

Translation of Japanese onomatopoeia into Swedish (with focus on lexicalization)

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The abundant use of onomatopoeia in everyday Japanese poses problems not only to foreigners trying to master the language, but also to teachers and translators of Japanese. Onomatopoeia are often used to express an impression in a personal, emotional manner, and therefore considered indispensable not only in conversation. Are onomatopoeia expressions to be treated as any other vocabulary when translated? Japanese onomatopoeia expressions are different. As they are written in hiragana (in some cases katakana) and often reduplicated, these “sound words” are easily recognizable in an environment dominated by picture-like kanji. The frequent use of word-initial *p* (otherwise restricted to foreign loan words), reduplication and the often co-existing particle *to* also characterize Japanese onomatopoeia (Jorden 1982).

Generally, linguistic theory considers the relation between sound and meaning to be arbitrary, and onomatopoeia to be an exception to the rule. More and more research, though, has been made about sound symbolism, which claims that there is a direct link between sound and meaning (Hinton 1994).

Abelin (1999) uses the broader term ‘sound symbolism’ to describe the phenomenon in Swedish. Onomatopoeia, she argues, are only sound words. In Japanese, though, *onomatope* is used both for sound-imitating words (*giongo*) and those that describe non-audible states and actions by sound (*gitaigo*). In English, the terms ‘mimesis’ and ‘mimetic words’ are also used.

There is a distinct difference between sound symbolism in Japanese and Swedish. In Japanese sound symbolism is an important part of the language. It is a well-structured sound symbolic system, where it is easy for the native speaker

to guess the meaning of a new word. In Swedish, on the other hand, sound symbolism is peripheral and based on consonant clusters. The difficulties of coming to terms with Swedish sound symbolism is further aggravated by the clusters sometimes being sound symbolic, as the *pl* in *plaska* ‘(to) splash’, and sometimes not, as in *plats* ‘place’.

1.2 Related studies

Several studies have been made comparing Japanese and English onomatopoeia. Kakehi (1982) states that in Japanese the onomatopoeia expression usually consists of an onomatopoeia followed by the particle *to* and the modified verb, while in English the equivalent is a more lexicalized expression.

The degree of lexicality and mimeticity were used by Tamori & Schourup (1999) to examine whether or not onomatopoeia in English and Japanese constitute a category of their own, separate from the ordinary vocabulary. As Jorden (1982) and others, they found that Japanese onomatopoeia are much more clearly defined as a category compared to English, where many onomatopoeia are highly lexicalized and have become more or less conventionalized.

Concerning translation of Japanese onomatopoeia, several studies have been made, especially of finding an English equivalent to these words. Edström (1989) focused on the 60 out of 200 cases in Kawabata’s *Yukiguni* where translations were omitted. The reason for the omission could be due to style, oversight or difficulties in finding an English equivalent. Edström found two categories of onomatopoeia which were especially problematic to translate, namely “those carrying more than one meaning simultaneously, and those indicating both a description of a situation and a subjective interpretation of that situation” (1989: 50).

In another study of onomatopoeia in Kawabata’s *Yukiguni*, Hayase (1978) pointed at several possible reasons for why a relatively a high number of onomatopoeia (59 out of 186) were left untranslated. The sentence structure of the translation, for instance, might be completely different from the original and therefore a faithful translation of the onomatopoeia could disrupt the new structure. *Giongo* and *gitaigo* express a personal, emphatic nuance that might be incoherent with the style of the translation. Another reason for omitting the mimetic words could be that a translation would require a lengthy, detailed explanation, according to Hayase.

Kubo (1997) used Kakehi’s (1982) categorization of onomatopoeia when analyzing translations of Miyazawa Kenji’s novels. The fact that 78% of the Japanese onomatopoeia (most of them *gitaigo*) were translated without the use

of onomatopoeia, or by explanatory translations, clearly shows the gap between Japanese and English onomatopoeia, according to Kubo.

In a study of French translations of Japanese onomatopoeia, Takeuchi (1998) came to the conclusion that sound-imitating words, *giongo*, were rendered into French by either the preposition *avec* 'with' or the verb *faire* '(to) do' followed by a noun indicating a sound, e.g. *bruissement* 'murmur, whistling', *fracas* 'crash', or by a verb expressing the sound, e.g. *gronder* '(to) growl', *ronfler* '(to) hum'.

