, 90). Globalization can in some instances be viewed as a threat to the preservation and appreciation of local differences, which

is why it is more difficult for local cultures to redefine and reinforce their identities in the context of globalization (Yifeng 2009, 90). An example of this, mentioned by Yifeng (2009, 91), is the homogenizing influence of the American culture on the global level that endangers native cultures by expanding its impact on others. The wider spreading of one culture throughout the world is the result of asymmetrical power relations, in which translation also plays its part. Translation is closely connected to the surrounding cultural, social, and political environments, and is inevitably affected by culturally or politically polarized views, which can dilute the regard for different cultures and languages (Yifeng 2009, 92).

Globalization together with a feeling of cultural otherness can cause apprehension about the loss of identity of local cultures, and sometimes extreme localization is used to replace any foreign material found in the source text (Yifeng 2009, 95). Localizing strategies are applied in order to make a translation more comprehensible and relevant for the target reader by connecting the text to local realities (Yifeng 2009, 96) that enable the reader to incorporate the text into their own cultural landscape and frame of reference. When local cultures respond to cultural otherness they come into contact with depictions of the foreign in translations (Yifeng 2009, 96). This, according to Yifeng (2009, 96), causes the translator to become a negotiator between cultural systems to mediate the contextual specificities from one culture to another. For a translation to be successful, it is critical for the translator to have knowledge about the target culture to ensure effortless cross-cultural communication (Yifeng 2009, 97). Furthermore, the cultural attitudes, according to which it is decided whether cultural features or references are worth translating, are the influence that determine how extensively the translator will intervene in the text (Yifeng 2009, 99).

The risk of excessive localization is that it will estrange the target readers from foreign influence completely, which in the long run will also disrupt intercultural exchanges through translation (Yifeng 2009, 102). Venuti (2018, 16) regards this also as an ethical issue, as adapting translations to conform to the target language culture can further reinforce cultural asymmetry in the global context. By foregrounding the foreign in English translations, the ethnocentric worldview can be challenged. (Venuti 2018, 16). As cultural meaning is produced through the personal and emotional experiences one has while reading a translation, it can be inferred that cultural meaning making relies on the cross-cultural communication that is expressed in a translated text (Yifeng 2009, 108).



### **2.1.2 Cultural asymmetry (domestication/foreignization)**

The power relations between different cultures are not equal, as the influence of some cultures surpasses state borders and inserts pieces of it into the fabric of other cultures. Klaudy (2012, 43) has characterized cultural asymmetry by three main features: “(1) one-way traffic in the information channels between cultures; (2) one of the cultures is emissive, while the other is receptive; (3) information flows from more widely spoken languages to less widely spoken languages”. She also mentions that a domesticating strategy might be assumed to be used when translating from minor languages into majority languages, and a foreignizing strategy when the translation is from a majority language into a minority language (Klaudy 2012, 43). The reason for using domestication, when translating from minority languages to majority languages, is due to the limited knowledge about the source language culture (Klaudy 2012, 43). Additionally, when translating from majority languages to minority languages, the explanation for selecting foreignization is to broaden the cultural understanding and to introduce different viewpoints to the reader (Klaudy 2012, 43). However, it was discovered by Klaudy that domestication as a translation strategy is utilized in both directions: from a minority language to a majority language and also from a majority language into a minority language (Klaudy 2012, 45).

Paloposki (2011, 40) defines domestication as “refer[ring] to the adaptation of the cultural context or of culture-specific terms”, and foreignization as “the preserving of the original cultural context”. When a domesticating strategy is utilized in translating a text, it brings the text closer to the target language reader. In this way, the text becomes reader-oriented, as the reading experience will not be disrupted by foreign elements (Koskinen 2012, 15). In contrast, when a foreignizing strategy is used, the reader may be paused by the unfamiliar items in the text (Koskinen 2012, 16) depending on the cultural knowledge of the reader. Koskinen (2012, 20–21) writes about the affect that domestication and foreignization strategies have on translations, and mentions that because domestication connects to the familiar, it is more likely to produce only positive affect, while foreignization generates a feeling of surprise that strives to create “momentary experiences of the unexpected”.

