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UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ

"Words is oh such a twitch-tickling problem":  
ANOMALOUS FEATURES IN ROALD DAHL'S  
*THE BFG*  
AND ITS FINNISH TRANSLATION

A Pro Gradu Thesis

by

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"Words is oh such a twitch-tickling problem": Anomalous features  
in Roald Dahl's *The BFG* and its Finnish translation

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Tutkielman aiheena on Roald Dahlin lastenkirja *The BFG* ja sen suomenkielinen käännös, *Iso kiltti jätti*, jonka on tehnyt Tuomas Nevanlinna. Kirjan luonne rakentuu suurelta osin siinä käytetyn omaleimaisen kielen varaan. Kieli ei läheskään aina noudata englannin kielen konventioita, vaan rikkoo niitä sanaston ja kieliopillisten rakenteiden osalta. Tutkielmassa keskitytään näiden kielellisestä normista poikkeavien ja jopa nonsensisten piirteiden ja niiden suomenkielisten vastineiden tutkimiseen. Metodi on analyttis-vertaileva. Tutkielmassa käytetään stilistiikan ja käännöstieteen terminologiaa kuvailemaan *The BFG*:ssä esiintyvän poikkeavan kielen olemusta. Erityisesti keskitytään niihin keinoihin, millä epäkonventionaalista kieltä on rakennettu sekä miten kääntäjä on ratkaissut ilmenneitä käännösongelmia. Tutkielmassa pohditaan myös, miten kääntäjän tekemät ratkaisut vaikuttavat kokonaisuuteen ja miten hän on onnistunut säilyttämään alkuperäisen teoksen epäkonventionaaliset piirteet. Tutkielmassa käy ilmi, että kääntäjä on valinnut käännös menetelmän, jota ei painota kovinkaan voimakkaasti ilmaisujen semanttisen sisällön tarkkaa välittämistä, vaan keskittyy löytämään mahdollisimman osuvia vastineita alkuperäisteoksessa esiintyville sanaleikeille, äännemaalailulle ja muille piirteille, joita ei ole mahdollista kääntää sananmukaisesti. Anomalisten ilmaisujen ja niiden käännösten tutkiminen osoittaa, että kääntäjän tekemät ratkaisut sopivat hyvin tämän tyyppisen tekstin kääntämiseen ja alkuperäisen teoksen hieman absurdi tunnelma ja kielelliseen leikittelyyn perustuva huumori välittyvät käännöksessä hyvin.

Tutkielmassa käsitellään myös epäkonventionaalisen kielen merkitystä teoksen kokonaisuudelle ja miten henkilöahmoja on poikkeavan kielen avulla rakennettu. Poikkeava kieli on teoksessa lähinnä huumorin väline, mutta se myös mahdollistaa tuoreen näkökulman tuttuihin, arkipäiväisiin ilmiöihin.

Tutkielma sivuaa lastenkirjallisuuden asemaa kirjallisuuden kentässä ottaen esiin kysymyksen, miten kyseisen kirjallisuudenlajin erityispiirteet vaikuttavat sen kääntämiseen. Esiin nousee erityisesti kääntäjän tekemien muutosten erilainen, hyväksytympi asema lastenkirjallisuudessa. *The BFG*:n käännökseen tehtyjä muutoksia analysoidaan ja niiden soveltuvuutta ja oikeutusta pyritään arvioimaan.

Asiasanat: children's literature, translation, linguistic anomaly, nonsense

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

*The BFG - BFG*

*Iso kiltti jätti - IKJ*

*Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English - Longman*

*Suomen kielen perussanakirja - Perussanakirja*

*Webster's New Dictionary and Thesaurus - Webster's 1*

*Webster's New World Dictionary - Webster's 2*

## INTRODUCTION

Anomalous features, ie. features that violate the grammatical or semantic conventions of the language, have been used in all fields of literature. In poetry they are perhaps most common, due to the special role that poetry has had as the most experimental field of literature, but prose writers have also sometimes found that conventional expressions cannot effectively enough convey the desired message. In children's literature wordplay is an important factor (an example of this are nursery rhymes), but writers of children's literature are by no means the only ones who use expressions and structures that are not established in the language.

Anomalies present an interesting problem for a translator. Anomalous language has certain common features with language where the intended meaning cannot be directly inferred from the linguistic components, such as idiomatic and metaphorical language. This is an interesting area, and I want to study it in the light of new material.

Roald Dahl's *The BFG* is ideal for the study of translation of anomalous features because of the important role that anomalous language plays in it - in fact the whole work would be more or less pointless if the language was conventional. A remarkable amount of the appeal of the book is based on the language the giant speaks, which does not always conform to the standards of English but has several anomalous features. I will concentrate on these features and their into Finnish equivalents. I will analyze the anatomy of the anomalous language in detail to find out how it has been constructed, as well as the translator's solutions to the problematic expressions, trying to determine what the consequences of his choices are, and to what extent he has managed to maintain

the unconventional features of the original work. The translator has chosen translation strategies that do not stress the semantic aspects, since *The BFG* has a strong emphasis on phonetic play, word play, puns and other features which cannot be translated semantically, as I will show later in the study.

Anomalous language is an important stylistic feature, which creates a certain - rather nonsensical - atmosphere in *The BFG*. Therefore, it is essential that the anomalous features in some form or other are also present in the translation. Dahl's extraordinary language presents quite a challenge to the translator. As a reader I got the impression that the translator has managed very well to convey the special atmosphere of the book, and it is interesting to study the ways in which he has done that.

The most central goals of the present study are to find out how the anomalous language has been constructed (ie. Dahl's techniques in creating the language) and what kinds of problems the translator has faced when translating the language and how he has solved them. The focus of the study is on practical goals - combining theory and practice is especially important in this field.

In the present study, one of the basic concepts is introduced first: what is linguistic anomaly and how it can be used for literary purposes. Since the approach on the subject is based on the concept of anomaly, the distinction between standard language and so called anomalous language will be discussed. The concept of nonsense will also be taken up in order to clarify the difference between nonsensical and anomalous language. A brief outline of Dahl's work in general is given, followed by a depiction of the work at hand, *The BFG*. The special features of children's literature are discussed, as well as the special problems of translating for children. Emphasis is given to the views for and against making adaptations to translations for children, because this seems to be one of the central problems of translation of children's books. In the chapter presenting the analysis, the anomalous features of *The BFG* are divided into four categories: lexical anomalies, idiomatic expressions, altered puns and grammatical anomalies. All the classes are presented by first analysing examples of the original work and then comparing the translations with them. The comparative method will be used. The concepts that appear in the analysis are

common grammatical terms, and terms of stylistics and semantics. Finally, the significance of the anomalous features to *The BFG* is discussed and conclusions drawn concerning the translation.

## 1 LINGUISTIC ANOMALY: DEFINITIONS AND USES IN LITERATURE

*The Dictionary of Language And Linguistics* (Hartmann 1972) concisely defines an utterance as anomalous when it does not comply with the grammatical and semantic conventions of the language. This rather broad definition focuses the attention on the conventionality of an expression, which raises the question of how to determine whether an expression is conventional or not. When looking for grammatical and lexical anomalies one can rely to a great some extent simply on grammar and dictionaries, which are taken to represent conventional standard language. One must, however, take into account the varying nature of language - linguistic structures and expressions tend to alter in the course of time, and grammars and dictionaries are slow to follow those changes. Therefore the intuition and ideas of a native speaker about his/her mother tongue are an important source when finding outconventional and unconventional expressions of a language.

The same source denifes an utterance nonsensical if it is in keeping with the phonological and grammatical conventions of the language, but semantically meaningless. A deeper definition of literary nonsense is presented by Tigges (1988), who claims that the nature of nonsense combines "a multiplicity of meaning with a simultaneous absence of meaning", ie. that a proper nonsense utterance at the same time invites the reader to interpretation and avoids the idea that there is a deeper meaning to be grasped (Tigges 1988:47). By this definition, most of Dahl's unorthodox expressions are not nonsensical in literary sense, since they usually lack features typical for nonsense. Other typically nonsensical features are lack of emotion and creating reality primarily with language. Reality is created by language typically in nursery rhymes and riddles. (Tigges

1988:136). Although nonsense is not constantly present in *The BFG*, there are some interesting cases of literary nonsense in it, however, which will come up in the course of the study.

There are very few theoretical presentations of anomalous features as components of creative prose fiction language, which would help us form a general view on the subject. However, there are some dealing with poetry. Leech, for example, discusses the importance of anomalous language, with its deviant expressions and unconventional structures, to poetical language, and makes observations that can be applied to prose fiction as well. He divides the types of deviation from the norm into eight categories: lexical, grammatical, phonological, graphological, semantic and dialectal deviations and deviations of register and historical period (Leech 1969:42-53). Of these, lexical, grammatical and semantic deviations are most common in *The BFG*. According to Leech, lexical deviation consists of either neologisms (a new word created "applying an existing rule of word-formation with greater generality than customary") or functional conversion (adapting a word into a new grammatical function without changing its form) (1969:42-43). In *The BFG*, functional conversion occurs only occasionally. Lexical deviation is carried out mainly by creating new words. In addition to inventing a completely new lexical item without etymological history - the only case which Tigges (1988:68) calls a neologism proper - there are several ways of coining a word. The most common ones are affixation and compounding, both of which Dahl generously employs.

The purpose and effect of deviant expressions in poetry is twofold, according to Leech (1969:44): The intended meaning can be conveyed in a more effective and perhaps short-spoken manner, and newly formulated ideas can be expressed. Thus, they can play a very important role in finding new, apt ways of expression. Leech discusses poetry, but there is no reason why the same would not apply to prose fiction as well.

### **3 ROALD DAHL AND THE GIANTS**

Roald Dahl (1916-1990) was a productive Welsh author who wrote for both child



and adult readers. He was a very successful writer of children's prose and verse and most of his work has been translated into several European languages. His works include *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, *Fantastic Mr. Fox*, *George's Marvellous Medicine*, *Danny the Champion of the World*, *James and the Giant Peach*, *Matilda*, *The Witches*, *Revolting Rhymes* and *Rhyme Stew*, to mention just a few. Some of his works have also been filmed, like *The Cremlins* and *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory*. In addition, he has written a few film scripts, including *You Only Live Twice* and *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*. (Compton 1995). With his children's prose he has managed to catch and keep the attention of his child readers with his tales in which "children are fit to rule; they understand cruelty and un-fairness and(...) are capable of relishing it" (Hitchens 1994). His rather rebellious or provocative style seems to appeal to children more than more traditional, educational children's writing that may often be boring in its naivety and in its attempt to teach the reader.

Dahl's style has also aroused negative reactions from parents and educators. It has been claimed that his works are too violent and give children a distorted view of the world. In the United States some of them have been attempted to remove from the curriculum (Hitchens 1994). It is true that his works do not follow the rules of PC, but nevertheless, they continue to sell well.

*The BFG* is one of Dahl's most successful children's book. It is a story about a friendly giant who catches dreams into jars and wanders around to blow them to children's bedrooms at night with a trumpet-like instrument - he is a dream-making giant. He makes friends with a little orphan girl called Sophie, whom he snatches from her bed in the middle of the night and takes to his cave in the Giant Country. Together they fight nine dreadful man-eating giants who go out every night to catch little boys and girls for supper. The Big Friedly Giant, the BFG, does not approve of eating "human beans" - his diet consists of repulsive snozzcumber, the only vegetable that grows in the harsh conditions of the Giant Country. Eventually the BFG and Sophie manage to capture the evil giants with some help from the Queen of England and the adventure ends happily.