The translation of *gitaigo*, mode-mimicking words which only indirectly imitate sounds and thus more symbolic than *giongo*, are likely to be more problematic. Takeuchi (1998) found three methods of rendering *gitaigo* into French. One method was translating the *gitaigo* by an adverb. In other cases a translation was impossible, if it was not made part of an expression (e.g. *gata-gata fureru* – in French *frissonner* 'tremule'). A third method was rendering the *gitaigo* into French by a paraphrase. The most problematic cases were rendered into French by a paraphrase.

Moriya (1987) states that while Japanese onomatopoeia are normally adverbs, in English and French onomatopoeia often taken an independent form as interjections or nouns. The same applies to Swedish, where onomatopoeia, as in other European languages, is in the periphery of the language. A detailed study of Swedish sound symbolism has been done by Åsa Abelin (1999) and will be used as a reference work in this study, when analyzing the sound symbolism in Swedish translations.

In examining Japanese onomatopoeia as dictionaries I have used Amanuma's (1974) monolingual *Giongo, gitaigo jiten* and Ono's (1984) Japanese-English *Nichi-ei gion gitaigo katsuyô jiten*. As a general reference work Hamano's *The sound-symbolic system of Japanese* has been very useful.

2. Onomatopoeia expressions and lexicalization

Lexicality, or the degree to which a word is part of the established vocabulary, and mimeticity, or the degree to which a word is a direct imitation of a sound, state or condition, are according to Tamori (1999) considered to be inversely proportional, that is, the more an onomatopoeia is part of the established vocabulary, the less mimetic it is. An increasing degree of mimeticity also points at a description of something concrete rather than abstract. Let us take a closer look at the terms mimeticity and lexicality and their application to onomatopoeia.

Whether or not an onomatopoeia can take the quotative form is one way to determine the degree of mimeticity. In Japanese the quotative form uses the

following construction: *to iu* (*yô na*) *oto/koe*. The particle *to* indicates that the following part is a quotation. Apart from this function, *to* is also used after onomatopoeia. As criteria for mimeticity, the quotative form and the existence of an obligatory *to* run parallel. They are both indicators of the word being to a greater degree mimetic, and thus less lexicalized.

Giongo (sound-imitating words) are more suited for the quotative form (and more likely to require *to*) than *gitaigo* (words describing states or conditions). For such manner adverbial *gitaigo* as *yukkuri* and *bonyari* *to* is optional, but the quotative form is not possible, since these words lack the capacity of concrete description.



Figure 1. Degree of lexicalization - semantically

Gitaigo (mode-mimicking) expressions, especially *gijôgo* (expressions which describe human emotions or feelings) do not normally fit into the quotative form. This form, and the existence of an obligatory *to*, point at a low degree of lexicalization.

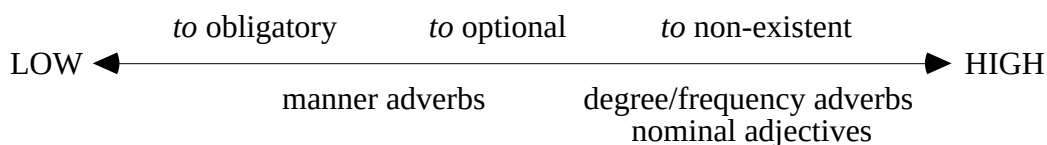


Figure 2. Degree of lexicalization - syntactically

Degree and frequency adverbs are followed by the particle *ni*. Thus, the particle *to* (and the quotative form) does not occur with these expressions. Most Japanese onomatopoeia are used as manner adverbs. When used as nominal adjectives, the degree of mimeticity is lower, and inversely the degree of lexicalization is higher, according to Hamano (1998), who also argues that forms combined with the verb *iu* are more mimetic than those combined with *suru*.

3. Translation of onomatopoeia with a low degree of lexicalization

As material for this study 275 cases of onomatopoeia and their Swedish translations have been collected from Yoshimoto Banana's *Kichin*, Endo Shusako's *Sukyandaru* and Miyazawa Kenji's *Nametokoyama no kuma*, *Shikaodori no hajimari* and *Yodaka no hoshi*. The novels have three different

Swedish translators, namely, Kerstin Vidaeus (Miyazawa), Vibeke Emond (Yoshimoto) and Gunilla Lindberg-Wada (Endo). A comparison between possible differences in translation strategies (concerning onomatopoeia) could also have been made, but is not part of this study.

In order to study how concrete onomatopoeia is translated, 26 cases of *giongo* from the above-mentioned works have been analyzed. Out of these, 11 were accompanied with an obligatory *to*. These 11 cases will be given special attention, as they are supposedly the onomatopoeia expressions which are the least lexicalized and give the most concrete description of a situation.