### **2.1.3 (Un)translatability and cross-cultural readability**

When translating a literary text from one culture to another, the translator needs to consider certain principal aspects that will affect the way the original text will be translated for the target audience. First, it is necessary to determine what will be translated; second, the translator must consider what kind of influence the translation could bear; and third, the extent of the translation's influence on the target culture has to be evaluated (Sun 2018, 235). According to Sun (2018, 231), the aim of translation is to unravel the disparities between source and target cultures. However, the foreign linguistic features and cultural concepts emphasize the limitations that concern translatability, and the notions of incomparability and untranslatability (Sun 2018, 231).

Sun (2018, 231) brings forward the concept of untranslatability, and explains that it is a great reminder to appreciate diversity and the unique qualities that can be detected in literary texts. For instance, when readers encounter unfamiliarities, it develops intercultural communication, which creates space for more understanding and sharing of ideas and values. When translating the untranslatable, extensive understanding and sympathy is necessary to transfer unfamiliar forms from the source text culture to the target text culture (Sun 2018, 232). Furthermore, as Toury (1995, 56–57) mentions, untranslatability requires the consideration of both adequacy, which is related to the original source text, and acceptability, which relates to the translated target text. Thus, the translation of the untranslatable needs to be a good enough representation of the original, while at the same time being comprehensible and accessible for the target audience.

Another aspect that is connected to the translation of the untranslatable is readability. According to Sun (2018, 233), readability combines accessibility and acceptability to ensure that the translation will be well received by the target readers. She also adds that the language of a translation contains some traces of foreign otherness, but simultaneously has to adapt to the target language norms, which in her words creates an artificial text (233). If a text is too loaded with foreign material, this will compromise its readability. However, if a domesticating translation strategy is utilized too heavily, the cultural design of the source text will be lost, which diminishes the essence of the original text (Sun 2018, 235). In some instances, the translation is made more reader friendly by removing items that have cultural significance, because they are seen as redundant and disruptive in terms of readability (Sun 2018, 240). The efficiency of cross-cultural communication in a literary text is essential, as readability plays a

substantial role in how well a translation is received and experienced (Sun 2018, 237). In order to escape the issues of untranslatability, Sun (2018, 242) suggests that interpretation, instead of literal translation, should be applied to improve translatability, and thus the readability of the translation.

## **2.2 Children's literature and its translation**

According to Alvstad (2019, 160), the initial demand for children's literature began in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century as a result of the development of the child image. In most countries, the demand for books that were aimed at a younger audience was met with the introduction of translations (Alvstad 2019, 159–160). The first literary texts specifically produced for children included adaptations of classic novels, folk tales and fairy tales (Alvstad 2019, 163). Thus, it can be concluded that translation has been a vital element in children's literature already in its early stages.

Because children's literature comprises a wide variety of different characterizations, there is not a single definition for it, which is why different descriptions can be found for it (Thomson-Wohlgemuth 1998, 5). Oittinen (2006, 35), points out that translation of children's literature is not substantially different from the translation of other literary texts, although it does include some distinctive characteristics. For instance, children's books frequently contain illustrations, they are also read aloud, and the audience consists of both children and adults (Oittinen 2006, 35).

### **2.2.1 The informative and formative value of children's literature**

Literature that is aimed for younger audiences not only functions as entertainment, but also has pedagogical dimensions. The educational appreciation of children's books has been of value from the beginning of the emergence of children's literature and different literary texts have been utilized for teaching the curriculum as well as applied for religious teaching of children (Alvstad 2019, 160). In this manner, children's books have operated as an important device for forming and informing children (Alvstad 2019, 160). As the younger generations are being educated and introduced to new information and different values through literary texts, children's literature possesses great power by being responsible for the way that different subjects are being portrayed through the texts.

As children's literature is consumed by children of varying ages, they experience stories both through listening and reading. The readership for children's literature can be divided to children up to the age of six, and school children up to the age of twelve (Thomson-Wohlgemuth 1998, 10). Children's age affects the language and sentence structure that is used in the books. For example, younger children prefer language that is clear and effective with simple sentences, while older children understand more complicated structures and words from the higher register (Thomson-Wohlgemuth 1998, 11). In addition to children reading literary texts on their own, adults often read the books aloud, which allows children to act as the hearers of the texts. The different rhythms, tone, intonation, and punctuation need more attention when reading stories aloud, as it helps the child create an image of the story in their mind (Thomson-Wohlgemuth 1998, 13).