Typically for Dahl, one of the themes of the work is fighting against a superior opponent using one's intelligence and invention. In *The BFG* it is the child, Sophie,

who is in command because of her wits and courage, and the adult figure, the BFG, carries out her imaginative plans. The same pattern, the friendship and collaboration of an intelligent child and a kind and gentle adult is recurrent in several of Dahl's works. The fact that Sophie is an orphan has a twofold function in the narration: on one hand it allows the reader feel sympathy for her, and on the other hand it makes possible the happy end in the true dahlesquian manner - Sophie and her giant friend can move into a comfortable house together after the other giants have been cleared off, and they do not have to worry about the tedious parents getting in the way.

*The BFG* bears satirical overtones. The self-conceit, narrow-mindedness and sheer stupidity of people are studied from the viewpoint of a giant and a little girl, and the actions of adults are seen in a comical light. The only good adult is the Queen of England, who efficiently organizes the mission to capture the man-eating giants, and turns out to be a wise and warm person. In *The BFG*, as in many other children's books that he has written, Dahl creates a strong opposition between children and adults, and it is always the children who come out as winners. In his books, children are often left on their own to survive in the cruel world of uncaring adults.

*The BFG* is a standard fairy-tale in many senses. The line between good and evil is easy to draw, the heroes are good to the core, and the villains are thoroughly bad, which is also shown in their appearances: typically for Dahl, they have long, untidy beards, they never wash, they are fat, ugly and stupid. *The BFG* also has a happy ending, a clear plot and a one-dimensional, rather shallow description of characters (Sophie and the BFG, as the main characters, are a bit more deeply described, however). These are all features that clearly place the work into the category of conventional fairy-tale. What distinguishes *The BFG* from the typical fairy-tale mode is the lack of a moral and an attempt to teach the reader. *The BFG* is meant to entertain, not educate.

### **3 CHILDREN'S LITERATURE AND TRANSLATION**

#### **3.1 Children's literature, a despised stepchild in the literary field**

As can be seen later in the examples, the translator of *The BFG*, Tuomas Nevanlinna, has chosen to replace the original proper names with Finnish ones and to make adaptations to cultural references, such as place-names and institutions. This strategy, which is called context adaptation, is not without problems. Opinions differ as to adaptations of this kind should be made at all. I will go into the details of this discussion later, and will also briefly examine some of the special features of children's literature, since the work we are studying is regarded as a children's book, and the norms and conventions of children's books are different from those of adults' books.

According to Zohar Shavit (1986), children's literature differs from other literature in many ways. Firstly, its status is low compared to any form of adults' literature. It is hardly ever mentioned in histories of literature, and it is not considered culturally important. Secondly, a book for children faces different expectations: its value is not judged by its literary merits but its ability to educate the child. Thus, the value judgement is made by parents and teachers and other educators, and not by the implied reader, the child, him/herself. This leads to what Shavit calls ambivalence of text: the author is pressured to aim her text at two different audiences at the same time, children and adults. Thirdly, special constraints are imposed on texts for children. Decisions concerning structure, subject, approach and plot are limited much more strictly than in adults' literature. A book for children is expected to have a suitable subject, an unequivocal plot, a happy ending and a clear expression of values (Shavit 1986:33-43.). Some authors of children's books have understandably resisted these demands. Astrid Lindgren, for one, has defended the author's right to write as she wishes to. In *Ord och Bild* (1964 as quoted by Furuland et al. 1976:366-367) she points out that it would be quite as preposterous to ask "what should books for children be like?" as to ask "what should books for adults be like?" There are a few voices among researchers that speak strongly for a literary approach to children's literature instead of educational or other means outside of literary value. John Rowe Townsend writes about the standards by which children's literature is to be judged: "Literary experience has value in itself for the general enrichment of life, over and above

any virtue that may be claimed for it as a means to a non-literary end" (in Hunt 1990:58).

Roald Dahl is one of the authors who have rebelled against the restrictions of the genre by choosing "unsuitable" subjects, using suggestive language and cooking up exceptionally violent plots (Hitchens 1994). For example, in *Danny the Champion of the World*, he handles the subject of poaching in an approving tone, which almost led to rejection by the publisher. Dahl has also explicitly taken up the subject of low esteem of children's books in *Roald Dahl's Book of Ghost Stories* (1983:14) in which he claims that children's literature is one of the most important facets of all creative writing.

An author can break loose from the ambivalence of text by making the choice to ignore the adult audience and write only for children. Some authors, like Enid Blyton, who have written extremely successful children's books, have made this choice. Shavit claims that it is typical for books that have been directed solely to the child audience to have a strong opposition between children and adults, with adults depicted as enemies or targets of ridicule. This non-canonized children's literature (ie. one directed solely to children) typically uses stereotypical plots and characterization, and it draws its popularity from the familiar, repetitive patterns. Serial books, like the Famous Five, Nancy Drew etc. are typical examples of this kind of literature. (Shavit 1986:42.) If the writer chooses this path, she may sell well, but there are also penalties in doing so. Her books will not be accepted as a part of the canonized, esteemed literature.

Roald Dahl's production is clearly child-centered - he has rejected the ambivalence of text and chosen children as his primary audience. This choice has made his books extremely popular among child readers, but it seems to me that there are also many adults who can appreciate his original, sometimes macabre style. In his children's books there is strong opposition between children and adults, and Dahl's recipe for a successful children's book seems to be to "conspire with children against adults", as Hitchens (1994:16) rather cynically puts it.

### **3.2 Adaptations in the translation of children's literature**

An important question at this point is how the differences between the status of children's and adults' literature affect their translation. First, it seems that the respect of the original text is lower in the case of children's literature due to its undeniably lower status in the literary field. At present, adaptations to the text are rarely made in the translations of books for adult readers, although that used to be a common practice as late as a century ago. Most researchers who have studied translations of children's books agree that adaptations are more easily tolerated in the translations of children's literature. Shavit argues that unlike a translator of adults' literature, a translator of children's books is allowed to "change, enlarge, abridge, delete or add to" a text, providing that the changes are in accordance with what is thought to be good for the child according to the values of society, and that the child's presumed ability to understand the text is taken into account. (Shavit 1986:112-113). The opinions of researchers and translators of children's literature differ on whether or not changes should be allowed. I will briefly summarize the discussion to get a general view on the central arguments. The effects of adaptations in the translation of *The BFG* will be discussed in chapter 4.

Since in the translation of *The BFG* the only changes that have been made are adaptations of the cultural context - there are no deletions or additions - I will take up views concerning only that particular kinds of changes. First, I want to briefly go through the types of adaptations that a translator can use when modifying a text. Adaptations in translations (of children's literature) can be divided into three classes, as Klingberg (1978:86-87) does: modernization (although Klingberg uses the word "modernification"), purification and context adaptation. Modernization is defined as moving the time nearer to the present, or changing details into more modern ones in order to make the text more attractive. Purification takes place if the values of the source text are distorted to make them accepted by the implied readers - or, in the case of children's literature, by the parents and educators of the readers. Klingberg takes a negative attitude to these kinds of adaptations on the grounds that they are in conflict with one of the aims of translation, i.e. the internationalization of the young readers. However, he seems to adopt a somewhat more tolerant view on the third class, context adaptation, by which he means the adaptation of cultural context of the source language to the cultural context of the

target language. This can be done by changing for example names, measurements, customs, practices and historical and literary references to fit the target language culture. As Klingberg himself notices, even context adaptation prevents the (child) reader from getting knowledge and emotional experience from the foreign culture, which makes it, too, problematic from the educational as well as the aesthetic point of view.

The clarification and adaptation of texts has a long history, probably as long as the history of translation itself. In the eighteenth century, an individual was thought to have the "right to be addressed on his own terms, on his own ground". This led to the idea that texts could or should be conformed to contemporary standards of language and taste. (Bassnett-McGuire 1980:61.) Although this kind of thinking has lost some ground when literature for adults is concerned, it still lingers on in children's literature.

Adaptations have been opposed on the grounds that the original text should be respected and the changes would lead to distortion of the text. Carmen Bravo-Villasante (in Klingberg et al. 1978:48) holds the view that no adaptations to the target culture or changes of proper names should be made. She brings up the point that maintaining the foreign elements will help the reader to gain a better understanding of other cultures and times, a goal which is seen important especially in children's literature. Birgit Stolt is along the same lines when she claims that as strange the milieu and the names may be, the child will quickly get used to them if the book is exciting enough, and they will not hinder the reading experience but rather add to the charm of the work (in Klingberg et al. 1978:137). It seems that in translating for young readers there lies a danger of too much simplification both on the level of the language as well as that of the plot and values and world views: I agree with Stolt in that foreign elements may give the reader a valuable experience of exotic, far-away places and customs, which s/he would not get if all unfamiliar elements were removed from the translation. Both Bravo-Villasante and Stolt recommend the use of preface and footnotes to clarify the problematic points. However, they ignore the aspect that Klingberg calls preserving the degree of adaptation. By the degree of adaptation he means the extent to which the author of children's books has taken into account the interests,

ways of experiencing, knowledge and reading ability of presumptive readers, ie. children. Klingberg claims that in principle the target text should not be easier or more difficult to read than the source text. Sometimes this can only be achieved by making adaptations in the translation, since it is obvious that a text with foreign names and strange places and habits is more difficult to read than a text with a familiar milieu (Klingberg et al. 1978:68.). Klingberg does not mention, however, whether or not the same demand should be made for adults' literature - it seems apparent that the cultural context in all translated literature, regardless of the age of the implied audience, is inevitably stranger than in native literature with a native milieu. However, that is not usually regarded as an unsurmountable problem when adults' literature is concerned. Rather, one might argue that the indirect experiences of foreign countries and exotic surroundings that literature can offer are one important reason for its appeal and even for its very existence. Therefore, by denying this aspect from young readers, Klingberg actually denies them an important part of the appeal of literature.

Oittinen (1993:87-96) holds the sensible view that all translation inevitably involves adaptation to some degree and the translator always adapts the text for target readers. She seems to support a more liberal view that accepts adaptations if they are helpful for the child reader in the reading process. I feel that in this reader-centered view there lies a danger of too ready acceptance of changes to the source text, which is, after all, the basis for all translation and should be approached with respect.

In the following chapter adaptations made to the translation of *The BFG* will be discussed and anomalous features of *The BFG* and *Iso kiltti jätti* analyzed. Views for and against adaptations will be tested in practice.

#### 4 ANOMALIES IN *THE BFG* AND ITS FINNISH TRANSLATION

"When I use a word, it means just what I choose it to mean -  
neither more nor less."

Humpty Dumpty

In order to analyze anomalous or non-standard features in *The BFG* and its

translation, *Iso kiltti jätti*, they have been divided into four categories: lexical anomalies, altered idiomatic expressions, transformed puns and grammatical anomalies. Some categories include a subcategory consisting of standard English expressions which have been translated with anomalous Finnish expressions. There is some overlapping in the categories, because the lines between, say, an idiom and a pun can be blurred. However, this classification seems to adequately take into account all types of non-standard language in the work, and it has proved to be practicable in the present study. I will analyze examples in each category and their Finnish equivalents using poetic analysis in the spirit of Leech (surprising as that may seem, it fits the analysis of this kind of language very well) and connotation analysis. Cacciari (1993:27-52) has presented a strategy of analysing unknown idioms and that strategy can be used to analyse other unknown expressions as well, such as the ones in *The BFG*.