3.1 *Giongo* accompanied by an obligatory *to*

Of the 11 cases of *giongo* with obligatory *to*, 7 were translated with sound symbolic verbs, 2 with pure onomatopoeia and 2 were left untranslated.

adjective	0	paraphrase	0
adverb	0	onomatopoeia	2
verb	7	omission	2

Table 1. Swedish translations of giongo+to (N=11)

- (1) *Zabun to mizu ni kakekondari*
(Hunden) dyker plums ner i vattnet
...plunging into the water
- (2) *Pinpon to fui ni doa chaimu ga natta*
Pling-plong. Plötsligt ringde det på dörren
Dingdong. Suddenly the doorbell rang

In the above two examples of onomatopoeia translations, the latter constitutes a sentence on its own, a proof of the low lexicality of the expression.

The normal case seems to be the use of a sound symbolic verb, e.g.:

- (3) *Gân to atama ga natte*
Nästa stund dånade det i Kojûrô's huvud
A great noise filled Kojuro's head
- (4) *Taki... gô to ochite kuru*
Vattenfallet...dundrar ner
...in a waterfall that goes thundering down

- (5) *Suru to mori made ga-gâ’ to sakende kuma wa dota’ to taore akakuroi chio doku-doku haki hana o kunkun narashite shinde shimau no datta*

Då skallade det i hela skogen

The whole forest would seem to cry out loud

In two cases the translation of the onomatopoeia was omitted:

- (6) *Kojûrô wa pittari ochitsuite ki o tate ni shite tachinagara kuma no tsuki no wa o megakete zudon to yaru no datta*

Kojûrô var fullkomligt lugn där han stod bakom ett träd, siktade mitt i björnens mårning och tryckte av

Kojuro would remain perfectly calm and, taking aim at the center of the bear’s forehead from behind a tree, would let fly with his gun

The Swedish translation merely conveys the fact of the gun being fired, with no reference to how it sounded is given.

- (7) *Sono toki, gî’ to oto o tatete doa ga hiraite ôkina kamibukuro o daeta Eriko san ga haite kita no de bikkuri shita*

Jag ryckte till när jag just då hörde dörren öppnas och såg Eriko komma in med en stor papperspåse i famnen

Just then the door opened with a squeal of hinges, and in came Eriko holding a large paper bag

Above we are not informed if the person telling the story (the *jag* ‘I’ in the Swedish text) is surprised by the sound the door made when it opened or by Eriko entering with a big paper bag in her arms. If she was surprised by the sound *gî*’, this could have been rendered into Swedish by, e.g., *gnissla* ‘(to) squeak’.

3.2 *Giongo* without an obligatory *to*

adjective	0	paraphrase	4
adverb	0	onomatopoeia	0
verb	9	omission	2

Table 2. Swedish translations of *giongo* without obligatory *to* (N=15)

Examining all the cases of *giongo*, it is apparent that for the group as a whole the equivalent in Swedish is a sound symbolic verb here as well.

- (8) *Kanojo wa kyûri o pori-pori tabenagara itta*
Medan hon satt där och knaprade i sig gurksalladen
She said, munching cucumbers
- (9) *Neboketa busu na kao de gusha-gusha sô itta*
... när han stod där med sömndrucket ansikte och mumlade
...Yuichi was mumbling, his face puffy with sleep
- (10) *Sono shôko ni wa kumadomo wa Kojûrô ga bocha-bocha tani o koidari*
... när Kojûrô plaskar genom dalgångarna
...as he squelched his way up the valleys
- (11) *Kojûrô ga tani o bacha-bacha watatte hitotsu no iwani nobottara*
Kojûrô plaskade genom dalströmmen
Kojuro was squelching his way up a valley

In examples (8) through (11), the shortcoming of Swedish sound symbolism is evident, the same *plaska* being used to describe two different *giongo*. The difference between the two *giongo* is that *bocha-bocha* is the sound of splashing in deeper water than could be imagined from the sound *bacha-bacha*. This is a good example of how precise Japanese sound symbolism is. Using the unvoiced variant, *pacha-pacha*, would make the splashing about less wild.

In a study of problems of translating onomatopoeia to French, Takeuchi (1998) points at the lack of a French equivalent to *gitaigo*. Finding ways to translate *giongo*, which also exist in French, is easier. In French three ways were used to translate *giongo*, using onomatopoeia, *avec* + a word for a type of sound (*bruit, fracas*, etc.) or a verb expressing the sound (*ronfler, bruire*, etc.). Below follows some Swedish examples corresponding to the French *avec*-method, that is, *med* + a sound word.

