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First come, first served - Först till kvarn får först mala

Translating English Idioms into Swedish

in Marian Keyes's *Rachel's Holiday*

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ABSTRACT

Översättning är ett intressant ämne och något som berör alla, både i yrkes- och privatlivet. För att en text skall vara flytande och språket verka naturligt, krävs det att översättaren gör vissa val som gagnar målspråkstexten. Till exempel måste skillnaden mellan olika kulturer tas i beaktande och här spelar översättaren en viktig roll.

Figurativa uttryck kan vara svåra att översätta eftersom de är språkspecifika och normalt inte kan överföras direkt till ett annat språk. I den här avhandlingen har idiomatiska uttryck studerats med fokus på de strategier som används då dessa översätts från ett språk till ett annat. Hypotesen är att idiomerna har blivit domesticerade, d.v.s. från att ha varit utländska har de anpassats till målkulturen. Till hypotesen hör också påståendet att de flesta engelska idiom har översatts med icke-idiom och för att texterna skall vara stilistiskt sett så lika som möjligt har översättaren lagt till svenska idiom där det inte förekom några i den engelska texten. Ingo (1990: 210) hävdar att vid bortfall av idiom borde en "god" översättare addera idiom för att garantera den stilistiska balansen. Antalet idiomatiska uttryck borde således vara ungefär detsamma i båda texterna.

Det primära materialet har tagits ur Marian Keyes' roman *Rachel's Holiday* och materialet består av 80 engelska idiom. Endast de uttryck från som fanns listade i *Cambridge Idioms Dictionary* (2006) inkluderades i den här analysen för att försäkra att materialet skulle bestå av erkända idiom.

Undersökningen visade att majoriteten av uttrycken hade blivit översatta med ett icke-idiom. Trots det har måltexten samma stil som källtexten eftersom översättaren har lagt till nya idiom där det inte fanns några i originalet och bibehållit både dess prägel av figurativa uttryck. Således är hypotesen riktig. Även domesticeringen av de översatta idiomerna är synbar i analysen.

KEYWORDS: idioms, figurative language, translation, language specific, chick-lit.

1 INTRODUCTION

Translation is an important part of our lives. In order for as many people as possible to take part in literature, films, poetry and business originating from other countries and cultures, we need someone, not only to change the language for us to be able to understand the text and the language, but also to alter the piece of work in that sense that we comprehend all the concepts that the author has wanted to convey, especially those not familiar in our own culture. If the translator wants the text to appear fluent and natural without making it appear too foreign or even confusing, s/he must make alterations in order for the target text to appeal to the target group. The scholars Bassnett and Lefevere state that translation is, in fact, a rewriting of a text, and such rewritings are meant to be functional “[...]in a given society in a given way.” (quoted in Venuti 1995: 7). Thus the process of rewriting is necessary in order for the target audience to grasp the full meaning of a text. Rewriting a piece of literature equals manipulation, which might have both positive and negative consequences. On one hand, rewriting could introduce new concepts, genres and devices which would support and stimulate the development of domestic literature. In this respect, the history of translation is also the history of literary innovation. On the other hand, rewriting could repress innovation, and, according to Bassnett and Lefevere, since rewriting is a form of manipulation, which can be considered negative, it is important to study such manipulative processes, that is translations, to get a greater awareness of our society and world. (Venuti 1995: 7)

Some aspects of a text can be more, others less difficult, for a translator to transfer into another language and, at the same time, into another culture. Aspects that are different in the two languages and cultures might cause problems during the translation process. Figurative expressions are an example of a case when the translator might find the translation process difficult since they are language and culture-specific. It is, therefore, important to consider what options the translator has when rendering figurative language and expressions that cannot be taken literally. An idiom is an example of figurative language and, if someone does not know the meaning of the expression, it is very difficult, if not impossible, to guess the meaning and to use it correctly. If the translator comes across an unfamiliar idiom it is hard to understand the meaning since

the separate parts of the expression do not bear their original meaning (Mikone 2000: 17). An idiom should, therefore, be seen as a unit, constructed by words that get entirely different meanings when put together. Since a word-for-word translation often is not possible, idiomatic expressions will most likely differ in different languages, for instance, concerning their composition. Since idiomatic language is an important stylistic feature, it is both interesting and important to study the methods and the outcome of these in translation.

The aim of this thesis is to study how English idioms have been translated in the Swedish version of the novel *Rachel's Holiday* by Marian Keyes. I claim that when translating the idioms in the primary material, the strategy of domesticating a text has been used. Thus the first part of my hypothesis is that the idioms have been domesticated so as not to sound foreign and strange. Domesticating a text means that the translator favours the target text readers and alters foreign expressions and elements in order to make the reading process easier for the target group. (Venuti 1992: 4–5) Most idioms have been simplified in such a way that they have been translated with a non-idiom in the Swedish translation, risking that the style of the Swedish version would differ from that of the original. In order to prevent that from happening, the translator has compensated for the loss of idioms by using idiomatic language in the translation where there was none in the original text. The second part of the hypothesis is that many of the English idioms have been translated with a non-idiom and, to compensate for that, the translator has added Swedish idioms to the translation in places where the author has used non-idioms. The text is, thus, made stylistically similar to the source text.

According to Nida and Taber, the translation of figurative expressions is important in all kinds of texts, both modern ones as well as old ones, such as the Bible.

One of the difficulties is that too often translators are not sufficiently sensitive to the possibility of idiomatic expressions, and hence the end result is a weakening of the figurative force of the translation, since they do not compensate for loss of certain idioms by the introduction of others. (Nida & Taber 1969: 106)

Nida and Taber claim that it is important to take idiomatic expressions into consideration when translating. They state that the best translations do not sound like a translation, and it is important to pay close attention to their style. The style of the Bible, for instance, cannot, and should not, be changed in order to sound modern and appear “[...]as if it happened in the next town ten years ago[...]” (Nida & Taber 1969: 13). The distinctive style, including certain expression, choice of words, constructions etc., has a function of its own.

The same idea applies also to the genre of “chick lit” as well. It has a particular style, which will be discussed in 1.4, and features of that style should be restored in the target text as well. Even though “chick lit” is often considered “less serious literature”, it can still be difficult to translate and transfer its stylistic features into another language without risking that some would disappear. Retaining the style of the text can be considered as important as getting the story and the plot correctly translated since the style may play an important part in them as well. The author has often paid close attention to his/her way of writing and, therefore, the translator also has to recognize that effort. Furthermore, “chick lit” is usually read for entertainment, and the reader is most likely to appreciate a fluent text without being constantly reminded of the fact that they are reading a translation.

The first part of this thesis will focus on the material and method; how the idioms were identified and studied and how they have been analyzed. The author and the genre that Keyes represents will be introduced in section 1.3. Since different types of figurative language have some features in common, one being that they are not supposed to be taken literally, other types than idioms, such as metaphors and similes, as well as their composition and use, will be discussed in 2.1. Translation is an important part of this thesis and translation strategies will be examined in chapter 3 since there are different strategies for the translator to choose from. The findings of the analysis of the material will be presented in chapter 4 and the thesis will close with conclusions drawn from the findings.

1.1 Material

The material of the present thesis consists of idioms identified in the novel *Rachel's Holiday* by Marian Keyes. The original version in English, *Rachel's Holiday*, was published in 1997 in London and the Swedish translation, *En oväntad semester* (¹an unexpected holiday), in 1999 in Stockholm. The author has described the lives of four of the Walsh sisters, Claire, Maggie, Rachel and Anna, excluding only the youngest sister Helen, in four different books. They have all had their share of mishaps and problems, and since their personalities are completely different, these four sisters provide their own points of view about each other and their living situation in the books. In *Rachel's Holiday*, the 27-year-old Rachel is the heroine, and she is faced with serious and even life-threatening problems; she is addicted to drugs and alcohol and forced to go to a treatment centre in order to recover. The novel centres around a disturbing subject of the life of an addict. This is a situation that an average reader of the novel probably would not be familiar with and, judging by the theme, one could mistakenly assume that this book could not be as entertaining as Keyes's other works. Many have, however, acknowledged that this has not been the case and that she has been able to write about this topic still keeping the novel humorous, and allowing the novel to have the same style as the rest of her books. When writing this book, Keyes could have portrayed much of what she herself went through when she was trying to stop drinking with the help of treatment and meetings. Writers of fiction often conduct a great deal of research when writing about specific subjects, but in this case the writer got all the inside information by living it herself. (Keyes 2009) *Rachel's Holiday*, which is Keyes's third novel, can be classified as "chick lit" since, despite the serious theme, there are numerous of characteristics in her book which are typical for the genre.

The primary material consists of 80 English idioms, identified in *Rachel's Holiday*. To collect the material, I first identified the English idioms in order to compare them to their translations in the target text. The idioms were identified by using Mikone's (2000: 17) definition of an idiom. Mikone states that an idiom can be explained by the

¹ My translation

following formula; A + B + C = D and that the meaning of the expression is different from its individual parts. In this thesis, an idiom is therefore an expression which bears another meaning than the sum of its parts. The next step was to study the target text and identify the Swedish idioms and compare them to the source text. By comparing the Swedish idioms to their English counterparts, I could see whether non-idioms in the source text had been translated into idioms in the target text. The 80 idioms in *Rachel's Holiday* have been checked against *the Cambridge Idioms Dictionary* (2006) and the Swedish ones against Luthman's *Svenska idiom* (2002). There were some idioms that are not commonly used and, therefore, not listed in the dictionaries and these were excluded from the study. The choice to include those listed in the dictionaries was made in order to include established idioms thus avoiding slang and the author's personal idiolect. For instance, the expression *to be up the pole* (Keyes 1997: 144), which is Irish slang for being pregnant, was used in the novel but is not included in the material since it is not listed in the dictionary of idioms.

The narrator of the novel is the main character Rachel and most of the English idioms in the material occurred in the narrative. They were often used to describe certain situations and actions, adding force to the meaning. For instance, the idiom *to spill one's guts* was used in *Rachel's Holiday* when Rachel wanted to tell a friend about a bad experience she had had with a young man who treated her badly.

So, with longed-for relief, I *spilled my guts* about my awful experience with Chris. (Keyes 1997: 564)

Det kändes som en befrielse att *få berätta om* min hemska upplevelse med Chris. (Keyes 1999: 482)

²It was a relief to *get to talk about* my awful experience with Chris.

Instead of using literal language, for instance *to reveal everything*, the idiomatic expression was used to indicate the secrecy and somewhat embarrassing nature of the information that was exposed. The majority of the Swedish idioms also occurred outside the conversations and mainly to describe people's actions, especially negative ones. An

² My translation

example is the expression *att föra någon bakom ljuset* (³to lead someone behind the light), which means to knowingly mislead someone. This expression was used to describe the feelings of a seven-year-old Rachel who felt that she had tricked her parents into believing something that was not true.

Jag slutade med att försvara mig för jag fick skuld känslor över att jag hade *fört dem bakom ljuset*. (Keyes 1999: 372)

⁴I stopped defending myself because I felt guilty about having *brought them behind the light*

Then I stopped defending myself because I felt guilty about *misleading* them. (Keyes 1997: 434)

The Swedish expression describes someone's actions, and, at the same time, the style of the idiom makes the perpetrator seem cunning and scheming, which the English non-idiom does not. This is an example where there was no idiom in the source text but the translator chose to use one in the target text. One reason might be to even up the numbers of idioms or the fact that this Swedish idiom conveys more emotions than a literal text would.