It must be made clear at this point that the concepts "standard language" and "standard English" that I use as antonyms for anomalous or nonsensical or deviant language, are not used here in the narrow sense of the terms, meaning the socially favoured variety of the language. Rather, "standard language" is taken here to denote any code of English that can be used by a native speaker. Defined like this, a non-standard expression would only be one that is not accepted by any standard of English, one that does not exist in any dialect or style. It comes close to our definition of anomalous language.

Next I will analyze the linguistic anomalies found in *The BFG*, and their Finnish renderings. First, adaptations made in the translation will be handled and then anomalous features that appear in idiomatic expressions, puns and grammar will be discussed.

#### **4.1 Adaptations in the translation of *The BFG*, an analysis**

Bearing in mind the arguments for and against adaptations in the translation of children's literature, presented in the previous chapter, I will now proceed to discuss in some detail the adaptations made in the translation of *The BFG*, and how the changes affect the work as a whole. Of the three classes of adaptation that



Klingberg mentions (modernization, purification and context adaptation) only context adaptation can be found in *Iso kiltti jätti*.

All the proper names have been changed into Finnish ones. The giants have got expressive Finnish names:

<i>The Fleshlumpeater</i>	has become	<i>Läskinlappaaja</i>
<i>the Childchewer</i>	"	<i>Penskanpurija</i>
<i>the Bonecruncher</i>	"	<i>Luunmurskaaja</i>
<i>the Manhugger</i>	"	<i>Raatokaappi</i>
<i>the Meatdripper</i>	"	<i>Rasvasylki</i>
<i>the Maidmasher</i>	"	<i>Lastenlyttäjä</i>
<i>the Gizzardgulper</i>	"	<i>Pötsiklonkku</i>
<i>the Bloodbottler</i>	"	<i>Verikorsto</i>
<i>the Butcher Boy</i>	"	<i>Teurastaja.</i>

And, of course *the Big Friendly Giant* has become *Iso Kiltti Jätti*. Since the proper names of the evil giants have meaningful semantic contents, it seems only reasonable to replace them with Finnish "equivalents" in the translation. The original names within the Finnish text would be incomprehensible for most child readers and the idea of bloodthirsty monsters would be sadly lost. Similarly, the replacement of *the Big Friendly Giant* with the Finnish version is legitimate in order to convey to the reader the humorous tautology of the name.

The translator has also replaced ordinary proper names with no semantic content with Finnish names. *Sophie*, for example, has been changed into a Finnish form *Sohvi*, and the butler *Mr. Tibbs* into *herra Puuppo*. It can be questioned whether these changes are legitimate, since their Finnish versions do not contribute to the understanding of the special nature of the characters. However, the mere changing of the names is not the most problematic element in the translation, but the adaptation of the whole cultural context, which has made the changes necessary. The original story takes place partly in England and partly in the Giant Country, but the translator has made it happen in Finland and the Giant Country. Naturally, this has led to many changes in the institutions and geography. To take just a few examples, the Queen of England has been replaced with the president of Finland (the gender of the character must have been changed in the process, as well as the gender of the servant), *London* with *Helsinki*, *Trafalgar Square* with

*Esplanadin kulma* and *the Times* with *Helsingin Sanomat*. Replacing an institution or a place with a Finnish one, and at the same time maintaining some of the details connected with it in the original text can cause problems on the semantic level, when the description and the object of description do not match any more. To elaborate, in *The BFG*, Buckingham Palace is described as a magnificent and glamorous castle with grand staircases and chandeliers, and armies of smartly dressed servants rushing to and fro to fulfil commands. Naturally, the image is very well suited to a fairy-tale. However, it does not really fit in the idea that an (adult) Finnish reader has of the presidential residence of Finland.

One of the problems with making, say, the president of Finland analogous to the Queen of England is that the connotations that emerge from the two institutions are different: among other differences, Queen Elizabeth has a more stable position in the minds of the Britons than the changing presidents of Finland have in the minds of the Finns. Therefore, the voice of Queen Elizabeth is also more familiar in Britain than the voice of the present president is in Finland. Thus, when the narrator of *the BFG* refers to the Queen's voice as *the famous voice* (BFG 149), and the translator replaces that, simply, with *kuuluisa ääni* (IKJ 167), the Finnish phrase is not as well-grounded and to the point as the original phrase. The problem, of course, is not the literal translation of the noun phrase, legitimate as such, but the replacement of one institution with another.

When the translator has chosen this path of adaptations, he has also noticed that several small changes to the text should follow from the decision, and he has been willing to make those changes. For example, in the same context, he has changed the date in which this famous voice is most regularly heard. The original reads: This was a voice Sophie had heard many times on radio and television, especially on *Christmas Day* (BFG 149). The translation: Tämä oli ääni, jonka Sohvi oli kuullut monta kertaa radiosta ja televisiosta, erityisesti *Uudenvuodenpäivänä* (IKJ 167). By this change in the semantic content the translator takes into account the fact that the (symbolic or actual) leaders of the two countries give their annual traditional speech to the whole nation on different occasions: on Christmas Day in England and on New Year's Day in Finland. The change is justified and even necessary. Let us take one more example of the

changes the translator has made in order to keep the target text consistent. The Queen says: "When I'm up in *Scotland*, they play the *bagpipes* outside the window while I'm eating." (BFG 191.) The translation: "Kun käyn lomalla *Lapissa*, siellä soitetaan *hanuria* ruoka-aikaan." (IKJ 171.) The need for small changes like this follows from big changes like transforming the whole cultural setting into the Finnish one.

All these adaptations could be defended on the grounds that they make the reading experience of the translation similar to the reading experience of the original text, and keep the degree of adaptation, using Klingberg's term, the same. Yet by taking this approach the translator ignores some of the aims that children's literature is often thought to have, namely the aim to internationalize the child by making him/her aware of other cultures. And even if one puts aside the demand of educating the child and examines the problem from the point of view of literary criticism, one might argue that the respect of the original text makes these kinds of profound changes highly questionable. As stated above, it is not likely that major adaptations are made in the translation of adults' literature nowadays. Why are they thought necessary or even justifiable in children's literature, then? Implied readers of *The BFG* as well as the translation are children of approximately 9 to 12 years. It is likely that they already are somewhat familiar with other European cultures, and would not be unreasonably baffled by foreign names and institutions. They might in fact find them exciting.

Nevertheless, I would argue that even the fundamental changes in the setting do not change the reading experience in the case of *The BFG*. The degree of adaptation stays the same, and even though the translation may fail to make young readers more aware of other cultures and surroundings, the bottom line is that *Iso Kiltti Jätti* can be read as an enjoyable story in its own right that is impeccable even in its little details. This is achieved by the translator's careful concentration on even the smallest features. In my opinion, the adaptations in *Iso kiltti jätti* have not in any way corrupted the work - in some cases they even seem inevitable in order to pass all the witticisms to a Finnish reader.

Should we follow Shavit, then, and conclude that it is only the low esteem of children's literature that makes it possible even to consider distorting the text in

this radical way, which could never be accepted if literature for adults was in question, and should we therefore condemn all changes in order to gain esteem to this underrated field of literature? Or should we admit that there are differences between children's and adults' literature because the implied audiences are different, and that there may, at least in some cases, be acceptable reasons to make adaptations to the text when children's literature is concerned? This is a question to which I cannot find a decisive answer at this point, even after the careful studying of the translation of *The BFG*, since there are many perfectly sound arguments in support of both views, as I have attempted to show in this chapter.

We will continue by discussing one of the most central types of anomaly in *The BFG*, namely lexical anomalies. They are central because they are great in number, but also because they, more than any other anomalous feature, help creating the fantastic, unreal atmosphere in the book by conjuring up images of mysterious fairy-tale figures.

#### 4.2 Lexical anomalies

Lexical anomalies are the largest category that can be found in *The BFG*, which includes neologisms and portmanteau words of Dahl's own making. The origin of some of these can be traced by their form and appearance, which makes the comparison with the Finnish equivalent relatively easy. The concept "neologism" is used here of new words coined by Dahl, and "portmanteau word" - or a blend - as defined by Hartmann (1972), is used of the combination of two or more free morphemes which form a new word that incorporates all the meanings of its constituents. An often cited example of a portmanteau word is *smog* (*smoke+fog*). The concepts of portmanteau and neologism overlap to some extent - it could be claimed that a portmanteau is a neologism in the sense that it is a new word. However, Tigges separates the two concepts on the grounds that one can trace the root words of a portmanteau, whereas a neologism is a completely made-up word without a (known) etymological history (Tigges 1988:68) An example of a neologism could be one found in *The BFG*, *schnozzle* (87). The context suggests that it be interpreted as *an eye*, an interpretation that could not be made without the

help of the context. Dahl's neologisms and portmanteau words are treated here as anomalous utterances because of their unconventional nature - they are not generally used expressions with established meanings, but the author's original inventions.

When it comes to exceptional language with strange expressions, a question of readability arises. The author, when creating new, un-heard-of expressions must, in order to be understood at all, rely on familiar, conventional lexical units and their denotations and connotations, or use the context as a guideline for interpretations. He/she can intentionally use old words as sources that conjure up new images and impressions. There may be allusions to familiar words to help the interpretation. In *The BFG*, most new expressions are based on familiar ones, which naturally affects the way they are understood.

During the course of analysis I will occasionally resort to connotation analysis in order to compare the emotional value of the examples in source and target texts. The problem with comparing connotations is that they are often extremely subjective and differ from person to person depending on his/her word view, experiences, opinions on religion and politics, etc, and are therefore impossible to take into account. However, the analysis that I intent to make here is based on the assumption that there are also general, more or less shared connotations to words and expressions. For a translator, it is important to find emotionally equivalent renderings, neither euphemisms nor dysphemisms.

I will also attempt to use denotation analysis in order to compare the translator's solutions to the source text on the semantic level. It may be questioned whether denotation analysis can be directly applied to nonsensical or anomalous lexical items, which are not in common use. How can a made-up word have denotations? One can only study the words that they resemble, words that they seem to have something in common with. I believe that by analysing these 'model words' one can find the intended images behind the exotic-sounding new words. Denotation analysis has serious limitations in analysing a translation whose appeal is not based so much on conveying exact meanings of lexical items and expressions into another language as conveying similar impressions and similar atmosphere, which is done by the imitation of the sound-patterns and the choice of

structures and phrases which create similar images. Despite the limitations, denotation analysis may be of help when attempting to determine, as we are, how the translator's choices differ from those of the author.

I will now proceed to study examples of lexical anomalies that occur in *The BFG*, and compare them with their Finnish equivalents. At this point, I have not paid attention to syntactic deviances present in the examples - they will be analyzed in a separate chapter. Consider the way in which Dahl has created an unconventional portmanteau word -or a blend - from two unrelated morphemes and how it has been translated:

(1) "Please, what is this *horrible swigpill* I is drinking, *Majester*?" (BFG 170.)

(2) "Mitä tämä *kammo lörökatkero* on, *dresipentti*?" (IKJ 190.)