- (12) *Senaka no nimotsu o dokkari oroshite*
... tog packningen från ryggen och satte ner den med en duns
Kaju set the load on his back down on the grass
- (13) *Doa ga gacha-gacha to hiraite*
... öppnades dörren med ett klirr
... with a scratch of a key in the door

(14) *Keredomo kuma mo iroiro dakara ki no hagshii yatsu nara gô-gô hoete tachiatte ...*

... reste han (björnen) sig upp med ett dovt rytande

... and the fiercest of them would rear up on their hind legs with a roar

A similar way of rendering an onomatopoeia into Swedish by a paraphrase is the following sentence from Endo's *Sukyandaru*:

(15) *Sumi no hô de otnashiku suwatte itanakaitachi ga zawa-zawa to tachiatatta*

Hans kollegor, som suttit tysta, reste sig upp under en del oväsen

The waitresses who had been seated quietly in one corner of the room noisily rose to their feet

Another method of coming to terms with *giongo* is the use of the present participle, as in the following examples:

(16) *Kuruma no kî o gacha-gacha narashinagara Yuichi wa modotte kita*

Yuichi kom tillbaka skramlande med nycklarna

Yuichi returned, jingling the car keys

(17) *Reizôko no bu- n to iu oto ga, watashi o kodoku nashikô kara mamotta.*

Kylskåpets brummande skyddade mig från alla ensamhetens tankar.

The hum of the refrigerator kept me from thinking of my loneliness

(18) ... gasa-gasa sanri bakari iku to ...

... går man den vägen på prasslande gräs en tolv kilometer ...

But if you push your way for about six miles through the rustling undergrowth

(19) *Furuboketa isu wa abura ga kirete iru no ka ... gî to iuoto wa Suguro ga kon iin ni kuru yô ni natte kara mô miminarete iru*

Den gamla nötta stolen behövde smörjas ... Detta gnisslande ljud hade Suguro blivit van vid under sin tid som patient på det här sjukhuset

The old chair seemed to need oiling ... it squeaked. Suguro's ears had grown accustomed to that sound over the course of his visits to this hospital

(20) *Za-za fuite ita kaze ...*

... hördes den susande vinden ...

the rustling of the breeze began to sound to my ears

Using the present participle form of the verb, e.g. *brummande* (derived from the verb *brumma*, meaning appr. '(to) make a growl-like sound') in example (17),

also makes the translation more active (Lindberg1992). In a similar manner, Kakehi (1993) proposed using the *-ing* form in English to make an expression more “vivid” and in such a way come closer to Japanese onomatopoeia

As *giongo* are more mimetic than *gitaigo*, it would seem natural to use sound symbolism when rendering these words to another language. The rare use of onomatopoeia, which ought to be the ultimate response to *giongo*, might be due to style and other factors (limited Swedish onomatopoeia, etc.).

4 Translation of highly lexicalized onomatopoeia

Gitaigo, onomatopoeia not imitating sounds but other states and conditions, are normally considered to be more abstract than *giongo*, especially those describing human emotions or feelings, *gijôgo*. Another indicator of abstractness, and a high degree of lexicalization, is the existence of a strong tie to the verb *suru*. The mimetic word serves as the initial component of a combined verb form (Kakehi 1993).

Below I will study three types of highly lexicalized onomatopoeia and the way these are translated, namely, the above-mentioned *gijôgo*, *-suru* verb forms as well as the very common CVQ/NCV-*ri* form.¹ The categories sometimes overlap, i.e. a *gijôgo* can also take the *-suru* or CVQ/NCV-*ri* form.

4.1 *Gijôgo*

It is evident that it is harder to find a sound-symbolic equivalent in Swedish for *gijôgo* compared to *giongo*. The latter tries to directly imitate a sound, while the former describes an emotion, and only indirectly relates to the sound of the word.

adjective	16	paraphrase	13
adverb	4	onomatopoeia	0
verb	3	omission	0

Table 3. Swedish translations of *gijôgo* (N=36)

As it is an indirect description of a state, rather than a direct imitation of a sound, there ought to be more variation in the ways of translating *gitaigo*. In French, Takeuchi (1998) has found that, as was the case for *giongo*, onomatopoeia is not used. Instead adverbs (*complètement*, *brusquement*), verbs (*s’effarer*, *frissonner*) or paraphrases (*ne pas se sentir frais* for Jap. *Kibun*

¹ C = consonant; V = vowel; Q = first half of a geminate consonant cluster; N = nasal.

gakusha-kusha suru) were used.