1.2 Method

I have studied idioms in the novel *Rachel's Holiday* and their Swedish translation. The strategies have been categorized according to the methods applied to the idioms by the translator. The categorization has followed the system introduced by Gideon Toury (1995: 82–83) who has, in fact, analyzed the translation of metaphors, whereas my interest has been in that of the idioms. Toury has identified three most frequently used methods of translating metaphors: a metaphor into the same metaphor, a metaphor into a different metaphor and a metaphor into a non-metaphor. A fourth method, a metaphor into 0, that is, complete omission, is also used but not as frequently as the three previous

³ My translation

⁴ My translation

methods. It is stated that the translator does not have the right to completely omit idioms, unless they are considered unimportant. On the other hand, it can be argued that only the author, and not the translator, has the right to decide whether a metaphor is unimportant. (Toury 1995: 82) This dilemma is a contributing factor why this method is not an ideal solution for translating idioms. Proceeding from the target text, there are another two methods where the metaphors appear in the target text rather than in the source text. The two methods are a non-metaphor translated into a metaphor in the target text and 0 into a metaphor, the latter method meaning addition of a metaphor to the target text with no linguistic motivation in the source text. When the metaphors appear in the target text rather than in the source text, they are considered a solution rather than a translation problem since the metaphors are added by the translator without specific influence by the source text. (Toury 1995: 83) However, only the methods considered the most relevant were used in this thesis. The strategies used in the analysis of the translation of idioms in *Rachel's Holiday*, were thus categorized by using methods inspired by four of Toury's six categories. They were grouped in the following way:

1. Idiom translated into non-idiom.

The idiom has been replaced by an explanation of the meaning in plain language instead of using an idiom in the target text. An example of this method is *to go round the bend* – *att bli galen*. This expression was used when the main character Rachel was so angry and upset about her addiction and what her family and friends thought of her behaviour.

Chaquie was the person who stopped me from *going round the bend*. (Keyes 1997: 471)

Tack vare Chaquie klarade jag mig *från att bli galen*. (Keyes 1999: 404)

⁵Thanks to Chaquie I managed *not to go crazy*.

In the example the meaning of the English expression has been rendered with a non-idiom, resulting in the loss of figurative language in the source text. This category is

⁵ My translation

very important since the hypothesis is that many idioms are translated into plain language.

2. Idiom translated into different idiom.

Corresponding pragmatically idioms have been used in both the source and the target text but because of differences concerning the choice of words and construction the idioms are not considered the same as their semantic composition is different. Example of this translation method is *to go for broke* – *att satsa allt på ett kort* and occurs when a man talks about him trying to have sex with a girl.

⁶I decided to *go for broke*, so I said to her "I suppose a ride is out of the question?" (Keyes 1997: 55)

"Jag bestämde mig för att *satsa allt på ett kort*, så jag sa: 'Ett ligg är väl inte att tänka på?'" (Keyes 1999: 50)

⁶I decided to *stake everything on one card*, so I said "A lay is surely not to think of?"

3. Idiom translated into the same idiom.

When the translator has chosen this solution, s/he has used an existing idiom in the target language that has the same construction, choice of words and meaning as the original one in the source text. The idioms *the walls have ears* – *väggarna har öron* are examples of this method where the same expression works in both languages and cultures. In this situation, the mother of the family is using this expression to let another adult know that her daughters might be listening and she should not talk about anything inappropriate.

'Sssh, *walls have ears*...' (Keyes 1997: 310)

"Sssccchhh, *väggarna har öron*." (Keyes 1997: 266)

⁷'Sssccchhh, *the walls have ears*.'

⁶ My translation

⁷ My translation

4. Non-idiom translated into idiom

This category proceeds from the target text, unlike those listed above, and shows whether the translator has added idioms in the target text. By doing that, s/he can compensate for idioms that possibly were lost during the translation process (see translation strategy 1 above). An example of this method is *nothing to hide – inga lik i garderoben* and occurred when Rachel reflects on her childhood.

Vi hade *inga lik i garderoben*. (Keyes 1999: 367)

⁸We had *no corpses in the closet*.

We had *nothing to hide*. (Keyes 1997: 428)

The first three categories focus on the translation of English idioms into Swedish and which translation strategy that has been used. In these cases the idioms are considered translation problems which have needed a solution. The last category focuses on the Swedish translation which has added idioms where there are none in the source text. Considering the fact that the translator has added the idioms rather freely with no specific influence by the source text, they can therefore be considered part of the solution rather than part of the problem.

1.3 The Author and Her Works

Marian Keyes was born in 1963 in the west of Ireland but was brought up in Dublin and spent some time in London (Keyes 2009). She has been addicted to alcohol most of her life, which is reflected in her novels, and especially in *Rachel's Holiday*, which is about addictions. Today Keyes is a recovering alcoholic and says that her success with the writing and her career as an author have helped her to gain control of her life. (Keyes 2005: 235) Her first novel *Watermelon* was published in 1995, and to this date, she has written eleven novels and two non-fiction books.

⁸ My translation

Marian Keyes's works are read by people from all over the world. Her books have been translated into 35 different languages (Keyes 2009). The plots of the novels are without exception set in either Ireland or the United States, and focus on women in their 30s, who are struggling with their love life, career, health etc. Regardless of one's homeland, people can identify with these problems, which is a contributing factor to Keyes's popularity. The fact that Keyes also writes about more serious subjects, for instance drug abuse, which the novel *Rachel's Holiday* centres around, gives her works depth and variety as well.

The title of the book *Rachel's Holiday*, which has been translated into Swedish by Caroline Zielfelt, has been changed into *En oväntad semester* (⁹An unexpected holiday). This title introduces a new perspective and suggests that most things will not go as the protagonist Rachel has expected, whereas the English title does not suggest this. Most of Keyes's other titles, however, are literally translated which could be a sign of the fact that most of the translators of her book titles have not seen any reason to change them.

Keyes has a certain style when writing which can be recognized in all of her works. She uses, for instance, much wordplay, idiomatic language and comical references to contemporary subjects. According to Delia Chiaro (1992: 11), it is a rather complicated task to write a humorous text, such as Keyes's work usually is. "If word play is to be successful, it has to play on knowledge which is shared between sender and recipient." (Chiaro 1992: 11). This means that both the writer and the reader have to recognize the references that are used, for instance, in the joke. Keyes also uses idioms as tools for humorous elements. Changing a well-known expression, and making it mean something else while the original idiom is still recognizable, is one way of making an idiom humorous. In *Rachel's Holiday* there is an example where Keyes uses an idiom to make a joke. In a situation Rachel makes a comment about two blonde girls who apparently are a little stupid; *The blonde leading the blonde* (Keyes 1997: 47). A new expression is formed based on the idiom *The blind leading the blind*. The meaning of the latter expression is that someone is trying to show someone else how to do

⁹ My translation

something which they do not know how to do themselves (Cambridge Idioms Dictionary 2006). By playing with the fact that the words *blonde* and *blind* are rather similar and that blondes are jokingly considered dumb and helpless makes this version of the established idiom quite successful.

The translation of texts with special features, such as figurative language, can therefore be challenging. The translator has to decide how to make the wordplay work in the target culture as well. Although the humorous elements in Keyes's texts are prominent features that make her works special and, presumably, popular, those aspects are reasons that also make them difficult to translate. The problematic features that occur in Keyes's novels can also usually be found in any literature belonging to the genre of "chick lit", which will be discussed in the following chapter.

1.4 The Genre of "Chick Lit"

The first word used in this expression indicates that this genre is mainly meant for young women since the word "chick" is slang, often in an offensive way, for a girl or a young woman. The fact that the protagonist is female is one of the most prominent features, and a novel with a male main character would not even be considered to belong to "chick lit" even though it might have other features that are prominent in this genre. Another characteristic is the importance of romantic elements which makes this genre similar to the genre of romance. But still one cannot say that these two genres, "chick lit" and romance, are equal since, in "chick lit", the heroine's affectionate feelings are not intended only for the prince of the story, but also for family and friends (Gelbman 2001).

The phenomenon of "chick lit" started with Helen Fielding's novel *Bridget Jones's Diary*, which is about an average woman, struggling with her relationships, weight and bad habits. Although this kind of fiction is mostly written by young, single women for young, single women, the plot is still centred around finding a man, getting married and achieving societal approval, both by men and women. (Zeisler 2008: 99) "Chick lit" is

often written in a certain way and in both Helen Fielding's and Marian Keyes's novels, these characteristics can be found. For instance, "chick lit" is often written in a diary form, constructed by e-mails or like a private journal, which might make the reading more intimate since the plot seems to be taken from someone's personal life (McCabe & Akass 2006: 190). Although the genre of "chick lit" is popular among readers, Marian Keyes herself has said that she does not like that term because it could be interpreted as condescending. According to Keyes, she has the impression that people, especially men, think "you silly little women with your silly little books" when speaking of "chick lit" (Keyes 2009). This genre, she continues, is understood as something that is written by women for women in order for them to have something "easy" to read. Keyes has noted that her writing is not taken seriously by all critics but states that her writing is indeed a serious matter to her.

People tell me I'm not going to win the Booker [Prize], and that's true but there are different ways of having one's work validated. I respect what I do; I don't take myself seriously, but I take my writing seriously. (Keyes 2009)

Keyes's main point is that although the genre she is supposed to represent might not be considered high quality literature, she takes her job as an author very seriously. Sometimes the real reward is not a reputable prize but positive feedback from the audience who enjoys reading Keyes's books regardless of her "easy" style or genre.

2 FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

In figurative language the meaning is not the same as the literal meaning of the words and sentences that are used. Figurative language occurs in all cultures and languages but the structure and composition, however, might vary from one language to another. It has the same function, though, giving the language variety and alternatives of expressing ideas. In writing, it is often used both in poetry and prose, but still mostly in texts that are informal and not academic (Ingo 1991: 209). Idioms are also frequently used in everyday speech, and most people are able to use idioms in their mother tongue without difficulty. According to Albert N. Katz (1998: 3) figurative language is in fact a common part of our verbal communication.

The creative interplay of language and thought is particularly evident in figurative language. The use of such language is not rare or limited to poetic situations but rather is a ubiquitous characteristic of speech. (Katz et al 1998: 3)

The use of figurative language is thus not only an optional feature in both fiction and non-fiction, but also in some ways necessary in order for the writer to make the text stylistically more appealing. There are different types of figurative language which all have one aspect in common; the figurative expressions should not be taken literally. Examples of figurative expressions that are commonly used in both speech and writing are metaphors, similes and idioms, all of which will be presented in this thesis for the sake of comparison.

It may sometimes be difficult to distinguish between plain and figurative language. According to Katja Mäntylä (2004: 37), however, the difference between, for instance, non-idioms and idioms may be weak and fuzzy and there is without a doubt an overlap. The indistinct difference between these types of language might cause difficulty in deciding how to categorize a phrase or an expression. Because of the fact that idioms may vary to a great extent, there is no standard rule as to the structure. Since it is not always possible to say on which side of the border an expression is located, the focus should, therefore, be on the meaning of the whole expression, and on its figurativeness. The following figure shows the comparison between figurative and literal language.