Most denotations of *pill* are negative: Apart from the most common denotation (a small solid piece of medicine), it has other meanings, such as "anything unpleasant but unavoidable", or in slang "an unpleasant or boring person" (Webster's 1 1990.)

*Pill* is also a part of several proverbs or idioms, in which it refers to something bitter and and unpleasant, like in sayings *To sugar the pill*, *A bitter pill to swallow*. The first part of the compound *swig/pill* describes the action of drinking, especially quickly in large mouthfuls (Longman 1991), and the second part brings along the negative connotations of *pill*. The result is an idea of an unpleasant drink, which is strengthened by the modifier *horrible*. It is also interesting to observe that if one uses the two components of *swigpill* to form a portmanteau word, one comes up with *swill*, which is a conventional word meaning "to drink greedily or in large quantity" (Webster's 2 1995). In other words, one may argue that the author has expanded a non-anomalous word *swill* into an anomalous compound *swigpill*.

The Finnish counterpart is constructed of *lörö*, which has allusions to *plörö*, coffee mixed with spirit (Perussanakirja 1992) and *katkero*, a bitter alcoholic drink or just a bitter taste. The result, again, is the impression of an unappealing drink, although the Finnish translation has implications of alcohol, which lack in the original text. However, if one sees the original *swigpill* as an expansion of *swill*, that aspect does not show in the translation. The modifier *kammo* is slightly

different from the original in tone, since it is not standard language like *horrible*. However, this non-standard form of the word *kammottava* could be seen as the translator's attempt to maintain the stylistic balance, since he has left out the subordinate clause *I is drinking* with its non-standard copula.

Another lexically deviant feature *Majester (dresipentti)* in this example is created by just a small deliberate misprint. However, the consequences of the misprint are considerable, because it changes the tone of the address. *Jester* denotes "a professional fool employed by a medieval ruler" (*Webster's 2 1995*) - which causes the BFG to inadvertently address the Queen in a comically insolent way. *Ma* can be understood here as an abbreviated form of a possessive pronoun *my* (as, for example, in a form of address *mylady*).

The Finnish counterpart for *Majester*, namely *dresipentti*, can also be analyzed in two parts, like the original. There is a contrast in the phonetic structure between the parts. The first part *dresi-* is difficult for a Finnish speaking person to pronounce because of the close proximity of the two alveolars [d] and [r], whereas the second part *pentti* is typically Finnish by its phonetic pattern. The fact that *Pentti* is a Finnish male name makes it possible for the reader to get the impression that IKJ impertinently addresses the president by his first name, or by a false first name, which is even worse. In any case, the form of address used by the giant results in an unintentional insult to the president. In that sense the effect of the translation is equivalent to the effect of the original. The nonsensical first part *dresi-* emphasizes the perplexity of the address and at the same time justifies the problems that the giant has in pronouncing it. As can be seen, the strategy of the translator differs from that of the author. Dahl, as discussed above, has changed a lexical item into another one which is pronounced almost identically, whereas Nevanlinna has developed a spoonerism (ie. he has interchanged two syllables) to create a similar effect.

Since the utterance in question has quite an exceptional phonetic structure, I decided to make a coarse phonetic analysis to see whether the possible implications of the sound patterns had been taken into account in the translation. If we describe the sounds of the utterance with phonetic symbols, using the IPA system, the result is more or less as follows:

[pli:z wot iz ðis horibl sɔɪgpil ʌi iz drinkɪŋ mədzestə]

By depicting only the vowels, we see an interesting pattern:

[i: o i i o i i i ʌ i i i i ʌ ɛ ə]

As many as 10 of the 16 vowels are a short, long, tense or lax version of [i] (the differences in laxness do not show in the rough depiction). There is a certain pattern to be seen. Opinions differ on the significance of such patterns in literature and how they should be interpreted. Leech points out that to a great extent there is no need to try and interpret sound patterns or attach external significance to them - "the 'music' of phonological schemes is its own justification" (Leech 1969:95). It is largely accepted in traditional literary criticism that vowels may indicate emotions, be a tool of characterization, define types and individuals, whereas consonants indicate movement, action and events. Front vowels [a], [o] and [u] are taken to express strength, solemnity and stillness, and back vowels [e], [i] and [y] smallness, cheerfulness and triviality. (Ingo 1990:50-77.) It is undisputed that sounds mould the impression created by the text by evoking images and feelings. It is another matter altogether to try and make interpretations based on the sounds. One has to be very careful when commenting on a text from this point of view, because there is the risk of attaching too much meaning to the sounds. After all, the reactions to the 'music' of sound patterns are personal and everyone attaches somewhat different feelings to them. The context plays also an important role in interpreting the phonological schemes. One way of interpreting the excessive [i] sounds in the example would be that the i's express the disgust that the giant feels when tasting coffee for the first time (as vowels are thought to express feelings). The interpretation is backed up by the context. Without going this far in the interpretation, it is at least safe to say that this lavish use of [i] sounds has certain significance to the reading experience - not on the direct semantic level but by creating a certain feel to it, as well as melody.

In his translation, Nevanlinna has obviously ignored the sound patterns:

[mitæ tæmæ kammɔ lɛtɛkatkero on dresipent:i]

Again, the vowels only:

[i æ æ æ a o ɛ ɛ a e o o e i e i]



There is no pattern to be seen - all back and front vowels except [u] and [y] are used with no special attempt to keep to any pattern. Phonological schemes are not usually considered as important in prose fiction as in poetry, where they can be of central importance. However, they add to the feel of the prose text as well, and omitting a sound feature as notable as this one slightly changes the atmosphere of the translation compared to the original.

True to the conventional usage of Finnish, *please* in the original has been left out, which is a justified solution from the aspect of readability. Omitting it adds to the naturalness of language. In the original, it stands for an abridged version of an expression in effect to "please, be so kind as to tell me". It also has a function other than the pragmatic one, namely making it possible to add yet another [i] sound to the utterance.

This example brings up one noteworthy feature of the translation, namely the replacing of cultural references by Finnish ones (like replacing the reference to the queen by a reference to the president). I will handle the complex question of cultural adaptations in detail in chapters 3 and 4.

I will take a few more examples of Dahl's lexical creations. In the following the BFG tells Sophie his opinion of human beings.

(3) "I is never showing myself to *human beans*." "Why ever not?" "If I do, they will be putting me in the zoo with all the *jiggyraffes* and *cattypiddlers*." "Nonsense," Sophie said. "And they will be sending you straight back to a *norphanage*," the BFG went on. "Grown-up human beans is not famous for their kindnesses. They is all *squifflerotters* and *grinksludgers*." (BFG 116.)

(4) "Minä en koskaan näytä itseäni *ihmisparsoille*." "Miksi ihmeessä et?" "Koska sitten ne pistää minut eläintahraan kaikkien *kuravien* ja *pisukattien* sekaan." "Roskaa", sanoi Sohvi. "Ja ne pistää sinut takaisin *norkokotiin*", IKJ jatkoi. "Aikuiset ihmisparsat ei ole kovin kuuluisia ystävällisyyksistään. Ne on kaikki *mäskipunkeloita* ja *sottapottia*." (IKJ 131.)

These are typical examples of Dahl's neologisms. They are built on something familiar - they are "variations of existing words or combinations of parts of existing words", as Lefevere describes neologisms in general (1994:41). *Human*

*bean* is the expression that the giants use of humans. Here it serves as an example of a blend in the dahlesquian manner: it combines two morphemes and their separate meanings. It is pronounced almost identically with *human being*, a lexical item that it is clearly intended to replace. The replacement of *being* with an edible vegetable *bean* emphasizes the idea which has also been explicitly expressed earlier in the work: Humans are nothing but snacks for the giants. In the translation, *bean* has been replaced by another vegetable, asparagus. The solution seems justified to a point, because in Finnish there is no similar construction connected with *bean*. *Ihmisparsa* can be read as a transformation of *ihmisparka*, as Sohvi, in fact, does a few times: "Minkälaisia ihmisparkoja sinä syöt?" Sohvi kysyi vapisten (IKJ 32).

However, with *ihmisparka* the problem of the point of view emerges. *Ihmisparka* shows the human point of view by expressing a sympathetic attitude to humans. There is no reason to assume that man-eating giants would sympathize with humans. The human point of view is not justified here: An expression in the giant language obviously should show the giants' point of view. The original *human being* is a neutral expression in this sense - it does not imply any specific point of view.

*Jiggyraffes* and *cattypiddlers* in the same extract are typical examples of Dahl's strategy of constructing new words. The context makes it clear that they are names of animals, probably wild. The resemblance to the names of real animals, *giraffe* and *caterpillar*, is strong. The nonsensical construction of the names brings to mind Lewis Carroll's *The Hunting of the Snark*. If we take *jiggyraffe* apart for analysis in order to find elements that may carry unexpected meanings, we find that it consist of two or more components that may conjure up images in the reader's mind. *Jig* can either mean "a fast, gay, springy sort of dance" (*Webster's* 2 1995), or in a slang, it can be a hostile and offensive way of addressing a black person (*ibid.*). The *-gy* ending of *jig* seems to change the word class from noun (or maybe a verb) into something else, possibly adjective. *Jiggy* would mean *jig-like*. Its front position in the structure invites us to interpret *jiggy* as a modifier to the head, *raffe*, which in its turn can be analysed as *raff* (the mute /e/ is unimportant). It bears the same denotations as *riffraff*, those people regarded as worthless and

disreputable, or in a dialect, worthless stuff (*Webster's 2 1995*), or it can simply mean rubbish or trash. In any case, it brings to mind something worthless and inferior.

The Finnish version, *kurahvi*, is constructed by slightly transforming the model word, *kirahvi*, which is equivalent to *giraffe* by its semantic content. The unpleasant connotations are conveyed by *kura-* (mud, dirt). It is associated, for example, with the idiom *vatsa kuralla*, which is an unwanted and displeasing condition.

*Cattypiddler* is also typical in its construction (like *squifflerotter* and *grinksludger*) as a compound with two obviously unrelated components which can bear more or less insulting connotations. My method of analysis, again, is to take it to parts and study the components separately. Of *cattypiddler* we get *catty* and *piddler*. *Catty* has two denotations in the dictionaries: "like a cat" or "spiteful, mean, malicious" (eg. *Webster's 2 1995*). Both of them fit the context: a cat-like animal could be thought to live in a zoo, whereas the BFG's disapproval of being sent to a zoo, his implicit protest "they want to put me in a place in which there are creatures like *that!*" strongly suggests that the inmates in a zoo must be rather repulsive. *To piddle* also has two different denotations: *to urinate* (as a child's term) or *to dawdle or trifle* (as in *to piddle the time away*) (*ibid.*). If we consider the two possible denotations that both *catty* and *piddler* carry, we may form a table that shows four possible interpretations:

1. Someone or something cat-like trifling (the time away)	2. Someone or something cat-like urinating
3. Someone or something malicious urinating	4. Someone or something malicious trifling (the time away)

Figure 1. The denotations of *cattypiddler*.

The average reader probably does not consciously go through all the possible interpretations, but they may well affect the reading on an unconscious level, forming a certain image of this exotic animal piddling away in a cage, even if all

shades of meaning are not fully appreciated - a fact that applies to all analyses here.