In a study of onomatopoeia in Kawabata's *Yukiguni* (Snow Country), Edström (1989) found that the most common category of rendering onomatopoeia into English was by using adverbs.

As can be expected, *gijôgo*, expressing human emotions or feelings rather than actions, are rendered into Swedish not by the aid of sound-symbolic verbs but by adjectives or paraphrases. (Only two cases of sound-symbolic or onomatopoeia translation was found.)

4.1.1 Adjective-perfect participle

Of the 16 adjectival translations, 12 were in the form of the perfect participle, which are very common as adjectives in Swedish. They are inflected as such and are used as such (Lindberg 1992).

- (21) ... *demo minikui karada kara, gyaku ni zoku-zoku, saserarechaunda*
 Men när det är en ful kropp blev man just därför ännu mer upphetsad
 But his ugly body really turned me on

- (22) *Gakun, to tomaru tabi ni mu'to suru*
 Varje gång bussen stannade med ett ryck blev jag irriterad
 My angry, irritable reaction to the jarring each time the bus lurched to a stop

- (23) *Hoteru no robî no isu ni koshi kakeru made, hanashi ni wa ikkô nifurenu*
Kanô ni sukoshi ira-ira shite Suguro wa kitsui koe odashita
 ... eftersom han blivit litet irriterad på Kanô, som inte med ett ord nämnde
 vad han ville tala om förrän de satt i fåtöljerna i lobbyn på Imperial Hotel
 Kanô would not even mention what he wanted to discuss until they were seated in
 the hotel lobby. Somewhat irritable when they finally sat down, Suguro asked ...

In examples (22) and (23), the same Swedish word *irriterad* 'irritated' is used for rendering two different onomatopoeia expressions. Merely looking at the phonological form, the gemination in *mu'to suru* indicates that the reason for the irritation is something taking place over a short period of time, in this case the abrupt, jerky stopping of the bus. *Ira-ira suru*, a reduplicated form, point at the pent-up irritation of Suguro having to wait for Kanô to come to the point.

4.1.2 Paraphrase

Paraphrases were also often used for translating *gijôgo*. In rendering *zo'to suru* into Swedish, Vibeke Emond on one occasion uses a sound symbolic verb:

- (24) *Doa o akeru tabi, zo'to shita. Sumanaku natte kara no koko wa, maru de betsujiin no kao o suru yô ninatta*

När jag öppnade dörren, rös jag till. Nu när jag inte bodde här längre, var det som om huset fått en vilt främmande människas ansikte

When I opened the door, I shuddered. It was like coming back to a stranger's house

But on another occasion the sound-symbolic verb has turned into a noun:

- (25) *Heya no sumi ni ikizuki, oshite kuru sono zo'to suru yô na shizukesa*

Det stilla lugn som andas i alla rummets hörn och tränger sig på som en rysning

the deathly silence that, panting in the corner of the room, pushes its way in like a shudder

Gunilla Lindberg-Wada interprets the way Endo uses the same onomatopoeia in a different manner:

- (26) *Betsu no hito to kîta toki, atashi zo' to shichatta*

När jag hörde att ni är två olika personer höll jag på att få slag

You sent a chill through me when you said you were somebody else

The above translation indicates a feeling of surprise, of being startled, and comes close to another onomatopoeia, namely *doki' to suru*, rather than the chilly fear creeping up your back, conveyed by *zo' to suru*.

4.2 *Suru* verb forms

The combined verb form with *suru* is common in Japanese, but it usually involves noun-verb combinations, e.g. *benkyô suru* 'study'.

adjective	21	paraphrase	7
adverb	1	onomatopoeia	0
verb	3	omission	0

Table 4. Swedish translations of suru verb forms (N=32)

In the examined material most of the *suru* verb forms were *gijôgo*. The only exceptions were *shin to suru* 'quiet', *shinmiri suru* (which may also be used as *gijôgo*) 'calmly' and *garan to shita* 'empty'.

4.2.1 Adjective

Shin to suru, not used by Miyazawa and Endo, appeared eight times in Yoshimoto's text. Often it is a concrete description of , e.g., a quiet room (*shin to shita heya*) and is then readily translated by Sw. *tyst* 'quiet'. When the onomatopoeia is used in a more abstract way the translation also changes.

- (27) *Kanojo ni wa, sô iu koto ga motsu, shin to shita sabishisa ga shimikonde ita*
 Denna hennes inre kraft hade drivit henne in i en tyst, ödslig ensamhet
 That quality must have condemned her to an ice-cold loneliness

Otherwise the most frequent *suru* verb is *bikkuri suru*, appearing six times in the examined material. *Shin to suru* and *bikkuri suru* dominate the *suru* verb category, and constitute most of the adjectival translations. *Gakkari-suru*, frequently used in daily conversation, was only found twice in the studied texts.

