

In my childhood, home was more than a physical place. Home was words that follow me to this day. Living in Sweden, Swedish was the language I would be exposed to in kindergarten, in the vast city parks with other children or when speaking to my maternal grandparents. Intersecting this was English, a language from my father, and from his American family. Although globalization was already very much present in both Sweden and America, these two countries felt like two separate worlds, only ever intertwining in my own home, and through the bilingualism that was present.

In Sweden, where I grew up the majority of my childhood, there was both maternal and paternal leave for parents, each being given a few weeks each. During that time, my mother would speak to me in Swedish during her turn, and my father would sing and speak to me in English during his. The first association I ever made to these languages was "mom" and "dad" respectively. When visiting my paternal grandparents in America, my English would be my only means of verbal communication and a reason I suppose it felt so much like home, even amongst the shiny plastic and stretching suburbia which I had otherwise never seen. In Sweden, I could be like every other child playing in the lush green parks - a delusion broken by my father calling my name and telling me "it's time to go home". In English.

I felt ashamed, embarrassed. It wasn't the norm. Though as I've grown, moved and am older, I imagine I would feel strange without my bilingualism.

English was my secret language when I was little, the one none of my friends could comprehend. That was my first skill, my first excellence in life. Today, it still is. Languages are delicious to me, and I love hearing them, attempting at them and, most of all, writing in them. Through my bilingualism I was able to understand more, see more, notice more of the details circulating around me. It allowed me to become observant, to grow and to question. It allowed me to question my own shame of my identity and overcome it. With English, I was able to go to a Swedish-English bilingual school, which was the school which has provided me with the most knowledge, growth and sense of belonging out of any place I've ever been. With English, I was able to go to an international school and be able to see a whole new reality outside of the norm I'd grown up in.

Before being exposed to these new environments, my vision of my future was limited. I could complete a university degree, live in a lovely apartment (with a cat preferably) and have a well-paying job and celebrate holidays with my Swedish family. These visions rarely branched outside of myself and my family, and they were self-centered. I was raised to be an individual, to see my future and to believe I can do anything I want. But my *anything* was limited. Bilingualism allowed me to surpass those limits; I've learnt that language can cross all borders - it is a privilege and a responsibility. I, myself, come from a very privileged background, and that is not the least because of the country I grew up in. The Swedish democracy has provided me with free speech, free education and the freedom of being an individual. The majority of the global population have faced oppression and denial of these - my perspective of how it can work well and knowledge of its

limitations is something I can share with others through the communication English has granted me. I can bring my own experiences and my languages in order to help bring change.

My perspectives and experiences are limited. But with my bilingualism I can communicate with a range of people who can enrich my understanding and empathy for others. For a long time, bilingualism granted me a secret language, and a privilege above others. Today, I don't want it as a privilege; I want it and the benefits it has granted me to be a human right.

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Below is a transcription of the first chapter of a book by the name "Ronja: The Robber's Daughter" by Swedish author Astrid Lindgren, a book my parents would read to myself and my siblings which frequented my childhood bedtime tales. Originally from a Swedish book, this is the translation I wrote:

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The night Ronja was born the thunder went above the mountains, yes, it was a night of thunder so that all goblins of the Mattisforest frightenedly burrowed in their holes and hide-outs, only the vicious savage birds liked the thunder more than any other weather and flew with shouts and screams around the Robbers' castle on the Mattis-hill. It bothered Lovis who was lying inside there and about to birth a child, and she said to Mattis.

"Scare the vicious savages away, so there'll be quiet here, or I won't hear what it is I'm singing!"

It was so that Lovis sang when she was giving birth. It was easier that way, she claimed, and the child would likely be of the happier type if it arrived on earth in the midst of a song. Mattis took his crossbow and slung out a few arrows through the window in the forest foliage.

"Go away, savages," he screamed. "I'm going to have a child tonight, do you understand, you nightmares!"