The translation, *pisukatti*, lacks some of the various interpretations, since it can only be read as *a cat that urinates*. When searching for a Finnish equivalent, the translator has concentrated on the interpretation that is seen in the cell 2 and ignored the other possibilities. Yet, the translation manages to take into account the child-like aspect of the expression (which shows in *pisu* - a child's term for urine), and even the phonetic structure bears some similarities to the original expression. *Katti* seems like a natural counterpart for *catty* with its semantic as well as phonetic content in this somewhat nonsensical world of *The BFG*.

On the syntactic level we find that the word-order has been reversed in the translation: the head of the compound in the original is *piddler*, whereas in the translation the head is *katti*. This difference does not seem to have a notable effect on the conveyed impression.

*A norphanage* is anomalous only on the orthographic level; the pronunciation remains conventional in spite of the deviant spelling. An **illusion** of non-standard speech is created by non-standard spelling. The anomaly is built by moving the final letter representing the sound of the article to the beginning of the head. In this way a strange-looking "new" word is created. If the translator had simply adopted the same strategy in creating the Finnish counterpart, the result would have been (*takaisin*) *norpokotiin*. That is an expression which sounds like standard Finnish when read aloud, despite the exceptional spelling. However, the translator has created a lexical item that is genuinely deviant by changing the model *orpokoti* a bit more and come up with the version *norkokoti*. *Norko-* is associated with the verb *norkoilla* (hang around or loiter), so *norkokoti* creates an image of an institution that encourages or even expects loitering of the inmates. I would argue that the solution of creating this new expression is justified, even though its construction slightly differs from that of the original, because it keeps the translation in tune with the nonsensical atmosphere of the original text.

*Squifflerotters* and *grinksludgers* at the end of the example appear to be even more nonsensical and obscure than the expressions handled above. In *squifflerotter*, the only familiar item is the stem of the head, *rot*, whose denotations

are associated with decomposing, decaying, sickness and corruption. To the stem, *-er* suffix is added. *Squiffle* does not exist in the English language as such, but one might tentatively interpret it as a self-made blend of two lexical items that closely resemble it, namely *squiffy* and *shuffle*. It is rewarding to study their denotations: *Squiffy* means drunk, intoxicated or tipsy (mainly in British English), and *shuffle* has various denotations that include dishonest manner, practicing deceit and achieving something by lies and trickery, among with the most common denotation of "moving by dragging the feet" (*Webster's 2* 1955). It is difficult - and also unnecessary - to attach one, coherent denotation to expressions like *squifflerotter*, which seem to contain a huge amount of possible interpretations. One might even argue that it is in the network of potential meanings, where the power of the expressions like this lies. It should be obvious, though, in the light of the analysis of the constituents that this expression conveys a humorously critical view of humans. The same goes for *grinksludger*, although its analysis is even more problematic: The completely nonsensical first part *grink* cannot be interpreted semantically. However, the other component, *sludger* can be analyzed, like *-rotter* in the previous example, as a stem and a suffix. The head *sludge* means "mud, spongy lumps of drift ice, any heavy, slimy deposit" (*ibid.*). Therefore humans are suggested to have these slimy qualities. The BFG's idea of humans is quite effectively expressed by these anomalous new words, although it is difficult to interpret their meanings precisely.

*Mäskipunkelo* of the translation can also be regarded as a compound with two constituents, *mäski* and *punkelo*. *Mäski* is crushed or ground malt, which is soaked in hot water for brewing beer. *Punkelo*, however, does not have a fixed denotation in Finnish - it is a neologism within a neologism. It resembles, though, two words that are used to describe a physical appearance or build, namely *kuikelo* and *punkero*. *Punkelo* appears to be a blend of these. Their denotations differ to the extent that they can be regarded as antonymous, *kuikelo* describing someone very thin, and *punkero* someone rather stubby. This combining of two downright opposite denotations into a single lexical item adds, again, nonsensical overtones to the reading experience. *Mäskipunkelo* does not bear any similarities to its source

language equivalent *squifflerotter* in the semantic level, and not, in fact, in any other level either, if one does not want to resort to a far-fetched connection between *rotting* as causing some substances to transform into a slimy and obscure form, which might slightly resemble the appearance of *mäski*. Even its phonetic structure differs drastically from that of *squifflerotter*. Strictly speaking *mäskipunkelo* is not a translation of *squifflerotter* at all, but more like an imitation or a version of it.

The Finnish equivalent to *grinksludger*, *sottapotta*, is pleasing to the ear because of the rhyme. The rhyme lacks in the original, however. There is a certain, although slight, semantic resemblance between *sotta* and *sludge*, and phonetic similarity of the sibilants. *Sotta* is informal Finnish for mud, dirt etc. and *potta* a bowl used by young children as a toilet (*Perussanakirja* 1992). *Sottapotta* is not by any means anything like a literal translation, either, but it is difficult to imagine what would be in a case of a lexical item without a conventional, fixed denotation, like *grinksludger*. And as I have stated before, the conveying of all aspects of the semantic content is not always the most essential element in translating a text like *The BFG*. It could be argued that *Iso kiltti jätti* is in part like a pseudo-translation: The form is sometimes more important than the exact content. Typical examples of texts that need to be pseudo-translated are puns, texts with strict rhyme pattern, imitations of a dialect and nursery rhymes - texts that do not stress the informative function (Ingo 1990:65-67). I would argue that in the case of expressions like *grinksludger* and *squifflerotter* the informative function is not important as long as the insulting impressions are maintained in the translation.

The common feature of these neologisms is that the ideas they convey are more or less insulting, which reflects the BFG's opinion of humans. Therefore the principal criterion for the translation must be that it also conveys a similar image. It succeeds in doing that - the Finnish version draws a comical yet mocking picture of human beings in a true dahlesquian manner.

Additional samples of Dahl's unconventional lexical items and their translations are examples (5) and (6) below. I find it unnecessary to analyze the following examples thoroughly, since their construction is basically the same as in the earlier examples: new compounds are formed of unconventional constituents,

and the result is a more or less obscure new word with imaginative denotations. The obscurity leaves the reader some freedom concerning the interpretations. The reader's experiences, imagination, world view and language skills may affect the interpretation of these unconventional expressions, whose meanings are not clearly fixed. In the following extract the BFG talks about a vicious nightmare that he has caught (being, as he is, a dream-catching giant):

(5) "I is so upset by this *trogglehumping bogthumping grobswitcher*," the BFG said, "that I is not wishing to go on. Dream-catching is finished for today." (BFG 86.)

(6) "Minä on niin järkyttynyt tuosta *pahnarääkästä rapamöyhäri kuravatkulista*", sanoi IKJ, "että minä en halua enää jatkaa. Unienpyydystäminen on loppu tältä päivältä." (IKJ 95.)

In this chapter examples of anomalous lexical items have been analyzed and some of the most common strategies of constructing new expressions presented. The Finnish "equivalents" have also been studied. Compounding is a common strategy of creating deviant lexical items, in the original as well as in the translation.

It can be seen in the Finnish counterparts that some, but not all, denotations of the original expressions have been taken into account in the translation. However, as stated above, the semantic aspect is by no means the only criterion for the translation of this kind of language, where there are other functions than merely the informative one. Next, the question of replacing standard expressions with anomalous ones in the translation is brought up. The number of anomalous features in the original compared to the translation is discussed, as well as the reasons for the disparity.

Standard expressions translated with anomalous expressions

The cases in which a standard feature in *The BFG* has been translated with an

anomalous one are relatively rare. Rather, it seems that the translator tends to transform the text into a more conventional style. This can be seen in the way he replaces anomalous syntactic structures with conventional ones. However, there are a few cases where perfectly common, standard English lexical items have been translated with anomalous, made-up Finnish "equivalents". In order to get a precise view on the difference in amount of anomalous features in *The BFG* compared to its translation, I took a sample of one fourth of the work and counted the anomalous features (pp. 9-59 in *The BFG*), of which I counted the anomalies. For the present purpose I divided them simply into two categories, semantic and syntactic anomalies. The syntactic category obviously includes the syntactic anomalies and the semantic category any other deviant features in the work, such as lexical anomalies and altered puns and idiomatic expressions. The results, presented here, serve as a rough indicator of the level of deviance in the original compared to that of the translated version.

	Syntactic anomalies	Semantic anomalies	TOTAL
<i>The BFG</i> 1/4 of the whole	319	224	543
<i>Iso kiltti jätti</i> 1/4 of the whole	183	246	429
			114

Figure 2. The amount of anomalies in *The BFG* and *Iso kiltti jätti*.

There are definite differences to be seen in the amounts of both syntactic and semantic anomalies between *The BFG* and the translation: on the whole, the original has significantly more deviant features. There are, however, more semantic anomalies in the translation than in the original. This raises the question why the translator has chosen to replace even some of the conventional expressions with unconventional ones and how that choice affects the atmosphere



of the translation. Let us consider the following example (also cited earlier):

(3) "I is never showing myself to human beans." "Why ever not?" "If I do, they will be putting me in the *zoo* with all the jiggyraffes and cattypiddlers." (BFG 116.)

(4) "Minä en koskaan näytä itseäni ihmisparsoille." "Miksi ihmeessä et?" "Koska sitten ne pistää minut *eläintahraan* kaikkien kuravien ja pisukattien sekaan." (IKJ 131.)

The anomaly itself is simply formed by swapping two sounds in the middle of the "correct" equivalent of *zoo*, (*eläintarha*), in a way that the meaning of the latter part of the compound is altered into something nonsensical. The anatomy of the anomaly is not, however, our main interest at the moment. The amounts of anomaly directly affect on the general impression the text makes and I therefore find it worthwhile taking the somewhat mechanical approach of simply counting the instances of anomaly in the two extracts. In the short extract above there are fewer syntactic anomalies in the translation than in the original (the original 5 cases, the translation 2). However, the number of semantic anomalies is higher in the translation (the original 3, the translation 4). The total amount of anomalies is 8 in the original and 6 in the translation. Without the change of conventional *zoo* into the anomalous *eläintahra*, the translation would only have 5 anomalies to the 8 of the original, making the disparity even more striking. Therefore the "extra" lexical anomaly in the Finnish version compensates for the smaller amount of syntactic anomalies. Although this is only a more or less randomly chosen extract, it represents the use of anomalies in the two texts well. The same pattern is repeated throughout the books: in the translation the lexis is somewhat more anomalous than in the original, but the grammatical structures more conventional. As I will argue in chapter 4.4, the choice of not imitating slavishly all the cases of grammatical anomaly helps the readability of the Finnish text. In many cases it would have been impossible to find exact equivalents to the grammatical deviances without sounding awkward and artificial. However, excluding anomalous features from the translation affects the stylistic balance, since the amount of deviant features has an influence on the style of a text. Thus, the stylistic balance is kept

(to a degree, but not completely) by adding extra lexical anomalies to "replace" the ones which had to be deleted for the sake of readability and naturalness of language.

Another example: The BFG describes to Sophie a vicious nightmare.

(7) "If this one [a nightmare] got into you, your blood would be freezing into *icicles* and your skin would go creeping across the floor." (BFG 84.)

(8) "Jos tämä [painajainen] yllättäisi sinut, sinun veri hyytyisi *päähileiksi* ja sinun iho ryömisi pitkin lattiaa." (IKJ 93.)