The level of knowledge and the ability to comprehend literary texts can be limited especially with younger children, which can affect the way that texts and translations are produced for them. However, as reminded by Thomson-Wohlgemuth (1998, 11), children are able to understand more as a receiver than as a sender. In addition, texts and readers have a shared goal of wanting to understand and to be understood (Oittinen 2006, 37). This suggests that children are able to absorb information even if it is outside of their linguistic and cognitive capabilities.

### **2.2.2 Adult influence**

Even though children's books are principally aimed and produced for children, it is the adults who control what is being written, translated, published, and bought for children. Therefore, for a book to be read or listened by children, it must first be appealing to the adults for them to then select the book for the children. This is also emphasized by Oittinen (2006, 36), who reminds that children's literature is revised according to the likes and dislikes of the adults, which means that children's books have to accommodate to the adult preferences. Furthermore, it is important for children's books to offer something for the adults as well, as they too are the consumers of these texts by reading the stories aloud to children.

As discussed above, adults are the gatekeepers of the literature that is produced and bought for children by assessing what type of texts are appropriate for younger people to read. Similar power is also with the translators of children's literature, as they make the decisions on how original texts are translated. Oittinen (2006, 35) defines translation as "rereading and rewriting

for target audiences”, which is a process that separates the translations from the original texts through different language, culture, readers, and viewpoints. According to Klingberg (quoted in Thomson-Wohlgemuth 1998, 29), the main principles for translating children’s literature is to expand a child’s impressions and ideas of foreign countries and cultures by increasing the available literature, and to encourage the development of the reader’s values by providing a text that is comprehensible to children whose knowledge is still limited.

### **2.2.3 Translation of children’s literature**

When translators translate for children, they have a certain child image in their mind that helps them with the translating process (Oittinen 2006, 42). This child image is constructed of the translator’s own memories of being a child as well as their current conception of children and childhood. As children do not have as much knowledge about the world as adults, the child image assists the translator to consider what levels of experiences, abilities or expectations children might have. By looking at the world through a child’s perspective, the translator can have a more informed outlook on how children feel and think about their environment (Thomson-Wohlgemuth 1998, 45). In this way the translator is better able to adapt the translation to cater for the needs of the young audience. Additionally, the manner in which the translator perceives children and childhood, affects the strategies that are selected and utilized in the translations of literary texts (Oittinen 2006, 43). For instance, if the translator believes that a text would be too difficult for children to understand, there is a greater incentive for the translator to adapt the original text to the level they assume the target reader would have (Thomson-Wohlgemuth 1998, 44), and remove the foreign material from the translation.

In order for the translated text to resonate with children, the right type of language should be considered and employed in the translation. Knowledge of the type of language that should be used for children, and that is used by children themselves, is valuable for the translator to be able to compose a relevant translation that simultaneously speaks to children but is also easy to comprehend (Thomson-Wohlgemuth 1998, 45). In the case of children’s literature, the translator’s writing style should not be too free, as it is easier for children to hold their concentration when the text is more precise and concise (Thomson-Wohlgemuth 1998, 37). The type of language that is selected for a translation can make the text more approachable when the language is simplified for the reader, or more instructive by utilizing more diverse language that will enhance children’s vocabulary (Alvstad 2010, 23). Perhaps the most important aspect to note when translating for children is that a child is not able to recognize

whether a text is an original or a translation (Thomson-Wohlgemuth 1998, 42), but bases their opinion of the text on how much they like reading or listening to it.

When translating from one language to another, this often also implies translation from the source text culture to the target text culture. Because children might not have a wide knowledge about cultures other than their own, literature can be a good medium through which children can begin to widen their cultural awareness. Thomson-Wohlgemuth (1998, 30) defines culture as “the combination of the ways and means of acting, thinking, feeling and perceiving reality”, in which language also plays an essential part. The more far apart the cultures of the original and the translated texts are, the more demanding the translation process becomes. Therefore, familiarity of both the source and target text cultures is crucial, as the translator has to evaluate how much of the culture-specific material the target text reader is able to process (Oittinen et al. 2018, 100). Furthermore, due to the differences in cultural contexts, the target reader’s frame of reference is necessary to consider during the translation process in order to adapt the original text in a way that ensures its readability, while also maintaining its interest (Alvstad 2010, 22).