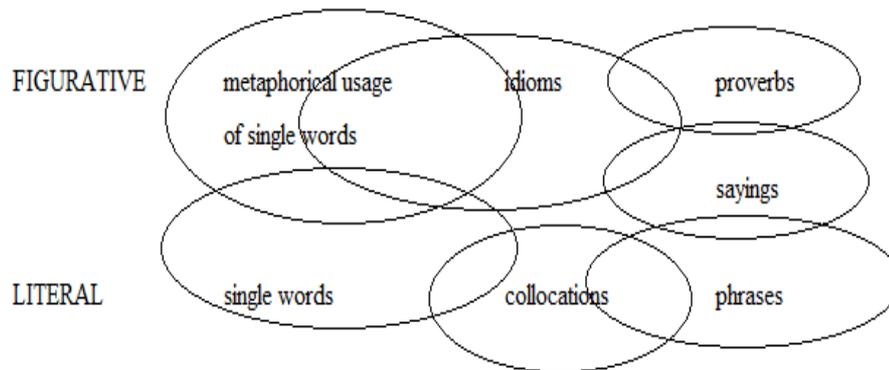


Figure 1. Overlapping features of literal and figurative language (Mäntylä 2004: 38)

The above figure shows that both types of language overlap each other in several different aspects. For instance, the figure shows that single words can be used both literally and figuratively which can cause difficulty when determining what is figurative language and what is not. Furthermore, Mäntylä (2004: 38) states that there can also occur confusion between various multi-word expressions and their usage, such as conversational phrases, sayings and proverbs. It is important to take into account the fact that there are different ways of expressing oneself, both literally and figuratively, and those are important to know to fully manage a language. However, it is not only important to know the difference between plain and figurative language but also to identify different types of figurative expressions. Therefore, the difference between some commonly used expressions will be discussed in the following chapter.

2.1 Metaphors and Similes

Knowing the difference between literal and figurative language is significant to a language speaker/learner. But it is also important to have knowledge of the differences between different figurative expressions as well. Metaphors and similes are examples of

figurative language that is commonly used in everyday speech and writing. It is not always easy to distinguish between them since they both share similar features, for example, they are not meant to be taken literally. When using metaphors as well as similes, you link one thing to another in order to explain how something is or is done (Hirsch et al 2002: 155). A metaphor is an expression that claims that one object or phenomenon is something else, which allows the reader/listener to draw conclusions and find similarities. For instance, the sentence “her home is a prison” is a basic metaphor that cannot be interpreted literally, but the overall meaning should be understood, that for some reason, not necessarily physically, someone is trapped in their home. By reading or hearing that expression, one can understand much about a person’s feelings, environment and behavior, and the expression shares a feature with the literal meaning. Metaphors are therefore often used to express ideas that are inexpressible by literal language. In order for a metaphor to work, that is, the hearer/reader understands what the speaker/writer wants to describe, both the writer and the reader have to share a common set of principles (Searle 1993: 102). When a person hears a metaphor, s/he needs to get through certain stages in order to comprehend the metaphorical meaning of such an expression. For instance, s/he must identify the expression and to determine whether it is, in fact, a metaphorical utterance. Furthermore, the listener needs to have some strategies for understanding and restricting the utterance. (Searle 1993: 103) As metaphors may vary in complexity, the process of interpreting metaphors could sometimes be delayed or even fail. Clarity, confusion, and understanding are all factors that one has to consider when using figurative expressions, such as metaphors.

Similes are similar to metaphors in such a way that they link two separate objects together, but mainly as a comparison (Hirsch et al 2002: 160). In addition, they differ from metaphors in construction. The words *like* and *as* are used in similes, whereas they do not occur in metaphors. To define the difference between these two types of expressions, a formula might be used; metaphors expresses that **A is B**, whereas similes are constructed as follows: **A is like B**. (Hirsch et al 2002: 155, 160) Examples of similes are *as gentle as a lamb* and *eat like a pig*, which could be quite descriptive when the distinctive features of those animals are known. However, many similes have been overused and become clichés, which means that they should be used with care to

maintain originality in one's thought. There is always an advantage in knowing them, though, in order to understand all types of texts and speech. The solution is to have the knowledge of when such expressions are suitable and what types to use, whether, for instance, metaphors, similes or idioms could make the text or speech richer.

2.2 Idioms

In part 2.1, metaphors were introduced and how they function. In the previous section, metaphors and similes share some features, and so do metaphors and idioms. An idiom is, in fact, a “dead” metaphor (Larson 1984: 249). The difference between “dead” and “live” metaphors is that a “dead” metaphor is a part of the idiomatic constructions of the lexicon whereas a “live” one is constructed by the speaker/writer to teach or illustrate something. For instance the idiom *leg of the table* is originally a metaphor but today it is so commonly used, and a part of the language use, that people do not think of the comparison of which it was based. (Larson 1984: 249) The “dead” metaphors, the idioms, have thus become so fixed that the users do not reflect on the background or how the expression is constructed.

When presenting metaphors and similes, formulas were viewed in order to explain their differences and constructions. To explain how idioms differ from literal language the same method will be used. Literal language can be explained as $A + B + C = ABC$, which means that the words that are used are meant to be taken literally (Mikone 2000: 17). The words simply equal the literal meaning of the sentence. Idioms are considered figurative and would often not make any sense if taken literally and one must know that the meaning of the phrase is something completely different from the meaning of its individual parts. According to Mikone (2000: 17), the formula of an idiom would therefore be as follows: $A + B + C = D$. From this formula, it can be seen that although using words, “with a life of their own outside the combination”, the final result is not similar to its parts of construction (Pedersen 1986: 126).

Furthermore, according to Saeed (2003: 15), idioms are words put together that have become fossilized and fixed over time. An example of such a fossilized expression is *glass ceiling*, which bears the meaning of promotional barriers for women. Saeed also claims that speakers and writers themselves contribute to the change of the usage of figurative language in such a way that they shift the meanings of the words to fit new conditions. Since literal language changes over time, it is only natural that figurative language develops in a similar way.

Another feature that distinguishes idioms from literal language is the fact that they can seldom be grammatically altered as literal word combinations can. Luthman (2006) uses a Swedish example in order to illustrate his point; *ha tak över huvudet* (¹⁰have roof over the head). The point is that one cannot even change the main noun *tak* (roof) into definite form without it sounding strange and losing its figurative meaning; *ha taket över huvudet* (¹¹have the roof over the head). The first sentence would mean that someone would have a place to live and not be homeless, whereas the second just indicates that a person is standing under a roof, and not completely outside. Just by changing the grammar the expression got a new meaning, which shows how careful one has to be when using similar expressions.

Viggo Hjørnager Pedersen agrees with Saeed's statement that idioms are strictly limited in their form and wants to introduce the claim that idioms represent an area of language where grammar and lexis overlap, and where the usual concept of "the word" proves inadequate (Pedersen 1986: 126). As an example, the idiom *once in a blue moon* is used, and its individual parts are studied in order to clarify his statement. The word *blue* can be combined with a number of nouns, and used freely as an adjective to describe objects; the noun *moon* can be used with many different premodifications, such as *yellow* and *honey*, and the adverb *once* collocates with different expressions of duration, for example, *once a week*, *once a year* etc. If these words are combined, they form a union, and "we get something resembling new molecule made up from familiar atoms..." (Pedersen 1986: 126). However, none of the main parts of the expression,

¹⁰ My translation

¹¹ My translation

blue, moon or *once*, is interchangeable with other words of its class. For instance, in the incorrect expressions *once in a red moon* or *twice in a blue moon*, only one word is changed (blue/red and once/twice), but since the expression is so strictly fixed, the slightest change would make it incomprehensible. (Pedersen 1986: 127) Thus, for the sake of the entire meaning, it is important not to replace any word in a fixed expression.

Since idioms are words put together to create a new expression with a different meaning, they are often considered one of the hardest aspects in a language to learn for non-native speakers. If a person is not familiar to a certain expression and cannot comprehend the meaning, misunderstandings can occur. Since idioms function on their own, not depending on the meaning of its parts, a student of a new language must learn the idiomatic expressions in the same way that s/he learns the general vocabulary of that language. Since most expressions cannot be translated literally from one language to another, the learner does not really have significant help from knowing idioms in his/her own language either. The use of idioms might also be confusing for some fluent or even native speakers. In the heat of a conversation they might splice or blend two idioms whose meanings and forms are similar. A recorded example is *he stuck his ground* (splicing *stuck to his guns* and *stood his ground*). (McArthur 1992: 498)

Some idioms might seem confusing because their origins are so old and the concept of the expression is out-dated. Some of them have their roots in ancient literature and some even derive from classic films. Idioms can be divided into different groups depending on how they are formed. According to Rosemarie Gläser, idioms can be categorized based on how they are constructed. Idioms can be:

1. Fragments or reductions of proverbs, such as *a rolling stone* (gathers no moss).
2. Proverbial sayings, for instance *to throw out the baby with the bath water*.
3. Irreversible binomial idioms, also called stereotyped set expressions. An example of that category is *wait and see*.
4. Stereotyped comparisons or similes, for instance *cheeks like roses*.

5. Literary allusions and fragments of quotations, such as ¹²*a catch-22 situation*. (Gläser 1988: 274)

As shown in Gläser's list, different idioms can be compiled in several different ways and their origin might be quite complex. Natural phenomenon, everyday work, as well as literary references might be the background for idioms that are used today. In most cases, by studying the literal meaning it is possible to understand why an expression has got its current meaning.

2.2.1 Idioms and Culture

Idioms differ between languages and cultures. As each person has a characteristic signature, each language has unique idioms. The word *idiom* comes, in fact, from the Greek root *idio*, which means a unique signature. It is, therefore, of great relevance that the expression is understandable, also after being translated. It can be argued that idioms are not only a part of the language but, also, a part of the culture. Therefore, idioms and figurative expressions may vary because of differences in, for instance, the environment, traditions and religion between different countries, languages and cultures (Baker 1992: 21). One aspect that is common in one culture, for instance hunting or a ritual, could cause the development of an idiomatic expression whereas in another culture, the source of the idiom is not known and people of another country may therefore not relate to the expression originated from an unknown situation. Arguably, for an idiom to start "functioning", that is, to convey the emotions and the underlying meaning, the speaker/listener needs to be able to relate and understand the literal meaning in order to understand the metaphoricity. With time, idioms become more fixed and the literal aspect less important.

¹² A no-win dilemma or paradox, similar to 'damned if I do, damned if I don't'. The term gained currency as the title of a 1961 war novel by Joseph Heller, who referred to an Air Force rule whereby a pilot continuing to fly combat missions without asking for relief is regarded as insane, but is considered sane enough to continue flying if he does make such a request. (Ammer 1997: 108)

Idioms can even consist of the same words, with the same individual meaning, but the meaning of the whole expression differs in different languages and cultures. For instance, in English, the expression *to have a hard heart* means ‘to be indifferent to the needs of others’, whereas it in Shipibo in Peru means ‘to be brave’. (Larson 1984: 115) In this case, the figurative expression is the same as far as structure and choice of words are concerned, but for some reason, the thought of a hard heart is interpreted differently. The variance between the idioms might originally be caused by cultural differences and the way the two cultures relate to the world differently. It can be claimed that everything that affects people in a certain area; the weather, the environment, the traditions, could be a contributing factor during the development of idioms.

