



Creative Translation: Björnen sover (Bear is sleeping)

Age recommendation:	5–11
Key Stage:	KS1–KS2
Duration:	30–50 minutes (depending on the number of activities carried out in class)
Keywords:	Singing, role play, creative translation
Languages:	Swedish, Finnish, English
Resources provided:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Soundtrack with animation and vocals in Swedish• Soundtrack with animation and vocals in Finnish• Soundtrack with animation and vocals with gaps in Swedish• Soundtrack with animation and vocals in English• Soundtrack with animation and no vocals (interpretative version for creative translation exercise)
Other materials:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Colouring-in sheet based on the illustrations for the animation• Handout with the lyrics in Swedish, Finnish and English

AIM

To engage with a song from a different culture through imitation, physical play, and creating own versions.

PREPARATION

The song, 'Björnen sover' (The bear is sleeping), has been provided in three languages (Swedish, Finnish, English). It is for the teacher to decide in which language the children should first learn it. It is originally a Swedish song, and learning it in the original by imitation might give opportunity to guess what it is about (from the accompanying pictures) before using the English version as a 'reveal'. For some groups it might be more suitable however to encounter it first with text that can be understood, before going on to attempt to imitate the foreign versions. The preparation needed would be to listen through the tracks and decide on which language to try first, and how to introduce the song. It may be that the bear itself needs contextualising, as an animal still roaming wild in parts of northern Scandinavia; it might be useful to try and guess the activities or characteristics of a bear together before playing and learning the song itself. The second part of the preparation needs to focus on the follow-up activities: a number of suggestions are provided below, where 2, 3a, and 3b might need some decisions made by the teacher beforehand. Activity 1 and 2 are more straight-forward; 3a and 3b have been provided as means for linguistic and compositional creativity.

ACTIVITY

The following activities can then be tried with the song:

1. (Compulsory!) Sing the song in Swedish (or Finnish). One child is "bear" and curls up in the middle to sleep. The rest of the group form a circle (link hands) and walk around the

bear. At the last word/syllable of the song, “tro” (trust), the ‘bear’ wakes and shoots out to grab someone from the circle. Whoever is caught, is bear next time. As the bear is sleeping and the instruction in the song is to be ‘gentle’ around him, the circling can be done on tiptoe, very quietly etc.



2. The final track provided is a “gap” track, where the last word of each line (in Swedish) has been left out. As the track plays, the children shout out the missing words. There are two ways to approach this game. One is to allow the children to supply the words in any language they choose – Swedish, Finnish, English or any other language they know, thus allowing multi-language and trans-language opportunities. This way the exercise also becomes a demonstration of inter-cultural exchange and transfer. The other variant is to fill in the words in Swedish, thus making it an exercise in memorising words in a new language by isolating them into individual segments, and making it into a memory game. The words are still visible on the sound file for anyone who can read, but the image can be turned off at a later stage to increase the challenge.
3. Activity 3a and 3b both encourage playing with the content of the song, using it as a tool for cultural transferability and narrative creativity, rather than focusing on the linguistic skills.

3a. Using the English version, play around with lines four and five of the song, which form the middle section, and get the children to compose alternative lines that scan (and maybe rhyme), e.g.: “He is not so savage / if you give him cabbage”.

3b. The whole song can also be re-written, for example to be about other animals. It has a very clear and succinct structure, with short lines, and is therefore very suitable as a framework for composing own versions. Perhaps stay with the animal theme and use the narrative structure to ‘fill in’ the different sections, letting the children suggest their own animals, where they sleep, and what they do. As above, the main aim here is linguistic creativity and achieving ‘cultural transfer’ by letting the children play around with the song and making it their own (with requisite help and guidance). An example might be:

*My dog sleeps
My dog sleeps
In his comfy bed
He is rather lazy
And his paws get tired
But at night, but at night,
Then he wants to play!*

But I’m sure you can come up with better!