The way in which culturally related information in an original text is translated, depend on the translator’s child image and their personal judgement about the most suitable translation strategy of such information. To achieve a successful ratio between preserving the cultural elements of the source text and making the text understandable for children can be demanding especially because translated children’s literature has a lower tolerance to strangeness than for example translations that are written for adults (Thomson-Wohlgemuth 1998, 41). If the translator is more loyal to the source text, then the foreign aspects of the source text culture might be too difficult for children to comprehend; however, if the translation is more target text oriented, children would not be exposed to foreign cultures through the stories (Asghari and Salmani 2016, 965). Additionally, because children are not as knowledgeable as adults, producing translations with incorrect information is more damaging, as a child is not able to make corrections while reading in the way that an adult reader would be (Asghari and Salmani 2016, 966).

Translations of children’s books might be the first impressions of foreign countries and cultures for children before they are able to discover knowledge themselves or experience new cultures personally. Therefore, children’s literature has substantial cultural significance due to the values and beliefs the books entail, as they will often influence the perceptions of future generations as well (Alvstad 2010, 25). Literature that is aimed for children prefers to support

and advance positive values because reading is, for the most part, to be a learning experience for children (Alvstad 2010, 26). However, as Oittinen (2006, 40) remarks, cultures and values can in some instances further incorrect impressions of countries and cultures, which is why the choices translators make for children's literature are noteworthy.

### **2.3 Realia**

The broader concept of realia refers to material items, culture-bound notions and phenomena, and a variety of other terms (Leppihalme 2011, 126). However, Leppihalme (2011, 126) points out that in translation studies the term realia is applied when referring to "concepts which are found in a given source culture but not in a given target culture". Due to the crossover between different cultures in the globalizing world, the definitions of realia can sometimes be vague, as the linguistic and cultural borders are crossed with the introduction of loanwords and calques from source languages to target languages (Leppihalme 2011, 126). When new words or concepts are integrated into the target language and they have established their position in the language, they can no longer be characterized as unfamiliar in the target language, even though the cultural origins would still be visible (Leppihalme 2011, 126).

Realia in different texts is what distinguishes the text from the stories of other countries, and additionally, through the use of realia, a piece of writing is closely connected to a specific culture, which makes the text a part of a larger entity. Because cultures and languages differ from each other and they can have significant contrasts, the cultural nuances can often be lost in the translation process. Leppihalme (2011, 127) explains that the difficulties arising during the translation of realia occur due to lexical gaps in the target language, or the translator's lack of comprehensive cultural knowledge. Depending on the translator's preferences and their goals for the overall translation, the cultural aspects can either be accentuated or diluted (Leppihalme 2011, 128). In addition, it is not only the translator's individual choices that affect the translation of realia, but also the commercial and sociocultural aspects, and the genre of the translated text that influence the translation (Leppihalme 2011, 128). For example, in the case of a children's picture book, the target audience's age, as well as the visual elements assist and direct the translation of realia.

There are different strategies that translators can utilize when translating realia. Leppihalme (Leppihalme 2001, quoted in Leppihalme 2011, 129) introduces seven different translation strategies for realia that she has adapted from other classifications. The strategies she mentions

are: (1) direct transfer, (2) calque or a word-for-word translation, (3) cultural adaptation, which is often used for instance when translating for children or avoiding culturally sensitive reference, (4) superordinate term, (5) explicitation, (6) addition of a text-external explanation, and (7) complete omission of the realia (Leppihalme 2001, quoted in Leppihalme 2011, 129).



### 3 Research Data and Methods

The data that I have gathered for my analysis is from the Finnish children's book *Joulupukki ja noitarumpu*, written and illustrated by Mauri and Tarja Kunnas, and its English translation *Santa and the Magic Drum*, which was translated by Timo Tepponen. The books by Kunnas are known for their detailed illustrations and captivating stories that appeal to both children and adults. Mauri Kunnas is an awarded author, whose books have been translated to 37 languages and published in 36 countries (Otava, 2022).

The action-packed book tells a tale about the events leading up to Christmas Eve. The story is told from the point of view of two little elves who try to solve the mystery behind all the strange incidents that occur around Christmas Village. The book includes many other characters as well who make an appearance as the story unravels. On the first spread of the book, all of the elves have their own introductions with illustrations of them and a filled in questionnaire of their profession, hobbies, favorite foods, and so on. These introductions allow the reader to get to know the individual characters before the start of the story and give a better understanding of the specific characteristics of each of the elves' personalities.