"Hoho, he's going to have a child tonight," the savages shouted, "a thunderstorm child, small and ugly I think, hoho!"

At that Mattis shot once again straight at the herd. But they only laughed in mockery at him and flew away with angry howls past above the treetops.

While Lovis was lying there and giving birth and singing and while Mattis to the best of his ability banished the savages his robbers sat by the fire down in the vast stonhall and ate and drank and fussed as loudly as the savages.

Something they must be able to resort to while they waited, and waited all twelve of them did for whatever was to happen in the tower. For in the entirety of their robbertime no child had been born in the Mattiscastle.

Most of all, Skalle-Per waited.

“Won’t that robberchild come soon?” he said. “I am old and worn and soon I’ll be done with my robberlife. It would be good to get to see a new robber chief before I pass.”

Hardly had he said it before the door opened and in rushed Mattis, out of his mind from overjoy. With high victory leaps he made his way through an entire lap around the table and screamed like a mad man.

“I’ve gotten a child! Do you hear me, I’ve gotten a child!”

“What sort of child did you get?” Skalle-Per asked from away in his corner.

“A robber’s daughter, rejoice and hurrah,” Mattis exclaimed. “A robbers’ daughter, here she comes!”

And over the high threshold stepped Lovis in with her child against her breast. Then it became completely silent amongst the robbers.

“Now I think you got it so that the beer washed down the wrong way,” said Mattis. He took the girl from Lovis and carried her around amongst the robbers.

Here! If you’d like to take a look at the most beautiful child that was ever born in a robbers castle !”

The daughter was laying in his arms and gazed up at him with awake eyes.

“That child already knows and understands a little bit of everything, you see,” said Mattis.

“What’ll her name be?” Skalle-Per wondered.

“Ronja,” said Lovis. “That I already decided long ago.”

“But if it’d been a boy, what then,” said Skalle-Per.

Lovis looked at him calmly and sternly.

“If I’ve decided my child’s name will be Ronja, then a Ronja it is!”

Then she turned to Mattis.

“Would you like for me to take her now?”

But Mattis didn't want to hand his daughter away from himself. He stood there and with wonder he watched her clear eyes, her small mouth, her black tufts of hair, her helpless hands, and he shivered in the light of the love he felt.

“My child, in those small hands of yours already you hold my robber heart.” said he. “I cannot comprehend it, but that's the way it is.”

“May I hold her a little,” begged Skalle-Per, and Mattis placed Ronja in his arms, as if she had been a golden egg.

“There you have the new robber chief that you've been blabbering on about for so long. But don't you drop her, whatever you do, for then it'll be the very last thing you ever do.”

But Skalle-Per only smiled towards Ronja with his toothless mouth.

To demonstrate my ability to translate from English to Swedish instead, I will translate a song that I grew up listening to, namely “Two Birds” by Regina Spektor or...

Två fåglar av Regina Spektor

Två fåglar på en ståltråd
En försöker flyga iväg
Och den andra tittar tättintill från ståltråden
Han säger att även han vill
Men en lögnare är han

Jag kommer tro det allt
Det finns inget jag ej kan förstå
Jag kommer tro det allt
Kommer inte släppa taget om din hand

Två fåglar på en ståltråd
En sa “kom igen” o den andra sa “jag är mör”
Skyn är molnig, och förlåt mig
En mer, eller mindre
Ingen e oroli(g)

Jag kommer tro det allt

Det finns inget jag ej kan förstå
Jag kommer tro det allt
Kommer inte släppa taget om din hand

Två fåglar av en fjäder
Sa att dem alltid kommer hålla ihop
Men en kommer aldrig släppa ståltrå(de)n
Han säger att han vill med
Men han är en lögnare

Två fåglar på en ståltråd
En försöker flyga iväg och den andra
Kollar tättintill från ståltråden
Han säger han vill med, han en lögnare är han

Två fåglar på en ståltråd
En försöker flyga iväg och den andra

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