In the original there are two instances of exceptional tense (ie. *be freezing* and *go creeping*), but no lexical deviance. In the translation, there appear also two cases of grammatical anomaly, namely the lack of the possessive suffix in *sinun veri* and *sinun iho*. Although there is an increasing tendency in Finnish to accept the dropping of the possessive suffix, at this stage it is still regarded as an unconventional feature in written language. However, the example in question shows a representation of spoken language. In spoken language it is common to drop the possessive suffixes. The conventional lexical item *icicle* has been translated with a neologism, which adds an unconventional expression into the Finnish text. As noted above, the importance of such additional anomalies lies in the fact that they maintain the stylistic balance by "replacing" those anomalous features that cannot be translated with corresponding anomalous expressions.

#### 4.3 Idiomatic expressions

"What I mean and what I say is two different things."

The BFG

In *The BFG* Dahl uses idiomatic language to fit his purposes, transforming common idioms into something unheard-of in order to add appropriate bizarre features to the giants' language. The translation of idioms is even more complicated than the translation of "ordinary", nonidiomatic language because of the very nature of the idioms. By definition, their intentional content does not match with the sum of the lexical elements, which is why it is interesting to study

the ways which a translator has found when looking for appropriate equivalents in the target language. Since idiomatic language is problematic and exceptional linguistically, I will first bring up some theoretical considerations concerning its unusual nature and how idioms are understood. Then I will proceed to look into the approaches taken in translation studies to translating idioms into another language. Finally, I will analyze some examples of Dahl's creative neo-idioms and their translations in the light of the theories.

#### 4.3.1 Defining and understanding idioms

Idiom or idiomatic expression can be concisely defined as "a group of words which has a special connotation not usually equal to the sum of the individual words, and which usually cannot be translated into another language without the special meaning being lost" (Hartmann 1972). Idiomatic expressions are a natural element in any language. They form such an inherent part of a language that a native speaker is not usually even aware of using them. Johnson-Laird (in Cacciari 1993:ix) points out that idioms are important firstly because of their pervasiveness - it is difficult even to speak spontaneously without using them - and secondly because they enrich the language by creating new ways of conveying familiar ideas and even reflecting new conceptions of the world. Of course, the latter can be said about other innovative linguistic devices as well, such as metaphor, neologism, chiasmus, etc.

Since the (correct) interpretation of an idiom is vital not only to a native listener/reader but also to a translator, I will briefly introduce some views on the comprehension of idioms in order to throw some light on the process of interpretation which the translator must go through when translating idiomatic language. Idiom is a peculiar linguistic invention that can be interpreted as an unanalyzable whole whose lexical elements, however, often seem to have an effect on the interpretation. This seeming paradox has led to two kinds of models of comprehension, as Glucksberg (in Cacciari 1993:4-5) points out. The first type of models can be called *direct access models*. These models argue that the meaning of an idiom is not grasped by considering the linguistic elements of the idiom, but by

direct memory retrieval from the mental idiom list or from mental lexicon, like any other lexical item. In contrast, the second type of models of comprehension are based on the idea of *compositionality* of idioms. Nunberg (1978:117-121) suggests that each expression has a certain degree of compositionality, ie. a degree to which the meaning of an expression is determinable from the meanings of its parts and the relations of its parts. According to this idea, "ordinary", nonidiomatic language would be compositional, whereas idioms would be, by definition, closer to the noncompositional end of the continuum. Glucksberg utilizes the rough division of idioms into relatively compositional and noncompositional ones, or analyzable and nonanalyzable ones. With comparatively compositional idioms the lexical items can be linked directly with their idiomatic referents, or they seem to have "somewhat metaphorical relations to their idiomatic meanings" (Cacciari 1993:4). Compositional idioms are interpreted by ordinary linguistic processing. For example, in the idiom *pop the question*, *pop* can be linked with *suddenly ask* and *the question* with *marriage proposal*. The linguistic meanings of the constituents are, in some ways, consistent with the idiomatic meaning and therefore they are important in interpreting the idiom. In contrast, the linguistic meanings of the words and phrases themselves do **not** help the interpretation of relatively noncompositional idioms, in which the constituent words cannot be linked directly with the stipulated meaning of the idiom. (Cacciari 1993:13-25.) An example of a noncompositional idiom could be *bite the dust*, meaning *to die*, or word-like idioms like the earlier mentioned *by and large*. Since the components have no link to the idiomatic meanings, the only way to interpret them is the direct retrieval from a special idiom list or as a part of the mental lexicon, as stated above. It is argued that if an expression is immediately recognized as an idiom, the linguistic analysis can be omitted; which makes the process of comprehension more rapid (eg. Gibbs 1984:275-304).

Cacciari has studied the strategies of interpreting a previously unknown idiom. They are worth citing here because they illuminate the kinds of tactics a translator can use when determining the meanings of unfamiliar, even nonsensical idioms, such as the ones in *The BFG*. One strategy is to look for another idiom that is similar in some ways. For example, one part may be interpretable according to

other idioms: *Go by the board* could be interpreted according to *go by the book*. In my view, however, there is no guarantee that the interpretation based on another idiom is correct - in this case, the expression *go by the book* means "to fall or be swept overboard" or "to be got rid of, lost, ruined, etc" (*Webster's 2 1995*). Both meanings are difficult, if not impossible, to derive from *go by the book*. In another case there may be a related word, eg. an antonym, or the same verb in the same position: *dry behind the ears* can be interpreted as an opposite to *wet behind the ears*. There may also be another idiom which uses a semantic associate of one of the words: *get out of a hole* is associated with *put yourself in a hole*. It seems that since Dahl prefers to create a new idiom by slightly changing an old, conventional one, this strategy of interpreting his creations is the most fruitful. In Cacciari's view, it may sometimes be worthwhile to interpret one constituent literally but also use the other words which compose the semantic field to determine the meaning. An example could be *Polish the apple* - *polish* means *to clean, to improve* and *apple* is a symbol of perfection, so the idiom means *to reach perfection*. One may also consider the cause-effect relationship between the action and select either the cause or the effect as the meaning: *grease the wheels*, where greasing the wheels allows the machinery start moving so the idiom can be interpreted *go faster*. One can also consider the semantics of the words: *asleep at the switch*, where *switch* can mean a railway switching station so the idiom means that someone is not alert at the crucial point. Sometimes it helps to visualize the action or state described: with *bow and scrape*, the image is of someone acting like a puppy who begs. (Cacciari 1993:27-52.)

It must be noted that useful as these strategies in some cases are, one may still be mistaken when interpreting an unknown idiom, because the meaning of some idioms simply cannot be derived by reasoning. And even if it can be derived from some elements of the expression, there often are several possibilities to choose from and no guarantee that the chosen meaning is the correct one. Furthermore, it seems that only the first one on Cacciari's list could be applied to interpreting noncompositional idioms, since comparing an idiom with another one does not require compositionality from it - the other four can only be used when the idiom is relatively compositional, ie. its constituents have some connection to the

idiomatic meaning.

#### 4.3.2 Translation of idioms

As we have seen, the interpretation of an idiom may be a complicated and difficult task even for a native speaker, but the problems are multiplied when an idiom has to be translated into another language. Next, some views on idiom translation will be examined.

Nida observes that when translating an idiom, the meanings of the components must be ignored and the idiom treated as a separate entity - as a semantic unit larger than a single word (Nida 1969:89-90). This approach resembles the *direct access model* of interpreting an idiom, in which idioms are also treated as separate, unanalyzable wholes and the meanings are retrieved directly from the mental lexicon.

Because the translation of the linguistic elements of an idiom is usually not possible, a translator must try and find an equivalent which has a similar function in the target language. Nida uses the concept of dynamic equivalence, which is based on equivalent effect of the message on the receiver of both the original text and the translation. (Nida 1969:14, 22-28, 129, 137, 173) The principal of equivalent effect concentrates on the style of the texts, whereas the idea of similar functions falls into the field of pragmatism.

There are four approaches to translating an idiom, as Ingo observes (1990:246-247): The first one is to translate an idiom with a target language idiom. This approach is recommended whenever possible, because it helps to maintain the stylistic features and expressive power of the source text. It must also be noted that even in the (rare) cases where the same idea is expressed by the same imagery, the form of the idiom is usually so fixed that it cannot be translated literally. For example, a very thin person can be said to be *nothing but skin and bones*. The Finnish equivalent would be *pelkkä luuta ja nahkaa* - a similar image but different

structure. The second approach is to translate an idiom literally. There is the risk that the new expression is clumsy and alien to the target language. In some cases, however, the translator may manage to create an acceptable new idiom. The third approach is to translate an idiom with an explanatory non-idiomatic expression. Sometimes there is no other alternative, if there does not exist an idiom with equivalent function in the target language. The translation loses some of the expressivity and spirit of the original, but it may, nonetheless, be very informative and grammatically impeccable. Finally, the fourth approach is to translate a normal, non-idiomatic expression with an idiom. Nida (1969:106) points out that this strategy can be used to compensate for the situations where an idiom has to be translated with a non-idiom, as a way of maintaining the stylistic balance. However, an excessive use of this technique would also produce a stylistically inaccurate translation. I will refer to these four approaches to the translation of idioms in the following analysis, which is why I have handled them here in some detail.

#### 4.3.3 Exceptional idiomatic expressions in *The BFG*

I will now proceed to analyze some examples from *The BFG* and their counterparts in *Iso Kiltti Jätti*. Dahl creates new idioms quite freely, but they are often based on familiar ones, which enables the reader to enjoy the transformation of a cliché-like, dead expression into a more vivid one. Transforming common idioms is a source of humour in the work. The question of the meaning and importance of the anomalous features to *The BFG* will be discussed more profoundly in chapter 5.

The first example shows a self-made idiomatic utterance which is based on phonetic alteration of an idiom in common use.

(9) "... because I is refusing to gobble up human beans like the other giants, I must spend my life guzzling up icky-poo snozzcumpers instead. If I don't, I will be *nothing but skin and groans*." (BFG 50.)

(10) "... koska minä kieltäydyn ahmimasta ihmisparsoja niin kuin muut

jättiläiset, niin minun on klunkittava perskurkkanoita koko elämä! Jos minä ei tee sitä, niin minusta jää jäljelle *vain suuta ja nahkaa*." (IKJ 54.)

The original idiom, of course, is *nothing but skin and bones*, whose Finnish functional equivalent is *vain luuta ja nahkaa*, as mentioned above. The translator has taken that as the starting point, replacing the idiom with a Finnish idiom with similar imagery. The Finnish and English idioms resemble each other, although the word-order is different and *bones* has been changed into a singular form. Obviously, a literal translation is not necessary here. Dahl's new version differs little from the original. He has replaced *bones* with *groans* making only a slight change phonologically, but a bigger change in the semantic level. Since the idiom in question is such a familiar one, the reader automatically recognizes it as an idiom and interprets it as such. The new meaning with *groans* is added to the interpretation. *Groans* emphasizes the plight of the starving person by creating an image of him/her groaning. In the Finnish rendering, the translator has used the only part of human anatomy which rhymes with *luu*, namely *suu*. The rhyming is important, because it shows the similar relation with the common, *luuta ja nahkaa* version as Dahl's idiom with the conventional idiom.

There are cases in *The BFG*, where only spelling, and not pronunciation of an utterance creates an anomalous or nonsensical new idiom. Consider the following example:

(11) "Phew!" said the BFG. "*Phew and far between!*" (BFG 76.)

(12) "Huh!" sanoi IKJ. "*Huh ja helteet!*" (IKJ 83.)