I began the analysis process by reading through the Finnish version of the book and gathering the realia in it, after which I read the English book and searched the translations of the realia found in the Finnish text. Most of the realia that I detected from the texts were from the first spread of the book with the introductions of the story's different characters. Although other culturally bound items were found in the books, such as Finnish idioms and expressions, I decided to focus on the concrete 'real' concepts instead of the figurative and linguistic aspects that connect to the Finnish culture.

The research material included twenty-five instances of realia, which I divided into five categories: food, activities, nature, places, and miscellaneous. In addition, I defined what type of translation strategy was used with each of the realia in accordance with Leppihalme's (2011) categorization of the translation strategies for realia.

## 4 Analysis

Table 1. illustrates the categorization of the realia found in the research material, and also indicates how many realia were detected from each category. The most instances of realia were found in the food category, which has a significantly higher number of instances when compared to the other categories that only have a few instances each.

Table 1. Categories of realia

Category	Number of Instances
Food	14
Activities	3
Nature	2
Places	3
Miscellaneous	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>

### 4.1 Food

The most instances of realia that I detected in the research data were food related. As in many other countries, food acts as a central part of the Finnish culture, as it is involved both in the everyday life as well as in special occasions and holidays that are strongly connected to the formation of a cultural experience.

The most frequently utilized translation strategy for food related realia was cultural adaptation, where the Finnish word would be replaced by a more universally comprehensible word that is more familiar in the target-text culture. In these instances, the Finnish cultural characteristics are faded by domestication, as the English translations of the realia do not include any connection to the source culture. Examples of this translation strategy can be found in examples 1–8. In most of these translations, even though the cultural relevance is lost, there is still some connection left to the type of food the Finnish realia is, which is indicated in examples 1–4.

- (1) ryynimakkara  
frankfurter
- (2) mustamakkara  
red hot
- (3) peltopiimä ja talkkuna  
buttermilk and bran
- (4) rieskaleipä  
rye bread

In example 1, the translation for *ryynimakkara* is *frankfurter* and in example 2, the translation for *mustamakkara* is *red hot*. These translations have changed the type of sausages mentioned in the original text to ones that are more common in the target text culture. Additionally in example 3, cultural adaptation was used. However, the word *peltopiimä* was left a bit ambiguous to me, as I was not able to find out if *peltopiimä* is a regional name for buttermilk or a specific type of buttermilk. Therefore, the translation strategy could also be considered as using a superordinate term with the translation *buttermilk*. As for the word *talkkuna* in the same example, the translation *bran* can be considered to contain some connection to the Finnish realia, as *talkkuna* can be used in a similar way as *bran*. Additionally in example 4, *rieskaleipä* is translated as *rye bread*. In this example the Finnish realia has been replaced by another type of bread that is a staple in the Finnish cuisine, which emphasizes the source text culture but is possibly more familiar for the target reader than *rieskaleipä*.

The translation strategy used in examples 5–8 is also cultural adaptation. However, in these instances the English translations are more removed from the Finnish culture and have little correlation to the original realia. In example 5, *turkinpippuri* has been translated to *peppercorns*. Pepper on its own would not qualify as realia, but as *turkinpippuri* can also refer to a specific Finnish candy, I consider it as one. In this sense, the translation has changed the reference from candy to a spice, although the translation *peppercorn* does hint at the spicy taste of the candy. No hints to the original word are left in example 6, where *vispipuuro* is translated to *fruit compote*. The Finnish realia refers to a type of porridge made with lingonberries, while the English translation is more of a condiment, which makes the two remarkably different from each other. In the last examples in 7 and 8, the common Finnish candies *salmiakki* and licorice have been translated to *toffees* and *jelly beans* that are perhaps more prevalent in the target text culture, but leave no resemblance to the Finnish candies mentioned in the original text.

- (5) turkinpippuri  
peppercorns
- (6) vispipuuro  
fruit compote
- (7) salmiakkikuvioita  
toffees
- (8) lakritsapötköjä  
jelly beans

Another strategy that was utilized for the translation of food was explicitation. This strategy was found in examples 9–11. In all these examples, the translation uses a more foreignizing strategy though explanation and description about what the specific dish consists of or what

they might resemble. In example 9, *mämmi* is translated to *rye porridge*, which explains well the type of food that is mentioned, as *mämmi* is made of rye and its consistency resembles that of porridge. In the case of *rievä ja rosolli* in example 10, *rievä* is translated by using the cultural adaptation strategy for bread as in the previous examples above with the translation *rye bread*. *Rosolli* on the other hand, is translated with explicitation by recounting the main ingredients of the dish in the translation *boiled beets and herring*. In this example, the reader will not be able to gain the full concept of the dish, as the translation merely names a root vegetable and a fish without any indication to the dish being a type of salad. Example 11 could be considered as the least descriptive translation out of these three instances of explicitation, as *lanttulaatikko* is translated to *baked rutabagas*, which expresses the main ingredient and the method of cooking but does not describe the dish itself.