There are also intercultural idioms that look and function in the same way in two different languages. The chance increases if the languages are related to each other, for instance English and Swedish, since they often contain similar words and expressions. Also since English has had such a great influence on almost all languages, including Swedish, the possibility of shared idioms between English and other languages is probably greater than it might be if two more distant languages and cultures were involved. Furthermore, different nationalities with the same religion, cultural history and traditions have different concepts in common. Thus, there are also intercultural idioms that function in the same way in different languages.

2.2.2 Previous Studies of Idiomatic Expressions

Studies of idioms in western languages have in recent years gained more interest, but previously, except for some studies that date back to the 1960s and 1970s, idioms have not played a significant role in Europe and its language studies (Mäntylä 2004: 48). Recently there has been a rise in idioms studies which is the result of the increased interest in formulaic language and translation studies. The entire approach to idioms has changed and multi-word expressions have gained more attention. Furthermore, linguists started to take more interest in multi-word expressions and not only the focus on idioms

has changed, but also, for instance, the structure, the metaphoricity and the function. (Mäntylä 2004: 48)

There has been a long tradition of studying idioms in the former Soviet Union and the Russian language, and, according to some scholars, for instance Adam Makkai and Rosamund Moon, Western definitions and categorizations, as well as dictionaries of idioms, have been influenced by Russian theories (Mäntylä 2004: 49). The Russian influence on the western studies should therefore not be forgotten. However, the Russian and the European views of idiomatic expressions have developed somewhat differently, and they differ to some extent concerning, for instance, phraseology and characteristics of idioms. What they do have in common, on the other hand, is the fact that both in Russia and in Europe, linguists see idiomatic expressions as a continuum.

Table 1. Russian and European phraseological continua (Mäntylä 2004: 49)

Amasova (Russian studies)	free phrases	Phraseloids	phrasemes	phrase unities	phrase fusions
Vinogradov (Russian studies)	free phrases	Phraseological combinations		phrase unities	phrase fusions
Aisenstadt/ Cowie (Western studies)	open collocations	Restricted collocations		figurative idioms	pure idioms
		3	2		

The table shows the comparison of Russian and European phraseological continua and the differences that occur, for instance, in the terminology. The word *phraseloid* is used in Russia whereas it is absent in western studies (Mäntylä 2004: 49). Not only does the terminology differ but also the characteristics of idioms and what features that have been high-lighted.

The processing and storage of idioms became the focus of attention in the 1970s (Mäntylä 2004: 57). As for storage, the most important question has been whether idioms should be categorized separately, or together with other lexical items. The goal would be to store and use idioms without any unnecessary misunderstanding, but there are different opinions about which method that would be the most successful; total separation or the same treatment of both literal and figurative expressions. The study of idiom processing has focused on the literal/figurative-distinction and which aspect, literal or figurative, is processed first by the language user, if not simultaneously. When studying the processing of an idiom, reaction-time tests have been used most frequently. They show how long it takes for a native speaker to interpret an idiom, and also to get more knowledge about how idiomatic expressions are stored in the memory and later recalled. (Mäntylä 2004: 57) The results of the tests concerning the processing of idioms showed that even children at the age of five are able to understand certain idioms in their mother tongue. Some literal interpretations occurred and were likely to be more common until the child starts school and acquire more figurative expressions in their language. When testing adult native speakers, the main goal of the test was to investigate the idioms themselves and factors affecting their reception, rather than studying the individual understanding of figurative expressions. Most adults, however, are quite familiar with the majority of idioms in their own language, and the focus therefore shifted to the expressions and their use.

Scholars have also been interested in comparing how native and non-native speakers comprehend idioms of high vs. low familiarity (Mäntylä 2004: 68). This means that, unlike the study of native speakers, where time was essential, this study focused on the understanding of idioms and whether the informants had interpreted the expressions correctly and how they had paraphrased them. The result showed that idioms of high familiarity were understood more often by both groups, but, not surprisingly, native speakers were able to interpret unfamiliar idioms more accurately than non-native speakers, who did rather poorly in the test, with the tendency of interpreting an unfamiliar idiom word for word, and not as a whole. It is likely that different processing and storage methods are activated depending on how familiar the expression is to the user/listener. (Mäntylä 2004: 69) Familiar idioms are represented as single entries; they

are known as a whole and the listener does not have to analyze them or even give any thought to their different parts. Less familiar idioms, however, do not work in the same way; the listener cannot interpret it as a unit and have to rely on other means. However, Ortony (quoted in Mäntylä 2004: 69) has stated that most people, both native and non-native speakers, often “learn idioms so there is no need for them to work out the meanings.” Most people thus learn idioms without considering what parts they consist of, which might be the reason why the study presented above showed such a big difference between familiar and unfamiliar idioms and their interpretation. One problem, however, could be the fact that, if it is true that native speakers learn idioms without considering its constituents at all, they might lose the ability to “work out the meanings”, which is, according to Ortony, possible and also useful for a native speaker (quoted in Mäntylä 2004: 69).

In the following part, different scholars, their studies and conclusions about idiomatic expressions, will be presented in order to follow the developments in idiom studies. Already in 1969, Uriel Weinreich, a pioneer at studying the forms of idioms, stated that an idiom is most frequently defined as a complex expression whose meaning cannot be derived from the meaning of its elements (Mäntylä 2004: 50). This statement is quite interesting since similar definitions have also been used by linguists to describe idioms today, many decades later. Weinreich, however, had a definition of idioms of his own, claiming that “[a] phraseological unit that involves at least two polysemous (having multiple meanings) constituents, and in which there is a reciprocal contextual of subsense, will be called idiom.” (quoted in Mäntylä 2004: 50). But this definition has not been considered sufficient since it excludes many expressions that are considered idioms. For instance, the idiom *to foot the bill* contains only one constituent that carries a special subsense. Moreover, Weinreich looked at idioms as separate from the rest of the vocabulary, and was of the opinion that it might be clearer to present idioms on their own. His conclusions might be based on the fact that some idiomatic expressions can, in some contexts, carry their literal meaning, which might be confusing if one is not sure how to interpret them. Weinreich’s study and presentation can be considered incomplete since he does not present a definition of idioms that can be used to cover all idioms and, furthermore, he mainly focused on the structure of idioms, and not their meaning or

metaphoricity, which are two aspects that are crucial when studying idioms. (Mäntylä 2004: 50)

The studies of idioms in Europe continued in the 1970s and new definitions and theories were presented. Bruce Fraser defined an idiom as “a constituent or a series of constituents for which the semantic interpretation is not a compositional function of the formatives of which it is composed.” (quoted in Mäntylä 2004: 50). For Fraser, figurativeness was not especially significant and the expression *by accident* was considered an idiom, with the motivation that the words were used differently than “normally”. When comparing Weinreich’s and Fraser’s views, it is noticeable that while the previous scholar’s definition of idioms excludes many idiomatic expressions, the latter scholar’s definition also includes those expressions that are generally not treated as idioms. This means that, according to Fraser, almost any word or expression could be labelled an idiom, which is the obvious problem with his idea. Another aspect that differs from Weinreich’s studies is the view of literal and figurative language and whether they should be separated or not. Weinreich thinks that idioms should be completely separated from literal language, but according to Fraser, when analyzing idioms and their literal counterparts, one should treat them as having “identical deep structure syntactic representations” (quoted in Mäntylä 2004: 51). Thus, Fraser focused on syntactic transformations and the possibility of applying them to idioms, which are commonly believed to be completely frozen. To show that all idioms are not fixed, Fraser presented six different levels of frozenness claiming that some idioms, in fact, tolerate a fair amount of variation. He states that those idioms, which are less frozen, can, to some extent, be seen as separate parts, whereas the completely frozen ones should be treated as semantics wholes. Fraser’s claim, however, has been criticized and disagreed upon by both scholars and native speakers, and, at least partly, the problem can be caused by the fact that Fraser only used transformational grammar as his tool for the study.

Although idioms were not studied much between the late 70s and the 90s, in 1982 Barbara Greim presented a grammar for idioms, by combining semantics and syntax. Greim’s (quoted in Mäntylä 2004: 54) starting point was the analysis of

transformations, presented by previous scholars, but she took it further in order to create a grammar for, and categorization of idioms. She studied the syntax of both the idiom and its literal counterpart and claimed that some transformations, for instance passivisation, are possible with idioms whose syntactic structure is similar to that of the literal counterpart. As examples she uses the following expressions, beginning with the figurative expression:

to put one's nose out of joint; constructed by a verb and an object + a prepositional phrase

to make one jealous; constructed by a verb and object + an adjective

Greim (quoted in Mäntylä 2004: 54) calls the equivalence between the expressions in the previous example semantic-syntactic compatibility. The important factor is that both expressions need to have a similar syntactic structure, and if they do not, transformations are not allowed to the same extent, as in the following example:

to be on cloud nine; constructed by an intransitive verb + a place adverb

to be happy; constructed by an intransitive verb + adjective

In this case, the example above, Greim claims that the semantic-syntactic incompatibility may have an effect on the interpretation of the idiom. As an example, she talks about how the idiom would undergo a “question-transformation”, with the result of a literal interpretation; *Where was he? On cloud nine*. Greim is not certain whether to call the transformed expression an idiom, or if it is rather a “word string similar to, for instance, *Where is he? In his room*.” (Mäntylä 2004: 54). Thus Greim’s main interest has been the hierarchy of transformability, and the result of her studies and tests shows that compatible idioms are more likely to allow some kind of transformation than the incompatible expressions, thus claiming that compatibility is the dominant feature. Although Greim’s conclusions show clear tendencies, the results of her studies have also been questioned, and one should remember that categories sometimes overlap and the acceptability of some transformations have been disagreed upon. (Mäntylä

2004: 55) However, her main point, that some idioms tolerate transformation and are not frozen which previous scholars have claimed, is proven and accepted as a fact.