- (28) *Gakkari shita kimochi de Kobari wa hikikaesô to omottaga*
 Kobari blev besviken och funderade på att dra sig tillbaka
 Fed up, Kobari considered turning back
- (29) *Kanojotachi ga nanika hanashia nagara petto shoppu no iriguchi de inuno kusari ya kubiwa o ijitte iru no o gakkari shita me denagamete ita*
 Kobari var gruvligt besviken där han stod och såg hur de båda kvinnorna innanför dörren till djuraffären stod och fingrade på hundkoppel och hundhalsband medan de pratade om något med varandra
 Kobari watched crestfallen as the two women toyed with the dog-chains and collars at the doorway while they talked

In the story, Kobari was expecting the woman in the pet shop to have a secret meeting, thus the translator adds this to the interpretation of *gakkari shita*, making Kobari *gruvligt besviken* 'extremely disappointed'.

Of all the examples in Miyazawa's novels I have only found one *suru* verb, *waku-waku*. Here is how Miyazawa uses the word:

- (30) *Ureshikute waku-waku shite iru*
 Vid det här laget är Kojûrô så glad att det pirrar i honom
 By now Kojuro would be glowing with delight

4.2.2 Paraphrase

In contrast to the sound-symbolic Swedish verb *pirra*, used by Kerstin Videaus

when rendering *waku-waku* into Swedish, Vibeke Emond uses the paraphrase *spänd förväntan* ($\approx$ ‘eager/tense expectation’).

- (31) *Myô ni waku-waku shita kimochi*
 En sorts underlig spänd förväntan
 I began to feel strangely shaky, close to tears

Another example of a paraphrase being used in rendering a *suru* verb into Swedish is the following:

- (32) *Shinjuku ya Roppongi o uro-uro shiteiru joryû dezainâ no tamago ya joyû*
kidori no musumetachi nokuzure
 som höll till i Shinjuku och Roppongi med drömmar om att bli berömda
 designers eller skådespelerskor
 as a kindred spirit with the fledling designers and aspiring actresses who lolled
 around the streets of Shinjuku and Roppongi

4.3 CVQ/NCV-ri form

The CVQ/NCV-ri forms, e.g. *hakkiri* ‘clear’, *nonbiri*, ‘peaceful’, function as manner adverbials and have a comparatively loose tie to the verb they modify, i.e. they can be combined with a number of different verbs. They are not used for concrete descriptions. These forms are the least likely of the Japanese onomatopoeia to independently form a sentence, the latter also an indication of a high degree of lexicalization (Tamori and Schourup 1999). Let us examine how the CVQ/NCV-ri forms are translated into Swedish, and if it is possible to discern less problematic translations.

adjective	28	paraphrase	16
adverb	30	onomatopoeia	0
verb	5	omission	4

Table 5. Swedish translations of CVQ/NCV-ri forms (N=83)

The normal case seems to render these forms into Swedish by using adjectives or adverbs. The quite frequent use of paraphrases might be due to problematic translations.

4.3.1 Common CVQ/NCV-ri forms

Among the onomatopoeia which have the form CVQ/NCV-ri, there are some

which are very common, more or less part of the ordinary vocabulary. The sound symbolic nuance of these words has more or less disappeared. Below follows a list of these words and the number of times they occur in the examined material.

<i>sukkari</i> ‘completely’	14
<i>sokkuri</i> ‘just like, identical’	12 *
<i>yukkuri</i> ‘slowly’	11
<i>hakkiri</i> ‘clearly’	7
<i>bikkuri suru</i> ‘be suprised’	7
<i>pittari</i> ‘(fit) perfectly’	3

Table 6. The most common CVQ/NCV-ri forms (N=54)

* Note: Eleven occurrences of *sokkuri* come from Endo’s *Sukyandaru* where the main character is obsessed by a ‘look-a-like’.

As the total number of these common (and readily translated) CVQ/NCV-ri words is 54 (out of a total of 83), it leaves only 29 cases of onomatopoeia which might pose greater problems to the translator. It should be observed that among the common CVQ/NCV-ri forms listed above only *bikkuri suru* can be regarded as a *gijôgo*.