The BFG utters interjection when the other giants stop throwing him in the air. The novel interjection combines an exclamation of relief and an unrelated idiomatic expression, whose semantic content does not fit into the context. The original idiom, *few and far between*, is clearly identifiable. The pun is based on homophony; ie. the relationship between words that sound the same but are spelled differently and have different meanings (eg. Hartmann 1972). Humour is created by the unexpected repetition of the interjection *phew* as a misspelled part of a common idiom. The idiom itself is an odd choice here, since it is not generally



used as an interjection, which enhances the comical effect. The translator has resorted to an utterance which is not idiomatic in Finnish as such, but refers to the "hot times" which the giant and Sophie had just escaped from. They had "kuumat oltavat". *Huh ja helteet* is associated with the idiomatic expression *huh hellettä*, which is an interjection used to complain or wonder about hot weather. However, the effect created by the misspelling of a familiar idiom and combining an exclamation and an idiom is lost in the translation - the Finnish version is only a slightly unconventional interjection without the humour of the original. However, a phonetic analysis reveals the pursuit of the translator to maintain certain phonetic aspects of the original, such as the alliteration formed by fricatives (the labiodental [f] in the original and the pharyngeal [h] in the translation) and the similarity of a few other sounds. *Huh* seems like a natural equivalent for *phew*. Of the four approaches to translating an idiom that Ingo presents, the third applies here: An idiom has been translated with a non-idiomatic expression.

Although idioms and puns have been divided into separate categories in this study, example (11) is a case where an idiom has been used to create a pun. The boundaries of the categories are blurred in some cases.

The following example shows a case in which an expression that is not anomalous in itself, since it has been conventionalized by much use, is used in an unusual way to describe the unutterable consequences of the vicious man-eating giants waking up in the middle of the capturing operation.

(13) "But if you is taking these sloshbuckling noisy bellypoppers any closer, all the giants is waking up at once and then *pop goes the weasel*." (BFG 186-7.)

(14) "Mutta jos te vie nuo mäskipottumeluisat kölihopterit yhtään lähem mäksi, niin kaikki jättiläiset herää heti ja *popsii plumps! kärppänä teidät kaikki*." (IKJ 209.)

The translation of this nursery rhyme expression has two aspects. First, there is the strive for phonetical equivalence which can be seen in the use of sibilants (*popsii*, *plumps* as the imitation of sibilants in *goes* and *weasel*) and long vowels [ii]. The translator has even used pseudo-translation in translating *pop goes the weasel* as *popsii kärppänä*, in order to retain the phonetic play at the expence of

semantic aspects. Secondly, there is the semantic view: *weasel* is a small carnivore which could be translated as *näätäeläin*. *Kärppä* is a valid translation here, not only because it is a determinate and skillful hunter, but also because of the connotations of the word: *kärppänä* brings to mind someone who is fast-moving, smart and ruthless. The aspect of speed is expressed in the original by the lexical items *pop* and *at once*. As in the case of the previous example, this expression, too, has been translated with a non-idiomatic expression.

In the following we see an example of an idiomatic expression that Dahl has formulated for his own purposes:

(15) "Do we really have to eat it?" Sophie said. "You do unless you is wanting to become so thin you will be *disappearing into a thick ear*." (BFG 52.)

(16) "Onko meidän todella syötävä tätä?" Sohvi kysyi. "Kyllä, ellei halua tulla niin laihaaksi, että *häviää sivuna almaan*." (IKJ 58.)

The "correct", conventional version of the idiom, which can clearly be seen, is *to disappear into thin air*, whose intentional or functional content equals with the Finnish idiom *kadota savuna ilmaan*. When creating the new idiom, the author has replaced *thin* in the conventional idiom with its antonym *thick*, which phonetically differs from the original only slightly. Likewise, *ear* [iə\*], with which he has replaced *air* [ɛə\*], bears phonetic and structural resemblance with its "correct" counterpart: they both consist of a diphthong only, with even one shared phoneme, the schwa. The close resemblance between the conventional idiom and its new version creates a humorous effect, which is enhanced by the nonsensical semantic content of the neo-idiom.

The translator has used a different method in transforming the corresponding Finnish idiom into a new, nonsensical one. He has created a spoonerism by interchanging two sounds in the conventional idiom. Although the strategy of forming a new idiom is different from the method Dahl has used, the effect is very much the same, because *sivu* and *alma* are real, existing words just like *ear* and *thick*, and they, too, phonetically closely resemble their "correct" equivalents *savun* and *ilma*.

From idioms, which are an inherent and prevalent feature in all languages, we

proceed to another linguistic device, the pun. A pun at its best can enrich the text by adding an extra meaning to it and by depth to it. In the following chapter puns in *The BFG* and *Iso kiltti jätti* are studied.

#### 4.4 Puns altered

Pun is an ambiguous utterance which is created by either using homonyms (words which sound the same but are spelled differently and have different meanings) or polysemy (words that are spelled and sound the same but have different meanings, some of which can be related to each other) (Hartmann 1972). It is essential for a pun that it activates two meanings at the same time: both the obvious usual meaning and the less obvious meaning that the author has intended (Lefevere 1994). Although puns are not necessarily anomalous by nature, I have decided to study them as well, because many of the puns that occur in *The BGF* are in fact deviant in the sense that they are based on lexical items and grammatical structures that do not exist in standard language, and because the unique language of the work is at its wittiest in them.

In the following Sophie and the BFG discuss the taste of various peoples.

(17) "*Danes* from Denmark is tasting ever so much of dogs," the Giant Went on. "Of course," Sophie said. "They taste of *great danes*." "Wrong!" cried the Giant, slapping his thigh. "Danes from Denmark is tasting doggy because they is tasting of *labradors*." "Then what do the *people of Labrador* taste of?" Sophie asked. "Danes," the Giant cried, triumphantly. "Great danes!" (BFG 28.)

(18) "Ihmisparsat *Hampurista* maistuu sämpylöiltä", Jättiläinen jatkoi. "Totta kai", Sohvi sanoi. "He maistuvat *hampurilaisilta*." "Väärin!" huusi Jättiläinen ja hakkasi käsillä reisiään. "Hampurilaiset Hampurista maistuvat sämpylöiltä koska ne maistuu *porilaisilta*." "Miltä *Porin asukkaat* sitten maistuvat?" Sohvi kysyi. "Hampurilaisilta", Jättiläinen huusi voiton- riemuisena. "Meheviltä *hampurilaisilta*!" (IKJ 30.)

It is often impossible to translate a pun, and the translator is required to write a

completely new one in the target language, which is what has been done here. Dahl is playing with place-names which have given name to breeds of dogs - a case of polysemy. The translator has used place-names which are connected to food in Finnish. The two puns are built differently: *dogs*, which *great danes* are supposed to taste like, is a superordinate (a more general concept) in the semantic hierarchy, whereas rolls of bread, of which *porilaiset* and *hampurilaiset* taste, is not a superordinate but a common ingredient in both dishes.

A nonsensical tinge is added into this example by refusing to follow the earlier established line of thinking according to which the taste of people can be determined by the name of the place of their origin. As such, the idea seems bizarre, but its logicity in the discussion previous to the example prevents us from placing it on the field of literary nonsense. Only when the logicity fails, in the quoted passage, and the reader erroneously, like Sophie, assumes that Danes from Denmark taste of great danes, can we argue that the passage is genuinely nonsensical.

The following pun is based on the identical pronunciation of two lexical items with different meanings. The Fleshlumpeater, one of the evil giants, tells to the BFG where he is going to dine that night:

(19) "I is off to *Baghdad* and I is going to *Baghdad* and mum and every one of their ten children as well!" (BFG 174.)

(20) "Minä on menossa *Pariisiin* ja *ahmasen* siellä *pari isiä* ja äidin ja kaikki kymmenen lasta!" (IKJ 195.)

This pun needs to be read out loud in order to fully grasp the feel of it. The verbal construction *to bag dad* has been unconventionally written like the capital of Iraq, where the Fleshlumpeater is heading. That device makes the utterance seem tautologous - the same form appears in the two coordinated verb phrases. Both verb phrases could, in another context, be understood to mean *leaving*, *going away*. Read like this, the Fleshlumpeater says the same thing twice and the rest of the sentence does not seem to relate to it at all: "*I is off to Baghdad and I is going to Baghdad // and mum and every one of their ten children as well!*" Here we have a case of a homonym because of the "incorrect" spelling. If Dahl had resorted

to the conventional spelling of the verbal construction in the second main clause, this pun would be based on a homophone - words which sound the same but are spelled differently and have different meanings.

In the translation the destination of the Fleshlumpeater has changed from Baghdad to Paris, which makes the Finnish pun possible. Obviously, since the utterance has mainly an aesthetic and not informative function, the change is fully acceptable. The pun does not work quite as well as the original one, because the punned items are not completely identical, *Pariisiin* being an illative and *pari isiä* a partitive construction. The translator has also decided to spell *pari isiä* conventionally with a small letter - a solution which diminishes, not emphasizes, the tautologous impression. When it comes to finding a suitable equivalent to the verb *to bag* (which can be interpreted here as *to seize; capture* or *to kill in hunting*), *ahmasta* seems a strange choice at first, since *to bag* does not entail eating of the game, as does *ahmasta*. *Ahmasta* is also placed in the informal register because of the missing *i*, whereas *to bag* can be used also in a formal context: *They bagged only a couple of rabbits that day*. However, *ahmasta* has apt connotations with *ahma*, a predator found in northern parts of America and Europe.

In this chapter I have studied some of the strategies Dahl has used when making up puns that the BFG uses, as well as their Finnish counterparts in *Iso kiltti jätti*. Puns in *The BFG* are unconventional in the sense that they are usually created by anomalous expressions and they include unconventional grammatical forms or lexical items. They are, however, typical puns by the definition: they are created by either using homonymy or polysemy.

I will now proceed to analyze grammatical anomalies found in *The BFG*. Their contribution to the eccentric language is significant, although they are not as inventive as the other types of anomaly. They are, however, pervasive in the work, and they add to the nonsensical atmosphere created by the peculiar language.

#### 4.5 Grammatical anomalies

"Meanings is not important," said the BFG. "I cannot be right all the time.

Quite often I is left instead of right." (BFG 34.)

Grammatical anomalies are easier to detect and analyze than lexical and idiomatic anomalies and puns, because grammar provides us with a relatively unambiguous norm for language use. Naturally, idiolects and dialects can differ from the norm provided by grammar, and I have attempted to take this into account in the analysis.

It seems that when creating the anomalous giant-language, Dahl has put more effort into lexical than syntactic anomalies, judging from the fact that his syntactic anomalies tend to be rather formal and recurrent and limit themselves mainly to exceptional verb forms and occasional mixing up of tenses. Word-order, coordination and negation for example, follow the rules of grammar, with almost no exceptions. The author's choice of refraining from making complex changes at the syntactic level helps keeping the text readable in spite of several lexical changes. In the translation there is a tendency to replace some of the original anomalous features (especially syntactic ones) with non-anomalous equivalents, making the translation less deviant than the original, as discussed in chapter 4.2.