Rosamund Moon has contributed with one of the most recent input in the field of idiom research, which was presented in 1998. Moon has adopted a wider definition of idioms and prefers, in fact, not to call them *idioms*, but *fixed expressions* instead (Mäntylä 2004: 73). She agrees with, for instance, Barbara Greim that fixed expressions are not necessarily fixed, but can undergo both syntactic and lexical changes to some extent. Moon claims, however, that there is some truth in what the term suggests, and although variation is allowed, “[...]there still remains some kind of fixedness, symmetry, or integrity[...].” (Mäntylä 2004: 74). Similar to that of Fernando, Moon’s starting point was the characteristics of idioms and she divided the expressions into three groups; 1) anomalous collocations, which represent the lexicogrammatical viewpoint, 2) formulae, which concern pragmatics, and 3) metaphors, which include what previously have been considered idioms. Furthermore, the metaphors were divided into *transparent*, *semi-transparent*, and *opaque/pure*, which all are non-literal. Moon studied, inter alia, the difference between the use of fixed expressions in both written and spoken language, and draw the conclusion that, contrary to common beliefs, such expressions were unexpectedly rare in spoken language. When fixed expressions were used in a spoken language, however, they usually had certain functions, for instance, to summarize and draw a topic to a close in order to change it. (Mäntylä 2004: 75) Moon introduced a new term to the discussion of variation of idioms, *exploitation*. By this she refers to the stylistic alteration of the lexis/semantics of fixed expressions, for instance to provide some sort of defamiliarization, and, typically, humour. As an example Moon uses the altered idiom *He burns the candle at five ends*, replacing *both* with *five* for the sake of humour. This aspect is also visible in the material of this thesis, and was presented in part 1.3, when the author has changed the idiom *The blind leading the blind* to *The blonde leading the blonde* in order to make an idiom humourous and, at the same time, describe a situation concerning two blonde, assumedly stupid, girls. Although Moon has approached her data from different points of view and been able to present evidence for several of her claims and conclusions about idioms, she is criticized for being too detailed and subjective. (Mäntylä 2004: 77)

Different scholars emphasize different aspects concerning idioms and it might be difficult to establish rules about grammar and usage that everyone can agree on. The view on idioms and figurative expressions has shifted somewhat during the years, and the definition and the use of idioms have been questioned; what types of expressions should be called idioms and whether their construction and form can be altered. There are many opinions of these matters which shows that although idioms are important parts of our language, such expressions are complex and different from literal language, which make them ideal to study. As presented in this part, several attempts have been made to construct a grammar and description of idioms. Nevertheless, none of the studies is conclusive, and because idioms and their behavior in most cases are unpredictable, the completion of a description on idioms patterns is considered impossible (Mäntylä 2004: 57).

3 TRANSLATION STRATEGIES

The average person does not reflect on how many translated texts s/he actually encounters in one day. On a daily basis we come in contact with several different translations, but we are usually so used to that that we hardly even notice it. Often when we read a text in our mother tongue, there is a possibility that what we read is, in fact, not originally written in that language. Whether it is an advertisement, a piece of literature or a manual, the text has probably been translated at some point and, at the same time, altered. Translating any text into another language is a difficult task because there are so many aspects that you have to take into consideration. This is something that Susan Bassnett-McGuire (1980) explains:

What is generally understood as translation involves the rendering of a source language (SL) text into the target language (TL) so as to ensure that (1) the surface meaning of the two will be approximately similar and (2) the structures of the SL will be preserved as closely as possible but not so closely that the TL structures will be seriously distorted. (Bassnett-McGuire 1980: 12)

Bassnett-McGuire emphasizes the meaning and the structure but also highlights that a text cannot be so similar to the source text that the quality of the target text is suffering. When translating, it is obviously of great importance to respect the author and quite closely follow the source text. At the same time, the text also has to be fluent and natural in the target language, which might, however, interfere with the content. The process of translating can be compared to being a teacher; just because you know the language does not mean that you are able to teach other people. And likewise; you might be able to transfer a text into another language successfully, in such a way that the language is correct but the text might stylistically still be missing important features, for instance. Literature, prose, poetry etc. are much more than just correct grammar and the right translation of words; the texts need to be believable even when transferred into another language by someone who did not write the text in the first place. According to Rune Ingo (1991: 16), the form of the text is at least as important as the content, maybe even more. In literary texts, the translator has to be careful and consider how the author wanted the text to be understood. If it is a piece of work that contains, for example poetic or figurative language, the person translating needs to make sure that the style is

maintained in the translated version as well. This is relevant also in this thesis because of the fact that the primary material contains idioms which need special attendance when translating, in order for the style to remain the same in the target text. Obviously there are different methods of translating literal and figurative language and in order to understand that difference, the translation of both types, literal and figurative, need to be examined.

There are different rules and strategies, which can be applied when translating texts. According to André Lefevere (1992: 1), the most productive description of a translation is “a text written in a well-known language which refers to and represents a text in a language which is not as well known.” This explanation raises many of the relevant questions about translation, for instance, why it is necessary to transfer a text into another culture. Lefevere also talks about why it is necessary that a translated text represent the original in a sufficient way; the translation will to all purposes and intents function as the original text in the target culture, and especially for those who do not know the language in which the text was originally written. (Lefevere 1992: 1) In such a case, the translator has a major responsibility in order to represent the work as the author intended. Considering the translation process, Lefevere (1992: 117) states that the first criterion for a translator is to master the languages in depth, but still even though they do, he claims that guidelines are often necessary, regardless of how experienced the translator may be. A translator should, for instance, not change the order of thoughts, facts or arguments because they are the same in all languages and there is a reason that made the author use one order rather than another. (Lefevere 1992: 118) This aspect does not differ between languages and, therefore, it would seem unnecessary to change it. Although, Lefevere considers the preservation of the style important, he concludes that if necessary, the style has to be abandoned when, for instance, meaning demands that it is done for the sake of clarity. It is of greater importance to make the text easily comprehensible instead of stylistically equal. (Lefevere 1992: 120) By stating this, he somewhat contradict himself, by first claiming that style is one of the most important aspects, and later, admitting that it can, and should, be altered if necessary. This contradiction shows that there are no strategies that work in every situation, language and text type. For a translation to be successful, each

case needs to be examined individually in order to identify which strategies that would be suitable.

A literal translation might be the most convenient method to translate and some scholars favour this strategy. For instance, Peter Newmark argues that whenever possible a word-for-word translation should be used.

However...provided that equivalent-effect is secured, the literal word-for-word translation is not only the best, it is the only valid method of translation. (Newmark 1988: 39)

Generally, if a word-for-word translation is used, the text will seem clumsy and not fluent, the latter feature being considered one of the main criteria of an acceptable translation. The thought behind the statement is understandable, though; the translation should be as similar to the original as possible, and the translator cannot take liberties. However, at the same time, it is important to make the target text stylistically as similar to the source text as possible, which can generally not be done without some minor changes concerning the word choice, sentence structure etc. The translator needs to be able to identify what type of text s/he is faced with and based on that conclusion, use their skills to decide whether a literal translation would be successful or not.

In order to eventually move onto the description of translation of figurative language, a figure, which show the process of translation, which can be adapted both when translating literally and figuratively, has been described by Rune Ingo. Ingo (1991: 92) claims that translation can be compared to the process of building a bridge; there are certain steps that need to be followed in order for the bridge to reach the other side. The following figure shows which steps that need to be followed in order to achieve an acceptable translation.

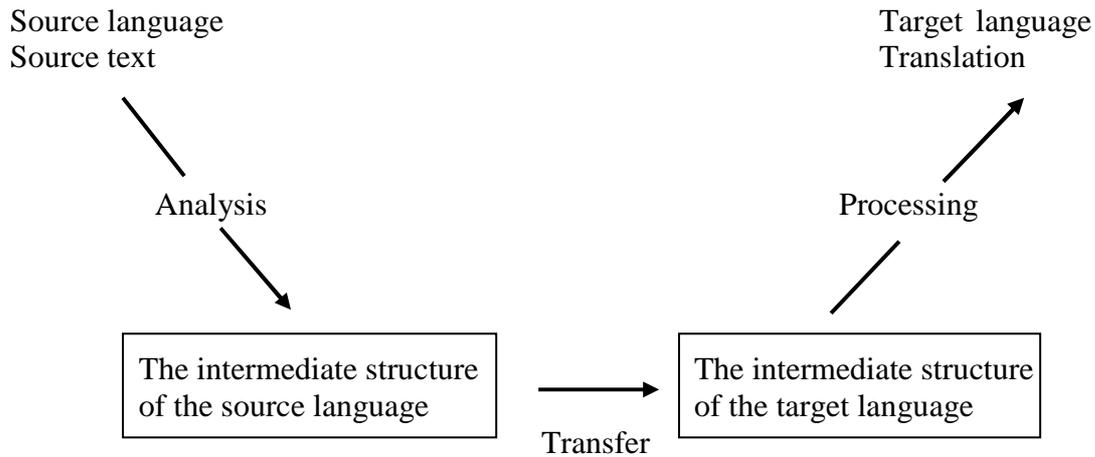


Figure 2. Translation process: analysis, transfer and processing (Ingo 1991: 92)

The three important steps that need to be followed during the translation process are analysis of the source text, transfer into the target language and processing of the half-finished translation. Ingo claims that the most difficult part to study is the transferring of the text from one language into another because of the fact that it is not possible to describe what happens in the brain of the translator when he transfers information from one language system into another. The process described by Ingo is mainly meant to show how a literal translation is performed but figurative language might also, to some extent, follow this pattern. The first step, the analysis, is considered the basis for the translation since a successful result can only be achieved if the translator has enough knowledge of the source text, for instance, the style. When considering the image of the bridge, it is easy to understand why the foundation needs to be solid in order for the end result to be functioning. In this process, the transfer is the part which we know the least of. Ingo (1991: 165-166) states that we know the source text and the target text but are unaware of the procedure itself that happens in between. Since the source text was closely examined during the previous step, Ingo states that the translator crosses the border between the two languages at the narrowest place during the transfer; the languages are more alike at a deeper level than they are on the surface. This kind of transfer is, therefore, successful because of the fact that the information is conveyed carefully without any mistakes caused by the complicated syntactic structure of the text.

In the final step, the processing, the translation gets its final form and the half-finished texts is prepared into a functioning translation with, preferably, similar stylistic features as the source text. (Ingo 1991: 216) Although most of the important aspects were transferred during the previous step, a translation could not be complete and successful without the last step. This shows that in order to achieve an acceptable translation, each aspect needs to be taken into consideration one at a time.

The previous presentation of Ingo's translation methods can also be applied when translating figurative language. The important aspects are that the text is carefully examined, the information is conveyed and the form and style is taken into consideration. It can be argued that the third step might require more attention when translating figurative language, since stylistic similarities might be considered crucial in such a text.

It is obvious that figurative and literal language cannot be treated in the same way. Although figurative language is frequently used, it is, in fact, considered abnormal compared to literal language (Katz et al 1998: 20). The motivation for this statement is that since figurative expressions are not fundamental to the language, the use of them must be optional because of the fact that the expressions could, if needed, be replaced with literal language. The translation of figurative language, which is not meant literally, becomes even more difficult if the expression also has a valid literal meaning. In such a case, recognition of the expression is crucial. Recognition is a process that might even occur before the problem can be solved; understanding the meaning of the expression. It is proven that even children at the age of five are able to recognize a figurative expression but more seldom able to understand its underlying meaning. (Katz et al 1998: 22) What might also contribute to the recognition is the context in which the expression occurs. If a figure of speech is used in a context where the literal meaning is totally out of context and not suitable at all, the listener will almost automatically start wondering what the meaning really is, whether literal or non-literal. Logical thinking will play a big part in this process. When translating figurative language it is obviously important to be able to recognize such expressions and there are also certain strategies that can be used in order to achieve an acceptable translation.

The translator has to be able to recognize which function and what important features the text has. If it is not mainly informative, but style and form are more important aspects, the translator has to refrain from transferring the content into the target language, but instead, seriously consider prioritizing the form of the text, and search for aesthetic and expressive counterparts (Ingo 1991: 201). The result of this action is that the semantic meaning will probably be lost, which does not matter, if the form of the text is more important than the basic information. Examples of such cases might be figurative expressions, wordplay or nursery rhymes, all of which rely on their form, in order to be appealing to their target groups.