- (9) mämmi  
rye porridge
- (10) rievä ja rosolli  
rye bread, boiled beets and herring
- (11) lanttulaatikko  
baked rutabagas

The last example of the food section covers the translation strategy of calque or word-for-word translation. In example 12, *lapinjuusto* has been translated to *Lapp cheese* with the use of calque. The only dissimilarity between the Finnish realia and the translation is that the translation has left out the genitive form of the original.

- (12) lapinjuusto  
Lapp cheese

## 4.2 Activities

Through the story, the readers are also introduced to some activities that are closely related to the Finnish culture. In addition, some of the activities are ones that can be done in winter, which can have affected the translation, as the readers of the translation might be unaware of these types of activities due to a lack of experience of a colder climate. For instance, as example 13 indicates, *värillisten jäälyhtyjien rakentelu* has been translated to *making Japanese lanterns*, which is very different from the original. The translation strategy that was used for this is cultural adaptation by introducing another type of lantern that perhaps is more familiar to the target text reader. This translation was noteworthy, as it does not rely on the source or the target culture to explain the activity, but brings in an element of Japanese culture, which creates a rather notable contrast with the Christmassy and wintery landscape that is present in the story.

- (13) värillisten jäälyhtyjien rakentelu  
making Japanese lanterns

Another winter related activity in the data was *avantouinti* that has been translated to *winter swimming*, as demonstrated in example 14. In this example, explicitation has been selected as a translation strategy to explain the activity. This translation strategy does not offer a complete understanding of what *avantouinti* truly entails, for example usually only having a small hole in the ice for swimming or dipping in the water.

- (14) avantouinti  
winter swimming

The third activity in the research data was *saunominen*, which is translated to *sauna* in example 15. Although *sauna* is a common concept that is widely spread and known all around the world, and thus not qualifying as realia, I nevertheless decided to include *saunominen* in the research data, as the activity refers to the Finnish experience of going to sauna. In this example, the activity of being in sauna has been translated to the noun that refers to only the place where the activity takes place and not to the actual experience and activity of bathing in the sauna. This translation strategy is a domesticating one, as a person reading the English version of the book would only connect *sauna* to their own experiences of it as it has been adapted to their culture, which can be very different from the Finnish one. In Finland *saunominen* is a fundamental aspect of the culture and it derives from age-old traditions, which makes it a specifically unique and Finnish experience.

- (15) saunominen  
sauna

### 4.3 Nature

The special nature in Lapland is also depicted by realia in the story. *Tunturi* is a characteristic feature in the northern scenery, and even though these softer mountains are located in other northern countries in the Fennoscandia area, I wanted to classify them as realia, as they do not appear in any English-speaking countries. In example 16, *tunturi* is translated to *arctic hill* with the use of explicitation to describe the realia in question. This translation strategy relies to foreignization, as the translation allows the reader to recognize the culturally related item. What was interesting to notice, was that on the last page of the book, there was a separate introductory section of the shaman character of the story, where he is told to reside next to *Väkkärätunturi*, which was translated to *Rapsallion Fjeld*, as shown in example 17. In this instance the

translation is different from the previous one, translating *tunturi* with *fjeld*, which could suggest that it is derived from the Swedish word *fjäll*. In this example, a more specific translation for *tunturi* was needed, as it states the name of a specific place and ‘*arctic hill*’ as a descriptive translation would not have fitted the purpose or context.

- (16) tunturi  
arctic hill
- (17) Väkkärätunturi  
Rapscaillon Fjeld

On the contrary in example 18, *tunturipuro* loses the northern feature of it, as it is translated as *brook*. In this example the strategy that was used is cultural adaptation that brings the text closer to the target reader with domestication.