4.3.2 Problematic CVQ/NCV-ri

Comparing the table for the 29 supposedly more problematic CVQ/NCV-ri forms with the table for all CVQ/NCV-ri forms, it is apparent that paraphrases were used to a much greater extent in rendering the former into Swedish. In 11 cases out of 29, the translator found it necessary to use a paraphrase when translating these words.

adjective	9	paraphrase	11
adverb	6	onomatopoeia	0
verb	3	omission	0

Table 7. Problematic CVQ/NCV-ri forms (N=29)

All CVQ/NCV-ri onomatopoeia are not this easy to translate. In order to understand words such as *dokkari* and *doppuri*, you must analyze the sound symbolic elements of the words. The CVQ/NCV-ri combination implies something quiet, round and feminine. This might be true for words like *kossori*,

nikkori and *hissori*. The combination could also express something thoroughgoing, complete, exhaustive and perfect, apparent in words such as *sukkari* and *pittari* (Takeuchi 1998).

Let us return to *dokkari* and *doppuri* and put them into a context.

(33) *Shujin ga dokkari suwatte ita*

Där satt innehavaren med hela sin tyngd

The owner of the place would be seated massively

(34) *Senaka no nimotsu o dokkari oroshite*

Kajû to packningen från ryggen och satte ner den med en duns

Kaju set the load on his back down on the grass

Dokkari is “a weighty object existing in a fixed position, from where it is not easily moved. It includes the nuance of having taken possession of the position occupied” (Ono 1984: 223). The explanatory translation in example (33), *med hela sin tyngd* (≈ ‘with all his/her weight’) does not necessarily describe the special position occupied by the shopkeeper, it could just hint at the person being heavy, thereof the sound when sitting down.

In example (34), the translator uses sound symbolism and the *avec*-method, i.e. *med* + sound word in the indefinite form. As *dokkari* in this case only expresses a sound, the Swedish *duns* (which indicates the sound of something heavy and dull) is a faithful translation.

(35) *Shitto o kaku tame ni wa, sono shittoshin no naka ni doppuri hitari, jibun o yogosaneba naranakatta*

För att beskriva svartsjuka måste han penetrera svartsjukans väsen och befläcka sig själv

In order to sketch a repellent heart, his own heart had to become loathsome

In (35), the translator, Gunilla Lindberg-Wada, uses an abstract verb, *penetrera* ‘(to) penetrate’ to convey the originally concrete picture given by *doppuri hitari* ‘(to) be immersed thoroughly’. On another occasion she uses a sound-symbolic verb, which is rare, when rendering a supposedly highly lexicalized CVQ/NCV-*ri* onomatopoeia, *kippari*, into Swedish.

(36) “*Iya, tashika ni omae da*” to Kanô wa *kippari* to

“Nej, jag är säker på att det var du”, snoppade Kanô av honom

“No, it was you.” Kanô was emphatic

Another supposedly problematic CVQ/NCV-*ri* onomatopoeia, *kossori*, is conveyed by a paraphrase into Swedish by two different translators:

- (37) “*Soretomo oretachi ni wa kossori nanika yatte irun ja nai ka*”
 “Kanske du när allt kommer omkring håller på med något i största hemlighet?”
 Or maybe you are up to something you haven’t told us about

- (38) *Sore kara oto o tatenai yô ni kossori-kossori modorihajimeta*
 Sedan började han smyga tillbaka så ljudlöst som möjligt.
 then stealthily, taking care to make no sound, withdrew

The Swedish equivalent to the reduplicated form of *kossori* followed by *modorihajimeru* is in example (38) a verb, *smyga* ‘(to) creep/tiptoe’, which as we have seen is very rare when translating highly lexicalized onomatopoeia.

According to Edström (1989: 50), there are two categories of onomatopoeia which cause special problems for the translator: “those carrying more than one meaning simultaneously, and those indicating both a description of a situation and a subjective interpretation of that situation”. An example of a CVQ/NCV-*ri* word with various meanings is *nonbiri*.

- (39) *Nonbiri to shita, atataakai hiru datta*
 Det var en stillsam, varm dag
 It was a warm, lazy afternoon
- (40) *Nonbiri shita hikkoshi no owabi no tame,ôya no ojîsan o tazuneta*
 Jag sökte upp hyresvärdens för att be honom om ursäkt för att jag
tagit så lång tid på mig med flyttningen
 By way of apology for taking so much time, I went to visit the landlord

Noteworthy in the above examples is the particle *to* inserted between the onomatopoeia *nonbiri* and the verb *suru* in example (39). According to the theories of Tamori (1999) and others, this would supposedly make the first *nonbiri* less lexicalized compared to the second. The first example is also readily translated by a single adjective in Swedish, *stillsam* ‘peaceful’, while in example (40) a paraphrase was found necessary for rendering this more abstract *nonbiri* into Swedish.