As noted in chapter 4.2, there is a notable difference in the amount of syntactic anomalies between the original and the translation: the original has considerably more anomalous features. The difference is caused mainly by the lavish use of the progressive present in the original: The translator has, as a general rule, ignored the deviant tense and replaced it by the Finnish present or past tense. No doubt the choice helps the readability of the Finnish version, but it also causes it to be less deviant than the original. The numbers of semantic anomalies, however, is somewhat higher in the translation - in other words, conventional English lexical items, puns and idiomatic expressions have in some cases been replaced by their unconventional Finnish counterparts. This choice balances to some extent the smaller amount of deviant expressions in the Finnish version.

In *The BFG* there appear only two major types of grammatical deviance: the unorthodox use of verb forms, which shows most clearly in the excessive use of the progressive present, and the breaking of the subject-verb agreement, especially by using the third person singular verb regardless of the number and person of the

subject. Only a few examples are given here due to the repetitive patterns of the grammatical anomalies. The two major types of grammatical anomaly will be handled together, since they usually appear together in the text.

In the following, the BFG explains to Sophie the giants' hunting practices.

(21) "How do they actually catch the humans they eat?" Sophie asked. "They is usually just *sticking* an arm in through the bedroom window and *snitching* them from their beds," the BFG said. "Like you did to me."

(22) "Ah, but *I isn't eating* you," the BFG said. (BFG 76.)

(23) "Kuinka ne oikeastaan ottavat kiinni syömänsä ihmiset?" Sohvi kysyi. "Ne yleensä *pistää* käden ikkunasta sisään ja *napsii* ne sängystä", IKJ

sanoi. "Niin kuin sinä teit minulle."

(24) "Niin, mutta *minä ei syö* sinua." (IKJ 84.)

The progressive present is prevalent in the giants' speech even to the extent that the past tense is almost never used. There are some occasions of the future use of the present tense in the BFG's speech, but the progressive present is by far the most common tense. It usually appears in connection with the third person singular verb, as in these examples. The translator has chosen a third person singular verb as well, regardless of the plural subject, which seems like a natural choice here. Since it is common in the Finnish vernacular to use a singular verb form with a third person plural subject (eg. *ne pistää*), the BFG's first utterance seems like natural spoken Finnish. Similarly, the subject *ne*, which in formal Finnish is used only of inanimate objects or animals, is accepted and widely used in spoken Finnish even when people are referred to. Therefore I would argue that the Finnish equivalent is significantly less anomalous than the original, which is notably deviant from all varieties of English. The example (22) is similar by the structure as (21). In (24) the deviance is much more striking than in (23), since it is not customary, even in spoken Finnish, to use the third person singular verb with the first person subject, as the translator has done here (*minä ei syö*). The result is closer to the original in tone.

In addition to these two characteristic types of anomaly, there are a few instances other kinds of grammatical deviations. They cannot be easily categorized because of their unique nature. Examples follow. Here the BFG and Sophie talk

about Jack, the famous giant-killer from the fairy-story "Jack and the Beanstalk":

(25) "*Us* giants," the BFG whispered, "is not knowing very much about this dreaded human bean called Jack." (BFG 93.)

(26) "*Me* jättiläiset", kuiskasi IKJ, "ei tiedetä kovin paljon tästä pelätystä Jaskasta." (IKJ 105.)

The example (25) shows the choice of a non-standard case in a subject noun phrase; the accusative *us* of an uneducated speaker instead of the nominative *we*. The Finnish personal pronoun, *me*, on the other hand takes the correct nominative case. Again, the original is more anomalous than the translation. However, had the translator wanted to find exact equivalents to all anomalous features, it would have been difficult to replace *me* in the translation with an incorrect case without sounding embarrassingly artificial. I feel that in cases like this it is pointless to expect the translation to imitate the source text slavishly. By using the standard form case, the translator has created a natural-sounding utterance that does not unnecessarily call attention to itself.

A completely different type of anomaly appears in the following example. The BFG lectures to Sophie on the exotic animals that live in the Giant Country:

(27) "Of course quogwinkles is existing. I is meeting them *oftenly*." (BFG 99.)

(28) "Tottakai marsukkokotiloita on olemassa. Minä tapaan niitä *harva se päivällinen*." (IKJ 110.)

The adverb of time, *often*, has an unnecessary suffix *-ly*. *Oftenly* is a hypercorrect form of the adverb. Instead of translating it as *usein*, which is the commonest equivalent of *often*, the translator has chosen as a starting point a more imaginative idiomatic expression *harva se päivä*, which has almost the same semantic content, but which belongs to a different register. To the head of that expression he has added the suffix *-llinen*, following Dahl's tactics faithfully. The solution has led to a complete change in the semantic content, giving it a nonsensical nuance - there is the simultaneous existence and absence of meaning, which Tigges (1988:136) sees as one of the basic characteristics of nonsense.



The following shows yet another kind of anomaly. The BFG and Sophie are plotting to meet the Queen. Consider the anomalous use of the verb:

(29) "How is I meeting the Queen?" asked the BFG. "I is not wanting to be *shooted* at by her soldiers." (BFG 123.)

(30) "Kuinka minä tapaan dresipientin?" kysyi IKJ. "Minä ei halua, että sotilaat *ammuu* minut." (IKJ 138.)

*Shooted* is an unconventional conjugation of an irregular verb. The translation takes advantage of the strong resemblance of two verbs with totally different meanings: *ampua* and *ammua*. The translation seems to imply more violence than the original, which is seen when the conventional model verbs of both the original and the translation are studied: *to be shot at* does not indicate the death of the victim, but merely that he had been a target, whereas *ampuu minut* indicates that the victim is shot dead. *Ampuu minut/minua* are equal to *shoot me/shoot at me*, respectively.

Let us finally return to an earlier cited example:

(3) "Grown-up human beans is not famous for their *kindnesses*." (BFG 116.)

(4) "Aikuiset ihmisparsat ei ole kovin kuuluisia *ystävällisyyksistään*." (IKJ 131.)

Here an uncountable noun is treated as a countable one. It has got a plural form, which it is not likely to get in conventional use of the language. This is one of the rare cases where a grammatically anomalous feature has been translated literally.

In this chapter I have taken up the types of grammatical anomalies found in *The BFG*, and presented some of the solutions that the translator has used for the problems of translating them. It has been shown that the target text does not faithfully imitate the level of unconventionality of the source text and that the translation is often non-literal in several details, probably unavoidably.

Since it is not the single instances that make the translation what it is but their combinations, or the sum of the details, I find it worthwhile to analyse the cases of anomaly one by one the way that has been done throughout the present study. The

importance of separate occasions lies in the accumulating effect they have on the whole.

## 5 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ANOMALOUS FEATURES TO *THE BFG* AND ITS FINNISH TRANSLATION

The exceptional language the giants use in *The BFG* is an important device in the depiction of their characters. They are the only ones who use language in the peculiar way that has been described in the present study. Anomalous features do not appear in the narrative nor in the speech of other characters - a fact that emphasizes the special qualities of the giants as compared to the others. His language also seems to connect the BFG with the other giants despite their mutual differences so it might be seen as a typical feature of the giants. Anomalous language works differently in the depiction of the BFG than the other giants, though. The good giant, the BFG, is eager to read and write and he suffers from his lack of education: "I cannot be helping it if I sometimes is saying things a little squiggly. I is trying my very best all the time" (BFG 50). The BFG's exceptional language leads the reader to think that he is witty, creative and imaginative. In contrast, the stupidity and lack of talent (which in this work, as in many other works by Dahl, are equivalent to wickedness) of the other giants is expressed by the choice of verbs used in the narration. Their speech is almost never described using simply the verb *to say*, but the verb has been chosen to emphasize their boisterous, arrogant nature. Among the verbs used are *to shout*, *to scream*, *to boom*, *to roar*, *to screech* and *to bellow*. The wicked giants also curse constantly in their own peculiar manner. For example, the Bloodbottler calls the BFG *a runty little scumscrewer, piffling little swishfiggler, squimpy little bottlewart, prunty little pogswizzler* (BFG 60). Nevanlinna has translated this as *senkin kuonakierö kun kääpästelee, senkin lorinalärty kun litisee, senkin sörsselö putelikänsä, senkin liiskavanttu vihulivisve* (IKJ 61).

As to the significance of the anomalous features of the language to the work as a whole, one might argue that the willingness to experiment with linguistic

features and the joy in doing so is characteristic to *The BFG*. Play on words is the source of both intellectual pleasure and humour in the work. Although the exceptional expressions often require extra effort from the reader, they also reward him/her by offering fresh, unexpected images and views. And as Puurtinen has noticed, "children may be fascinated by strange, complicated words, which add exciting nuances to the text" (1995:181) but they also tend to like "sameness", repetition of familiar patterns. However, the question of readability arises when many unorthodox expressions are used. The language may turn into gibberish which does not contain enough fixed semantic information for a satisfactory interpretation, and the reader may grow impatient and lose interest. The danger is even more acute in the field of children's literature, owing to the fact that children are less competent as readers. Apparently realizing the danger of the loss of readability, Dahl places most of his anomalies into informative contexts, where the rough meaning can usually be detected fairly easily. The considerable simplicity and conformity of the grammatical anomalies, as discussed in the previous chapter, also makes the interpretation easier: the grammatical anomalies stay very similar throughout the book, which enables the reader to direct his/her attention more to the eccentric lexical features.

## 6 CONCLUSION

In the present study the exceptional linguistic features of Roald Dahl's *The BFG* have been discussed, as well as the translator's solutions to problematic points. It has been shown that when translating a text which contains anomalous, unconventional expressions, the translator cannot rely on established, conventional expressions if s/he wishes to create a similar atmosphere to the target text, but s/he also has to create a new lexical item or a structure. In many cases it is impossible to find a semantically equivalent expression for a neologism or some other innovative creation, because their precise meanings are often difficult to pin down. It is obvious, though, that the choice of a new, unorthodox expression for the translation is not by any means arbitrary or whimsical, but it is firmly based on the properties of the original expression. The translator may, as Nevanlinna has done

in the translation of *The BFG*, concentrate only on one or two aspects of the original expression (for example, on the phonetic structure or the semantic content of the expression or a part of the expression) and try and find an appropriate equivalent which combines the chosen features in a desired manner.

The most common strategy of the translator to find Finnish equivalents for anomalous expressions is to take into account the semantic content of the original expression to some extent and use one of the possible conventional equivalents as a starting point in forming a new, unconventional expression. The expressions have something in common with the original - either on the semantic, phonetic, pragmatic or morphological level.

One of the research questions of the study was how well the translator has managed to maintain the anomalous features. I would conclude that the translation is less anomalous than the original. This can be determined from the numbers of the anomalies. Especially the smaller number of grammatical anomalies caused the translation to be less anomalous than the original. The translator's choice to occasionally replace a standard English expression by an anomalous Finnish one compensates, however, for the disparity to some extent.

A comparative method has been used in the study. It is a natural choice in a study like this in which features of the original text are compared with features of the translation. It proved out to be a sensible approach to first describe features of the original text on semantic, pragmatic, phonetic and morphological levels and then compare the findings with the features of the translation.

Solutions of one translator has been depicted in this descriptive study. In a practical translation study, like this one, some possibilities of translating anomalous language in which there is not a direct link between the semantic content and the linguistic components can be shown. This is an area which I have studied in the light of new data. An interesting topic for further study would be to determine to what extent the similar tactics of translation would apply to the translation of metaphorical and idiomatic language, in which the meanings cannot be directly inferred from the linguistic components, either.

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