Figurative language is used for a purpose and should therefore not be overlooked. This kind of language is not considered “ordinary” language, but rather a deviation from the norm with the task to achieve some special meaning or effect (Teilanyo 2007: 310). The use of figurative language is therefore no coincidence, but a deliberate choice made by the author. Thus the translator is expected to “be discreet in handling this area such that he neither diminishes nor unduly improves the literary texture of the ¹³ST.” (Teilanyo 2007: 310-311). Based on these previous statements, it is clear that figurative language demands more effort and focus from the translator; s/he needs to consider all options in order for the translation to retain the level of literariness that exists in the source text.

There are different methods and strategies that can be used to facilitate the making of an acceptable translation. According to Gideon Toury (1995: 82–83), whose translation strategies of figurative language was presented in 1.2, a figurative expression could be translated with a corresponding expression in the target language, which would ensure the preservation of the style and form. Languages often have expressions that match each other concerning the meaning, but since figurative expressions often are language and culture-specific, it is likely that they do not match in structure. Furthermore, Toury presents the possibility of translating figurative language into literal language, or total omission, but emphasizes that certain actions should be taken to preserve the figurativeness of the language. One solution would be the addition; the translator would

¹³ Short for *source text*

add expressions of his/her own, resulting in a target text with similar amount of figurative language. Finally, it can be argued that the main concerns when translating non-literal texts is to recognize, analyze and translate according to the authors intentions.

3.1 Translation of Idioms

Since idioms often are language specific, it must be remembered that idioms cannot be translated word-for-word unless the expression in question happens to be intercultural. Jan and Rikard Svartvik (2004: 7) present a humorous example of a literal translation of an idiom, which was not successful. The authors talk about a story involving a computer that got the task of translating an English expression into Russian and back into English again. The expression was originally *out of sight, out of mind*, but, after the translating procedures, it came back as *invisible idiot*. (Svartvik & Svartvik 2004: 7) This example shows that a translator has to be really careful when using a word-for-word translation for expressions that are not meant to be taken literally

During the translation process, it is possible either to be true to the source culture or to the target culture and these translation strategies are called foreignization and domestication (Venuti 1995: 20). Venuti states that depending on which method the translator uses, s/he either favours and follows the rules of the source culture (foreignization), or, by altering it, makes the text more suitable for the target language and culture (domestication). When choosing between these strategies it is possible to either bring the author home to the readers or send the readers abroad to another culture. Thus by applying either of these methods when translating, it is impossible to be fair to both cultures. For instance, by using the foreignizing method Venuti states that “[i]n it’s efforts to do right abroad, this translation method must do wrong at home[...]” (Venuti 1995: 20). The method foreignization has been used and therefore the readers might encounter unfamiliar aspects that belong to another culture. The problem with foreignization is that the reader may have trouble with understanding foreign items, and the message that the author wanted to convey might be lost. On the other hand, the

problem with domestication is the dilemma of knowing how much the translator is entitled to change. The goal is to move the author closer to the readers. The translator needs therefore to take caution whichever method s/he chooses. Other terms that are linked to domestication and foreignization are visibility and invisibility of the translator (Venuti 1995: 1). A translator can become visible, which means that the reader knows and can recognize that the text is a translation originally written in another language. Examples of signs that a reader may find, might be foreign words, cultural phenomena etc. When the translator is visible, the translation has been foreignized. When the translator is invisible it is more difficult to identify aspects that indicate that it is a translated piece of work; it has been domesticated. (Venuti 1995: 7) Aspects that are specific for the culture of the source text are, in this case, replaced with corresponding features in the target culture, in order for the target text to seem “familiar” to the reader. There are both positive and negative views of these strategies, and it is difficult, if not impossible, to claim that one method is more preferable than the other.

Foreignization and domestication are strategies that can both be used when translating idiomatic language. When a translator uses a word-for-word translation, he or she is foreignizing the text. If the goal, when translating idioms, is a fluent and easily understandable text, the translator has to be careful not to make the text sound strange, but to use interchangeable idioms that bear the same meaning in both languages. In the material of the present study, the method of domestication has been used in cases where the idiom has been replaced with a Swedish counterpart, but also when the expression has been explained in literal language or changed for the sake of the target language. There is even a chance that the reader does not notice that it is a translation since the translator has brought the text and the idioms closer to the target culture. In the following example the English idiom has been translated into plain language in Swedish in order to suit the target group and language since the present idiom does not occur in Swedish.

‘I believe no one could *make head nor tale* of that book she wrote.’ (Keyes 1997: 88)

“Jag tror inte att någon *fattar någonting* av hennes bok.” (Keyes 1999: 77)

¹⁴‘I don’t think anyone *understands anything* of her book.’

Thus the idiom has been domesticated since a Swedish-speaking reader would not consider the translation of this expression foreign, whereas s/he definitely would if the idiom was translated word-for-word.

Some translators’ handbooks give concrete models of how to translate idioms and one example is presented by Rune Ingo (1991: 209–210). The methods of translating idioms are as followed:

1. The idiom is translated with a corresponding idiom in the target text if possible. According to Ingo (1991: 209), it is the translator’s duty to keep the text as stylistically similar to the source material as possible. This is possible either by being very careful and finding suitable counterparts to every idiom in the source text, or adding new ones in the target text where there originally was none.
2. The idiom is translated literally and/or word-for-word. Ingo states that this solution is seldom successful and might just lead to misunderstandings and confusion. But if an idiom is literally translated, it can make an impact on the target text and become a new, acceptable idiom over time.
3. The idiom is explained in the target text without any figurative language. The problem here is that the style of the text might change and that an expressive and varying text will become pale and unappealing.
4. A non-idiom is translated with an idiomatic expression. This might sometimes be a necessary action to preserve the style of the text if some of the original idioms have been explained in plain language. (See number three above).

According to Ingo (1991: 210), the most successful way of translating idioms, is to find a corresponding idiom in the target language. A slightly less successful method would

¹⁴ My translation

be to explain the expression in literal language which conveys the meaning but not the style. At the bottom there is the option of direct translation which, without proper consideration, might fail since idioms are language specific. Furthermore, Ingo explains that there are certain aspects that a translator always has to take into consideration when translating. One has to ask 1) what the author really says, 2) what s/he means, and 3) how it is conveyed. (Ingo 1991: 210) The expression *she has an old head on young shoulders* is used as an example when trying to analyze an idiom according to the main questions that were mentioned above. The literal meaning, the answer to the first question, would simply be that a young person has an old head, which makes no sense at all. The actual meaning, though, the answer to the second question, is that someone is sensible despite their insignificant age, and that is the information that the translator has to convey to the target text. To answer the third question, the translator has to think about the style, usage and frequency of the idiom, in order to find a corresponding expression in the target text. (Ingo 1991: 212)

As it has been discussed in this chapter there are different ways of translating idioms and figurative language. It is important to make an effort to achieve an acceptable translation, in order to keep the style of the target text as close as possible to the source text. The translator has to decide whether to find a corresponding expression in the target language or explain it in literal language. Idioms are culture-specific and, generally, all types of culture-specific items are considered translation problems since they usually cannot be translated literally into another language. In the following chapter culture-specific items and their features will be discussed.

3.2 Translation of Culture-specific Items

When a text is translated into another language it is also transferred into another culture. Translation therefore mixes two cultures and their concepts and in this situation an unstable balance of power arises between the different languages and cultures (Aixelá 1996: 52). Often one language/culture has a higher rank and is considered more significant during the translation process. An example of a language, which usually

enjoys a higher status, is English, which is very powerful considering the number of speakers and the countries in which it is the official language. Furthermore, Baker (1992: 21) says that there are even words in English that do not occur in some languages which could insinuate that English is the most developed and progressive language. It goes without saying that English is also the language that has the greatest influence on other languages concerning words, and to some extent, expressions.

A culture-specific item is often expressed in a text by an object or a phenomenon which is restricted to the source culture, meaning that the item is unknown to the target culture. Furthermore, they are not parts of the structure of the language, but manifestations of a surface nature (Aixelá 1996: 56). The problem arises when a translator is faced with such an item and there is no corresponding word in the target language. An object/phenomenon, to which it is possible to draw parallels, needs to be identified in the target culture in order for the meaning to come across. Culture-specific items are often linked with the most arbitrary area of the linguistic system, such as, local institutions, streets, place and personal names, historical figures etc. If, for instance, the name of a famous person is used, it means something to the readers of the source text. However, the person might be completely unknown to people outside that culture and, in that case, people reading the translation may miss some aspects that the author wanted to highlight. Aixelá (1996: 57) uses the Bible and the image of a lamb as an example where an important symbol is almost impossible to translate, for instance, from Hebrew into the language of the Eskimos. Features that are linked to a lamb are innocence and helplessness, but if the animal is unknown, it is impossible for people to know these connotations. In this case *the lamb* is a translation problem but on the other hand, it does not constitute a problem during the translation into Spanish or English since the image of the lamb has the same meaning in all three languages.

In order to make the translation of culture-specific items less complicated, there are guidelines that can be followed. When using the method referred to as *repetition* the translator uses as much as they can of the original references (Aixelá 1996: 61). For instance, place names and similar local aspects are not changed or replaced. The consequences of this method might be that the readers find the text more alien because

of the cultural distance. The text is therefore foreignized since it still includes foreign names, phenomena and similar aspects. The method called *linguistic (non-cultural) translation* means that the translator uses references close to the original but offers a target language version, which still can be recognized as belonging to the culture of the source text. (Aixelá 1996: 62) This will increase the comprehensibility but the reader will still know that the terms belong to another culture than their own. For instance, *dollar* is translated into *dólares* in Spanish, and even though the Spaniards do not use this currency, they know what it is and can recognize that it is a foreign concept. When following the rules of the strategy called *extratextual gloss*, the translator does exactly what the name implies; s/he adds an extra explanation of the meaning but does not want to blend it with the text. Instead footnotes, glossaries, translations in brackets etc. are used in order to clarify the foreign item and, more specifically, to explain puns and to offer data about famous people. (Aixelá 1996: 62) The opposite of this strategy also exists; the explanations are instead included in the text so as not to disturb the reader's attention. The strategy is then called *intratextual gloss*. *Naturalization* means that "[t]he translator decides to bring the ¹⁵CSI into the intertextual corpus felt as specific by the target language culture." (Aixelá 1996: 63). An example is the word *dollar* (compare with the previous translation above of the same word) which according to this method is translated into the Spanish word *duro*, a currency still accurate in Spain. When comparing the two translations (*dólares/duro*) the difference between the translation strategies is obvious. The last strategy that will be presented, *deletion*, is used when the translator considers the culture-specific item irrelevant, unacceptable or too obscure. In such cases the item can be omitted, and although this method is not fully accepted among scholars, it is used quite frequently. (Aixelá 1996: 64) Culture-specific items are relevant in this thesis since they have features in common with figurative expressions and idioms; the translator has to take culture and history into consideration when translating both of these types.

