

Pippi Longstocking in Translation: Is Your *Pippi* the Same as My *Pippi*?

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Who Is Pippi Longstocking?

My research in the field of translation studies uses a children's book and its translations to illustrate linguistic adjustments in accordance with social convention.

I compare closely the first Danish, German and English translations of a Swedish children's book, *Pippi Longstocking*, to the original text.

Pippi was written during 1945 at a time in which Sweden was feeling ever increasing tension of Hitler's Nazi Germany on the one side and Stalin's red army on the other. In the midst of this dark time Lindgren created *Pippi*: An exuberant girl, anti-authoritarian, larger than life, happier than happy, the strongest girl in the world – able to lift her horse. She lives in an old villa with her horse and her monkey in a small and very ordinary Swedish town.



As translation is the gate keeper between different cultures (Fayard 2015), can we be sure, when reading a text in translation, we are all reading the same story?

An Example of my Research

East-German literature was used as a didactic vehicle as well as a way of indoctrinating the more easily influenced citizen: the child. (Thomson-Wohlgemut 2007). This can be seen when translations of *Pippi* are compared:

Swedish Source Text

..., och han var glad at hon hade haft sin kappsäk med gullpengar sü at hon inte hade behövt lida nöd medan han var borta.

West German Translation

... Er freut sich, daß sie ihren Koffer mit Goldstücken mitgenommen hatte, so daß sie keine Not zu leiden brauchte, während er fern von ihr war.

..., and he was glad that she had her suitcase of gold coins, so that she had not suffered want while he was away.

East German Translation

... Er freut sich, daß sie keine Not zu leiden brauchte, während er fern von ihr war.

..., and he was glad that she had not suffered want while he was away.

What can we conclude through the research?

As seen in this example, translation is not phenomenon whose nature and borders are set once and for all; rather translation is an activity dependent on the relations within a certain cultural system (Even-Zohar 1990).

Through my research I conclude that Lindgren's *Pippi* is neither your *Pippi*, nor mine. In translation she becomes a product of specific times and specific cultures: Everyone's *Pippi*, safe to let into our societies. A work for children shows the transformative nature of translations especially clearly, and reminds us of the power of languages to influence all of us.