5. Summary and conclusion

Comparing Swedish translations of Japanese onomatopoeia with different degrees of lexicalization, it is evident that while a sound symbolic verb is the normal equivalent for an onomatopoeia of a low degree of lexicalization, highly lexicalized Japanese onomatopoeia are typically rendered into Swedish by an adjective or an adverb. (Almost all adverbial translations are of the CVQ/NCV-*ri* form.)

	CVQ/NCV- <i>ri</i>	<i>gijôgo</i>	<i>suru</i> verb	<i>giongo</i> (all)	<i>giongo+to</i>	<i>giongo</i>
adjectives	28	16	21	0	0	0
adverbs	30	4	1	0	0	0
verbs	4	3	3	16	7	9
paraphrases	17	13	7	4	0	4
onomatopoeia	0	0	0	2	2	0
omissions	4	0	0	4	2	2
totals	83	36	32	26	11	15

Table 8. Summary table of Swedish translations (N=177)

As the more highly lexicalized onomatopoeia only indirectly imitate sounds, they are more abstract and it is difficult to give a one-to-one translation. Consequently these words, describing emotions (*gijôgo*) or just generally modes or conditions (*gitaigo*), are to a larger extent than sound onomatopoeia (*giongo*) rendered into Swedish by a paraphrase.

In the examined material, an abundant use of the highly lexicalized CVQ/NCV-*ri* form is apparent. A number of these (e.g. *yukkuri*, *hakkiri*, *bikkuri suru*) are very common and have lost much of their sound symbolic value. Therefore these words do not follow the normal trend of highly lexicalized onomatopoeia being more difficult to translate.

It could be argued that these common CVQ/NCV-*ri* forms should not be regarded as onomatopoeia. But since they cannot be combined with onomatopoeia of a lower degree of lexicalization (e.g. *ha'*) they are formally still onomatopoeia. Compare the use of *bikkuri suru* with that of *odoroku*, a word which has an onomatopoetic origin but which now is fully lexicalized:

- (41) a. **Ha' to bikkuri suru*
 b. *Ha' to odoroku*

Another sign of *odoroku*, although of onomatopoetic origin, being fully lexicalized is that it can be written in kanji.

An obligatory co-existence of the particle *to* is a crucial criteria for determining the lexicality and mimeticity of an onomatopoeia expression. Sound onomatopoeia followed by the quotative particle *to* are lowest on the scale of lexicality, and inversely the most mimetic. The only cases of pure onomatopoeia (i.e. not merely sound symbolic, which is the normal case in Swedish) being used to render Japanese onomatopoeia into Swedish were words from this group. Furthermore, paraphrases had to be used (in four cases) in order to find a Swedish equivalent for *giongo* not accompanied by *to*.

Concerning sound symbolic translations of Japanese onomatopoeia, pure onomatopoeia in Swedish has a childish, sometimes vulgar, nuance and might therefore be avoided. Sound symbolism in Swedish (mostly in the form of sound symbolic verbs, e.g. *gnissla* '(to) squeak'), on the other hand, does not have this nuance and is also often used in the translations I have studied.

Sound symbolism in Swedish is not by far such a coherent and well-structured system as the Japanese. The variations and possibilities of catching small differences (e.g. of sounds) is not found in Swedish. Thus attempting to give a sound symbolic equivalent to a Japanese onomatopoeia runs the risk of missing nuances expressed in the Japanese word.

This might be the reason why translators avoid or ignore these expressions. Compared to the translation of Kawabata's *Yukiguni*, though, the examined material in this study has not omitted onomatopoeia expressions to such a large extent. Other explanations for the many omissions might be style. Swedish onomatopoeia might not be regarded as appropriate for the literary style of Kawabata, whereas this does not pose such a problem for the more popular style of Yoshimoto and Miyazawa.

In any case, this study has shown that sound symbolic translations of Japanese onomatopoeia are possible, and could be made to a larger extent, especially in texts where the author, e.g. Miyazawa, consciously has used these expressions in order to give a special touch to the content.

If a sound symbolic or onomatopoeia translations is considered impossible or inappropriate, an alternative way of catching the meaning expressed by Japanese onomatopoeia has to be found. Kakehi (1993a: 135) proposed the *-ing* form or inverted word order for English translations in order to grasp the vividness of onomatopoeia expressions. In Swedish translations, the present participle, giving a similar effect, is frequently used.

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