¹⁵ Short for *culture-specific item*

4 IDIOMS IN MARIAN KEYES'S *RACHEL'S HOLIDAY* AND ITS SWEDISH TRANSLATION *EN OVÄNTAD SEMESTER*

The aim of this thesis has been to study idioms in Marian Keyes's *Rachel's Holiday* (1997) and their Swedish translations in *En oväntad semester* (1999). The first part of the hypothesis is that the translated idioms have been domesticated since they are in some way altered in order to suit the target culture. The second part of the hypothesis is that idioms are mostly translated into non-idioms and, to make up for lost figurative expressions, the translator has added Swedish idioms in the target text where there was none in the source text. This means that not only have the English idioms been studied, but also the Swedish ones and their non-idiomatic counterparts in the source text. The idioms and the translations have been categorized according to the strategies Gideon Toury has outlined for the translation of metaphors (1995: 82–83). Toury presents six different strategies, of which four have been relevant for the present thesis; 1) idioms into non-idioms, 2) idioms into different idioms, 3) idioms into same idioms and 4) non-idioms into idioms.

The corpus consisted of 80 idioms identified in *Rachel's Holiday* by Marian Keyes and their Swedish counterparts in the translation *En oväntad semester*. Additionally, non-idioms that were translated into Swedish idioms were also included in the material. In order to only use acknowledged idioms in this study, they have been checked against *The Cambridge Idioms Dictionary* (2006) and Luthman's *Svenska idiom* (2002) respectively. *The Cambridge Idioms Dictionary* covers traditional idioms, exclamations and sayings, idiomatic compounds, clichés and similes, of which the last category has not been used in this study, since they often are considered to be a group of their own, which is also stated in chapter 2.1. Both the dictionary of English idioms and Luthman's book give definitions of the expressions and examples how to use them and these books have been used when identifying the material for this thesis.

The following table shows the translation strategies of the idioms in the material of the present thesis. The table shows that the majority, 36 idioms have been translated into non-idioms in the Swedish translation. Furthermore, 24 idioms have been translated

with the same idioms in Swedish and 20 idioms have been replaced with different idioms in the target text. All in all, there are 80 English idioms in this study and in order for the style to stay the same, the translator can add a corresponding number of Swedish idioms considering the fact that many idioms were replaced with literal language.

Table 2. Translation strategies of idioms in *Rachel's Holiday* and *En oväntad semester*

	Number
English idiom into non-idiom in Swedish	36
English idiom into different idiom in Swedish	20
English idiom into the same idiom in Swedish	24
English non-idiom into idiom in Swedish	26

The most common idioms in the English material, *to be off one's head* and *to let off steam*, were used three times each throughout the novel. There are nine idioms that were used twice each and the rest, 56 idioms, were used only once. The most frequent Swedish idiom was used four times; *med nöd och näppe*, with the meaning of 'barely', 'only just'. Twelve idioms were used twice, and 42 idioms were used once each. Although some expressions have been used several times each, they are still treated as different cases, since despite being the same expression in one language; it may have several different counterparts in the other language, both idiomatic and non-idiomatic.

In the following chapters the different translation methods will be presented as well as examples from the material. In the examples, the idioms are italicized in order to help the identification. In order for non-Swedish speakers to understand all idioms, the Swedish expressions and sentences have been translated back to English.

4.1 English Idioms into Non-idioms

In the material, the majority of the idioms in English, that is, 36 idiomatic expressions, were translated into a Swedish non-idiom. This might be the easiest way of translating figurative language, but the target text will lack much of the variety and colourful elements that appear in the source text. The reason behind the fact that most idioms were translated into literal language might be that the English language has been suggested to be richer in idioms than Swedish (Gustawsson 2007). This method of translation is a type of domestication and the translator brings the text closer to the target culture by translating the unknown English idiom into a non-idiom, that is, literal language, in Swedish. The idiom, which functions as the example below, could not have been translated word-for-word as there is no corresponding idiom in Swedish that has the same meaning. Considering language differences, it is not surprising that this method is used most frequently. Although the majority of idioms in the material occurred in the text outside the conversations, almost half of the idioms in this group were identified in conversations and used by characters when communicating with others.

One of the most frequent idioms, which occurred three times, is *to be off one's head*. In the following example Rachel is faced with a note, mistakenly taken for a suicide letter, which she wrote while extremely intoxicated. She is now shocked when realizing how serious her addiction really was and how it changed her.

I vaguely remembered deciding that 'I can't take anymore' would be the title for my poem about the shoplifter who was going straight. I was horrified. Being brought face-to-face with something I'd done when I was *off my head* was deeply shocking. I stared and stared at the spidery scrawl. (Keyes 1997: 493)

Jag mindes svagt att jag hade bestämt att "Jag kan inte ta mer" skulle utgöra titeln på en dikt om en snattare som beslutat sig för att lägga av. Det var fruktansvärt att konfronteras med någonting jag gjort *i berusat tillstånd*. Förhårad stirrade jag på kråkfötterna på pappret i min hand. (Keyes 1999: 424)

¹⁶I remembered vaguely that I had decided that ‘I can’t take anymore’ would constitute the title of a poem about a shoplifter who has decided to stop. It was horrible to be confronted with something I had done *in intoxicated state*. Bewitched I stared at the crow feet on the paper in my hand.

This idiom is informal language and mostly used in British and Australian English (Cambridge Idioms Dictionary 2006). There are two separate meanings of which only one is suitable in this situation. The first meaning is to be crazy, and the second one is to be out of control because of alcohol and/or drug use, which Rachel remembers herself being in this example. However, this expression is mostly used when describing someone’s state of mind. (Cambridge Idioms Dictionary 2006) There are three different Swedish translations for this idiomatic expression in English. They are all non-idioms, but among the translations, the meaning differs. In the above example, the expression is translated into being intoxicated by alcohol. In the other cases the same English idiom is translated into describing that Rachel was high on drugs and, in the third case, that she just ruined everything, with no specific reference to neither alcohol nor drugs. The translations were *så påtänd* (¹⁷so stoned) and *sabbat alltihop* (¹⁸ruined everything), and although the same expression, *to be off one’s head*, was used in all three cases in the source text, the Swedish translation had three different versions. Because the idiom occurred in three totally different contexts, the translations were allowed to differ as well. However, in the material there were examples of an idiom occurring twice in the English text with the same translation in both cases in Swedish; *to get somebody off your back*.

‘I came in here to *get her off my back*.’ (Keyes 1997: 154)

“Jag la in mig här för att *få tyst på henne*.” (Keyes 1999: 133)

¹⁹‘I put myself here to *get her quiet*.’

This idiom is used twice and translated into *få tyst på någon* (²⁰get somebody quiet) in both places in the Swedish novel. The circumstances where the idiom is used are quite

¹⁶ My translation

¹⁷ My translation

¹⁸ My translation

¹⁹ My translation

similar and that might be the reason why the translations are the same. Thus the context is an important factor when translating.

It has been argued by some textbooks that this strategy should only be used when there is no corresponding idiom in the source text. Ingo (1990: 247) states that the translator should only use an exact translation as long as there are no negative consequences for the translation and its meaning or form, and by using an idiom that is foreign to the target culture and readers, confusion may arise. The translator also has to realize that if s/he is not able to find corresponding idioms and uses literal language frequently, the style of the text will be altered, and it is their responsibility to restore the figurative language in the text. Since the idioms, in this category, have been translated and explained in literal language, they have thus been domesticated and the text has moved closer to the target culture and readers. Since the text and idioms are domesticated, the readers of the Swedish translation would not notice that there are any idioms missing without comparing the source and the target texts, but it can still be considered unacceptable to exclude too much of the figurative features. The solution would therefore be compensation of idioms which will be discussed in 4.3.

4.2 English Idioms into Different idioms

Since idioms are language specific, idioms are not constructed in the same way in different languages. In this category the translator has made an effort to find corresponding idioms in Swedish with the same meaning, but with a different structure and words. Even idioms that have the same semantic meaning can be totally different because of culture, customs, points of view etc. By finding corresponding idioms, the translator does not change the style of the text, which might be considered the most important aspect. In the material, 20 English idioms were translated into a different idiom in Swedish.

²⁰ My translation

To *let off steam* is an informal expression, which occurs three times in the material, and means to do or say something to help you get rid of strong feelings or energy. The word *let* can be replaced by *blow*, still bearing the same meaning, but it is then more commonly used in American and Australian English, whereas the first version also belongs to the British vocabulary. (Cambridge Idioms Dictionary 2006) The background of this expression comes from the invention of Thomas Newcomen in the early 18th century; the steam engine. To properly work, such a machine has to release excess steam through a valve to prevent it from blowing up. (Hole 2005: 167) When looking at the concrete background of the idiom, it is quite clear how the expression has got its current meaning. If a person is filled with really strong emotions and cannot let it out, sooner or later he or she will erupt. In this example Rachel is talking about how her cocaine use is no different from other people having a drink in order to relax.

They might have a few vodkas and tonic and *let off a bit of steam*. I had a couple of lines of cocaine and did likewise. As I said to my father and my sisters and my sister's husband and eventually the therapists at the Cloisters, 'If cocaine was sold in liquid form, in a bottle, would you complain about me taking it?' (Keyes 1997: 1)

De kanske tog några vodka och tonic för att *varva ner*. Jag tog några strängar kokain. Som jag sa till min far, min syster, min svåger och så småningom även till terapeuterna på Klostret: "Om kokain såldes i flytande form på flaska, skulle ni då bråka om att jag drack det?" (Keyes 1999: 9)

²¹They maybe took a few vodkas and tonic to *lap down*. I took a few lines of cocaine. As I said to my father, my sister, my brother-in-law and eventually also to the therapists at the Monastery: 'If cocaine were sold in liquid form in a bottle, would you then argue about me drinking it?'

The Swedish translation, *varva ner*, means to decrease the speed or tempo, and to take it easy (Luthman 2002: 137). The English expression indicates that there are strong feelings to let out by having a drink whereas in the Swedish one the persons just want help to relax. There is a slight difference in the meaning but both expressions state that some people use alcohol to relieve themselves emotionally. In this case, the English idiom seems more aggressive and might suggest a stronger feeling or energy than what

²¹ My translation

the Swedish one does. Although many idioms might differ somewhat as far as meaning is concerned there are some in this material that are considered different semantically but bear the same meaning. The following example expresses the exact same action in both language but the idioms are constructed differently.

Chaquie had some things to *get off her chest* and she didn't care who knew it.
(Keyes 1997: 157)

Chaquie behövde *lätta sitt hjärta* och brydde sig inte om ifall någon lyssnade.
(Keyes 1999: 135)

²²Chaquie needed to *ease her heart* and didn't care whether anyone listened.

In this category, the English idioms have been translated into different idioms in Swedish. Different idioms mean that they differ lexically and semantically. The translator has restored the figurative language in the translation, and has, by using Swedish idioms that do not occur in English, also domesticated the text. This method, translating source language idioms into target language idioms, is considered by many scholars, for instance Ingo (1991: 209), the most acceptable and fairest one to both of the languages and the author as well.

4.3 English Idioms into the Same Idioms

Although idioms are language specific, there are some expressions that are intercultural. The chance of similar idioms increases if the languages belong to the same language group, share cultural and religious beliefs, or if one of the languages has a strong influence on the other. For instance, idioms that are lexically and semantically the same in both English and Swedish often originate from the Bible, fairy tales or classical literature (Gustawsson 2007). Since the culture of English and Swedish speaking people is rather similar and the languages are closely related, it is not surprising that they have more idioms in common than, for instance, an African language and Swedish have. 24

²² My translation

idioms in English belong to this group and were therefore translated to an idiom in Swedish that is alike both lexically and semantically.