- (18) tunturipuro  
brook

#### 4.4 Places

Two instances of realia that describe a place were found on the spread of the book that illustrated a map of Christmas Village. From this map, the reader can find the different locations where the story takes place. For instance, *avantouimalampi* in example 19, is translated to *winter swimming hole*, which uses an explicitation strategy. This translation is a good complement to the translation of *avantouinti* that was previously mentioned in the activities section, where the activity was translated as *winter swimming*. However, now with the translation *winter swimming hole* with an illustration next to it, the entire concept of the activity becomes clearer, as the reader is able to piece the different components together to form an idea of what the realia entails in more detail.

- (19) avantouimalampi  
winter swimming hole

Another realia mentioning a place is *kota* in example 20. For this realia the translation strategy that was utilized was omission, as the description next to the illustration of the place has been deleted in the translation. Although this particular place does not occur in the storyline, it is interesting that the realia is ignored in the translation, especially as the illustration of the map allows the reader to explore new and different places in the Christmas Village.

- (20) kota  
n/a

## 4.5 Miscellaneous

The last instances of realia are gathered under the miscellaneous category. The translation strategy that was used in examples 21 and 22 is cultural adaptation, with which the realia from the source culture has been changed to a more familiar item in the target culture. Example 21 mentions the realia *noitarumpu*, which appears in the title of the book, and is also present throughout the story, as the main villain, the shaman, uses it to cause trouble in the Christmas Village. Even though *noitarumpu* is not directly part of Finnish culture, I wanted to include it in the analysis of realia, as Sami influences in the book and in Finnish culture in general are present especially in the northern parts of Finland, where the story is located. In the English translation, this realia was translated as *magic drum*, which can be assumed to be any type of drum that holds magical qualities, which then causes the loss of some of the connotations the Finnish word *noitarumpu* contains, as it immediately creates connections to the scene of the story in the Finnish Lapland with Sami culture and shamans.

- (21) noitarumpu  
magic drum

The other realia that used cultural adaptation as a translation strategy is *saunapadallinen* in example 22, which was translated to *tub-size*. This translation has been domesticated, as there is no relation to the Finnish realia. Here, domestication was selected for the translation of *saunapadallinen* possibly because this concept is most likely unfamiliar to people outside of Finland due to differences in sauna culture around the world. Thus, the realia has been replaced with a more globally known concept.

- (22) saunapadallinen  
tub-size

The final translation that will be analyzed in this section is example 23, where *hammaspeikko* has been translated to *tooth-decay gremlin* by using the explicitation strategy. This translation can be considered as foreignizing, as the translation describes what kind of creature is talked about even though it might not be well known to children in the target text culture. The explanatory translation specifies in detail what type of fairy-tale character is being mentioned to ensure not mistaking it for example with the tooth fairy, which would bear completely opposite connotations than *hammaspeikko*.

- (23) hammaspeikko  
tooth-decay gremlin

## 5 Conclusions

My objective for this thesis was to discover how the realia in the children's book *Joulupukki ja noitarumpu* were translated from Finnish into English in order to find out whether the culture of a minority language would be preserved in the translation. In addition, I wanted to research if the translation would function as a learning medium for children and allow the reader to be exposed to new and different cultures.

I divided the realia in my research data into five categories: food, activities, nature, places, and miscellaneous. Additionally, I defined the type of translation strategy that was utilized for each of the realia found in the data with Leppihalme's (2011) categorization of translation strategies for realia. From my analysis I discovered that in most instances, the translation did not retain the cultural references of the realia, as the translations in all of the five categories mostly relied on domesticating strategies to bring the text closer to the target reader, which diminishes the cultural influence of the book. Some of the domesticating translations did not have any connection to the source text realia. However, most of the domesticating translations did retain a level of connection to the type of source text realia by translating them with a word from the same category that the original represented. Translations that utilized foreignizing translation strategies were significantly fewer.

The findings I was able to gather from my analysis indicate that the translations in the research material rely more on domesticating translation strategies and adapting the text to the local realities of the target reader. Therefore, the English translation does not give a comprehensive representation of the minority language culture that is present in the source text.

The definitions of the different strategies for translating realia by Leppihalme (2011) were helpful for the analyzing process, as they provided a frame of reference for the analysis. However, in some cases I found it challenging to find a suitable translation strategy, which is why I think other categorizations for translating realia could also be applied to perform a more detailed and comprehensive study of the translation of realia. Perhaps more insight of translating from minority languages into majority languages could be gathered for example by executing a more extensive study comparing other translations of the book to discover if domestication is always the more dominant translation strategy utilized in translations for children.



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