The idiom *butterflies in one's stomach* occurs twice in the material and refers to a feeling of nervous anticipation, often experienced before a performance of some kind (Ammer 1997: 92). The expression dates back to the 1900s and likens the feeling that would be caused by having swallowed live butterflies that are flying around inside one's stomach. In this example Rachel is preparing to meet her future boyfriend Luke.

The kind of churning excitement that I usually associated with Luke was absent. Instead a steady quiet anticipation hummed within me. I had *butterflies in my stomach*, but they were asleep. They stretched and turned occasionally, just to remind me that they were there. (Keyes 1997: 370)

Den nervkittlande upphetsning jag i vanliga fall associerade med Luka var borta. I stället hade jag en lågmält nynnande förväntan inombords. Visst hade jag *fjärilar i magen*, men de sov sött för tillfället. Ibland vände de sig om och sträckte lite på sig, bara för att påminna mig om att de fanns där. (Keyes 1999: 318)

²³The nerve tickling excitement I in usual cases associated with Luke was gone. Instead I had a low-voiced humming anticipation inside. Surely I *had butterflies in the stomach*, but they slept sweetly at the moment. Sometimes they turned and stretched a little, just to remind me that they were there.

The Swedish idiom, which is an exact replica of the English expression, not only means the same, but also has the same background and references as the English expressions. In this case, the thought of having something moving and stirring up your stomach is associated with of nervousness in both languages.

There are some intercultural idioms that can be used when translating from one language into another. In this material, many idioms were translated into the same idiom in Swedish, that is, an idiom which lexically and semantically equal. It is possible to state that the translator has domesticated the text even in this case, since, although the idioms are the same, there are some minor changes that have been made. For instance, as it is

²³ My translation

shown in the above example, ‘in *my* stomach’ has been changed to ‘in *the* stomach’ since it sounds more correct in Swedish. Thus, the translation does not seem foreign to the target text readers.

Although the idioms in the previous example are considered the same there are some minor differences between the languages. These differences can be noticed in the use of articles. In the English idiom, the words ‘in *my* stomach’ is used compared to ‘i *magen*’ (²⁴in *the* stomach) in the Swedish idiom. The deviation is not significant and makes no difference as for the meaning but can still be noticed in several idioms in the material of the present thesis.

’Your drug use is just *the tip of the iceberg*, Rachel,’ she said. (Keyes 1997: 461)

“Drogerna är bara *toppen på ett isberg*, Rachel”, fortsatte hon. (Keyes 1999: 396)

²⁵’The drugs are just *the tip of an iceberg*, Rachel,’ she continued.

In the previous example the difference lies on the article that is used to determine iceberg. In the English idiom there is a definite article whereas in the Swedish one the article is indefinite. What this is caused by is difficult to identify but most likely is the difference in the grammar and use of the languages a part of the answer.

4.4 English Non-idioms into Idioms

Since many English idioms were translated into non-idioms in Swedish, the translator chose to add idioms in the target text where there was none in the source text. By using this method, the style of the two texts stays the same and the figurativeness of the source text is not lost. The main reason to add idioms might be for the sake of the style, but according to Larson (1984: 116), in some languages, there are words, which are non-idioms in the source language, that are most naturally translated with an idiom in the

²⁴ My translation

²⁵ My translation

target language. It is difficult to say whether the Swedish idioms in this category have been used because they are considered more suitable than literal language, or because of the loss of idiomatic expressions. The answer might be both. In the material, 26 non-idioms in the source text were translated into Swedish idioms.

The Swedish idiom *med nöd och näppe* occurs four times in the Swedish translation of the book. The word ‘näppe’ is not used outside this expression in Swedish and is quite difficult to translate. Still, this word is not a new one, but occurred in writing already in 1528 (Wedin 2007). ‘Nöd’ (distress), however, shows that this expression and what it describes, is associated with difficulty and the meaning of the translation is *barely and only just*. This idiom is quite common in the Swedish language and can be used in many types of texts. In the material, the expression is used to describe how two people at the treatment centre were so uncoordinated while doing some physical exercises that they were barely able to even stand.

John Joe vevade repet tillsammans med Nancy, hemmafrun som var beroende av Valium. Vi var alla klumpiga, men John Joe och Nancy tog priset. De var så okoordinerade i sina rörelser att det nästan var osannolikt. Nancy kunde *med nöd och näppe* stå på benen. (Keyes 1997: 329–330)

John Joe was turning the rope with Nancy, the housewife who was addicted to Valium. Even though everyone was clumsy and falling round the room, Nancy and John Joe were just that little bit too uncoordinated. In fact, Nancy was *barely* able to stand. (Keyes 1999: 384)

²⁶John Joe cranked the rope together with Nancy, the housewife who was addicted to Valium. We were all clumsy, but John Joe and Nancy took the prize. They were so uncoordinated in their movements that it was almost improbable. Nancy could *with distress and bare* stand on her legs.

Although the meaning of the Swedish and English expressions is the same, the form and structure of the two versions are quite different. In this case, it is probable that the Swedish idiom was chosen because it is more suitable than a literal one and is more effective in describing the situation, in which it was used. If this is the case, this example

²⁶ My translation

follows Larson's statement that sometimes an idiom is, in fact, preferable before a literal expression (Larson 1984: 116).

The following example is an example of where the idiom in Swedish could be considered more effective and informative than the English counterpart in plain language. The example is taken from a situation where Rachel wants to leave during an uncomfortable discussion with her mother.

Det var dags att *fly fältet*. (Keyes 1999: 450)

Time to *go*. (Keyes 1997: 524)

²⁷It was time to *flee the field*.

In this context, where the main character wants to leave the scenery, the Swedish idiom *att fly fältet* (²⁸to flee the field) is really suitable. The idiom brings a battlefield to mind and in this case Rachel wants to avoid getting into a fight with her mother. Thus the Swedish idiom conveys more of the atmosphere and negativity, whereas the English counterpart is quite neutral.

This section has shown that there are different methods and strategies that can be used when translating idioms from one language into another. The idioms were often domesticated in order to suit the target text; they were either explained in literal language or the idioms were, to different extent, transformed so they would not sound foreign to the target text readers. 36 out of 80 English idioms were translated into literal language in Swedish. 20 idioms were translated into a different idiom and 24 were translated into what is considered the same idiom. Because of the loss of source text idioms, the translator added Swedish idioms herself in order to maintain the author's style of the text. 26 idioms were added to the source text which evened out the number of idioms in both of the texts. The results which were identified in the analysis will be presented in the following section.

²⁷ My translation

²⁸ My translation

5 CONCLUSIONS

Figurative language is interesting and by adding it to a text one can express oneself in a more colourful way and to make the text more stylistically appealing. By using such an expression it is possible to express, for instance a feeling, in a more powerful way than by just saying it in literal language. Idioms are a fascinating type of figurative language and are not always easy to define. One common definition is that an idiom consists of different words but the meaning of the whole expression cannot be understood by looking at the individual parts; it must be considered a whole. The formula of an idiom can therefore be displayed as follows; $A + B + C = D$. (Mikone 2000: 17) When learning a new language it is also crucial to learn how to use these kinds of expressions correctly since they are language specific and also contribute much to the language and are useful to know, both when hearing and speaking that language

In this thesis, idioms have been studied and, more specifically, which strategies that have been used when they have been translated from English into Swedish. The material consisted of 80 idioms from the novel *Rachel's Holiday* and its counterparts from the Swedish translation *En oväntad semester*, was analyzed according to Gideon Toury's model for translation strategies of metaphors (Toury 1995). The strategies were divided into 1) idioms translated into non-idioms, 2) idioms translated into different idiom, 3) idioms translated into same idiom, and 4) non-idioms translated into idioms. The first part of my hypothesis was that, through the translation process, the idioms have been domesticated so as not to sound foreign and strange. Since idioms are language specific, the second part of the hypothesis was that many of them have been translated with a non-idiom. That would make the target text stylistically different from the source text, and to avoid that difference the translator would have to add idioms where there was none in the original text. The thought of compensating lost idioms with new ones in the target text is according to the theory presented by Nida and Taber (1969: 106). When translating a text, it is obviously important to alter the language but it is equally significant to transfer the style to the target text, and in this case, the figurative language.

The corpus of this study consisted of 80 in English and their Swedish counterparts, and they were identified by comparing the English text to the Swedish text and vice versa, the Swedish one to the English, in order to find idioms that were added by the translator. After comparing the methods of translating, the study showed that the most common strategy was to translate the English idiom into a non-idiom in Swedish. In this material 36 English idioms were translated into non-idioms, which could change the style of the target text significantly. The second most common method of translating was the translation of idioms into the same idioms, which occurred in 24 cases. Only 20 idioms were translated into different idioms in Swedish.

The results of the study show that the first part of the hypothesis is correct; the idioms have been domesticated during the translation process. The majority, 36 idioms, was translated into literal language in the Swedish version and, therefore, the text has been moved closer to the target culture and readers. When reading the text and the Swedish equivalents to the English idioms, the readers would not find the text foreign since the culture-specific items were replaced with literal language and explanations. Only 20 of the idioms were translated into different idioms in Swedish; expressions that are different both semantically and lexically but bear the same meaning. In this case, the idioms have also been domesticated since the translator used corresponding idioms in Swedish, instead of only translating the English ones, which would lead to unknown expressions in the target text. It is argued that this is the most successful method of translating idioms; using target text idioms that are culture-specific and suitable for the language and culture in question. There were 24 idioms that were translated into the same idioms in Swedish. Since English and Swedish are similar and share both cultural and religious backgrounds, some idioms are expressed in the same way in both languages. However, some minor changes were sometimes made, for instance the use of prepositions, which shows that although the idioms are considered the same, they were still domesticated in this category as well. An idiom would sound foreign even if just one minor aspect about it is not according to the language pattern. Therefore, the conclusion is that all idioms have been domesticated to some extent; some because of the fact that there are no corresponding expressions in the target language and some because of the importance of not sounding foreign.

The second part of the hypothesis, which is about the compensation of lost idioms in the source text, is confirmed. Most English idioms are translated into literal language but the numbers of idioms in both texts, 80 in the English one and 70 in the Swedish one, are much more equal than they would be without any added idioms in Swedish. In this way, the style of the text have been preserved in a better way since the loss of idioms is not as big as it could have been without the inference of the translator. Furthermore, the fact that the strategy of translating into a different idiom was used least frequently is rather surprising, seeing that it is stated that idioms are language specific. In this case, translating into the same idiom is a more common method than into a different one and the reason might be that English and Swedish are quite closely related and otherwise share many words and expressions as well. Swedish is also influenced by English and is constantly changing. It is not surprising that these two languages have much in common since they exist close together, and the people using them share religion, a great deal of culture and history.

This was only a brief study of the use and translation of figurative expressions. It would be interesting to widen the study and look at the methods of different translator, their attitudes towards problems that might occur when translating figurative language and the importance of making both the source and the target text stylistically equal. The last point is especially interesting since it does not only concern the translator, but also the writers and all the readers of written works and their translations.

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