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Negotiating the Boundaries of Professional Subtitling. The Case of Finnish Subtitlers and Their Online Community

Abstract

In recent years, the Finnish subtitling field has undergone significant changes, which have caused instability in subtitlers' working conditions. Subtitlers have responded to these changes by working together towards a more unified professional community. One important means in these efforts has been an active online presence consisting of, among other things, a website and a blog. The subtitlers' online presence could be characterised as an element of a "professional project" (Tyulenev 2014: 68–69), an attempt to institutionalise the profession and to search for social recognition. One aspect of a professional project is to draw the boundaries of the profession and to determine criteria for acceptance into the professional community. The definition of professional boundaries is a recurrent theme on the Finnish subtitlers' website and blog. The subtitlers' case therefore provides an enlightening example of how a heterogeneous professional field can attempt to improve its standing by determining its own boundaries. This article will explore how Finnish subtitlers define the boundaries of their profession on their website and blog, what criteria they present for inclusion in their professional community, and how exclusion from the community is expressed. The analysis will demonstrate that a number of professional practices, such as adherence to local subtitling traditions, are used as a way of determining the behaviour of a professional subtitler. As a consequence, the definition of professional boundaries emerges as a central argument in the subtitlers' professional project, becoming a strategy for unifying the subtitlers' community and advocating for a more stable status.

1.   Introduction

In Finland, subtitling is a visible and culturally significant segment of the translation field. Foreign-language films and programmes have traditionally been subtitled rather than dubbed, and due to the large amount of international programming, subtitles have been one of the most widely read text types (see, e.g., Salmi 2010). The subtitling profession, however, has not been particularly visible or well established. Instead, it has gone through various periods of instability, and the instability has been reflected in the subtitlers' professional community, which has been fragmented and struggling for a unifying voice. In the last five years, however, a significant number of subtitlers have formed a more cohesive community that they have used to advocate for their profession. This community has been largely constructed through a shared online presence.

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This article will examine how Finnish subtitlers have used their online community as a means of defining the boundaries of their profession. The discussion of professional boundaries is inspired by Sergey Tyulenev's (2014: 68–69) concept of the "professional project", a process of institutionalising a profession and seeking social recognition for it. In addition, the subtitlers' online texts will be analysed with the help of professional criteria that Kaisa Koskinen and Helle V. Dam (2016) suggest as elements of boundary work within translation studies. The Finnish subtitlers' boundary work offers an example of translators looking for ways to cope with challenging circumstances by attempting to increase their visibility and influence through disseminating their own definitions for the norms and characteristics of their profession. As pointed out by Anna Jankowska (2012: 56), despite increasing academic attention to audiovisual translation in general, studies of audiovisual translators' working contexts have been scarce. This article therefore provides an addition to the limited number of discussions on audiovisual translators' professional circumstances.

After a brief overview of the history of subtitling in Finland, I will introduce the concept of the professional project and discuss the significance of determining professional boundaries as one step in the project. Then, I will analyse a set of texts published on the Finnish subtitlers' website and blog to see how elements of this boundary negotiation are present in the online community. Finally, I will discuss the significance of these boundaries for the subtitlers' professional community and professional project.

2.   The Finnish Subtitling Field

In the Finnish context, subtitlers' working conditions have long been heavily dependent on the client or employer. There has been dramatic variation in rates, workloads and other practical aspects of the work. The subtitlers of the national public broadcaster YLE have traditionally enjoyed stable working conditions that have been guaranteed by a collective agreement. On the other hand, those subtitlers who produce subtitles for DVD releases, commercial broadcast networks and streaming services through large, multinational subtitling agencies, are often independent entrepreneurs, and their working conditions tend to be more uncertain with significantly lower rates (Laine 2007: 265–268; Abdallah 2011: 173–174).

In recent decades, the multinational agencies have gained a dominant position on the Finnish subtitling market, which has resulted in further marginalisation of subtitlers and caused insecurity in their working conditions (Abdallah 2012: 41–42). The heterogeneity of subtitlers' working conditions has fragmented the subtitlers' professional community, as subtitlers working in different contexts have had little contact with each other. The heterogeneity of the professional community may also be exacerbated by the variety in subtitlers' backgrounds. Some have completed translator training and know something of the practices of subtitling before entering the profession, while others may have a language degree but no translator training, or an altogether different background. These new subtitlers are not always engaged in professional networks. As a consequence, some novice subtitlers do not have a solid professional identity and they may not be motivated to seek membership in the professional community (Holopainen 2015: 94).

This situation is by no means unique to Finland. In fact, the Finnish situation appears to be quite similar, for example, to the Polish context described by Anna Jankowska (2012: 45), where better working conditions are the domain of the experienced few, and newcomers to the field usually have to settle for much less: "Under normal circumstances, it is very difficult to 'get into the industry without any contacts unless you work for a pittance for a studio that looks for suckers.'" Furthermore, Arista Szu-Yu Kuo's (2015) global survey of subtitlers' working conditions reveals similar challenges across the world. Kuo (2015: 189) suggests that "the vulnerability of subtitlers seems to have increased with the development of the industry", and that problems with rates, timetables and quality of the work are widespread in the globalised subtitling industry. In addition, Kuo (2015: 189) mentions lack of recognition for the subtitlers' work as one key aspect

of their problematic situation. The Finnish subtitlers' situation reflects global trends and offers an example of how professional subtitlers may attempt to react to the challenges they face.

A particularly challenging turning point for the Finnish subtitling field came in September 2012, when MTV Media, a broadcaster and a significant employer of subtitlers, outsourced its subtitling work to a multinational subtitling agency which had a poor reputation among many subtitlers. MTV Media described the move as an effort to focus on its "core business operations" (MTV Media 2012). The news was shocking to MTV Media' s subtitlers, and nearly all, 101 of 110 subtitlers, resigned in protest, because they were concerned that the outsourcing decision might lead to considerably worse working conditions (Ihander 2012). What made the situation unusual was the fact that other subtitlers started expressing their solidarity to MTV Media's subtitlers by boycotting MTV's subtitling assignments which were being offered to different agencies and subtitlers (Ihander 2012).

As the unified boycott shows, MTV Media's outsourcing decision brought a significant portion of Finnish subtitlers together around a shared cause, and it encouraged subtitlers to work together in an effort to improve and harmonise working conditions for all subtitlers. One key tool in this process was a website, www.av-kaantajat.fi, and an associated online forum and blog, started by the subtitlers themselves. These platforms have been used as a means of sharing information and news, and as a platform for interaction among subtitlers. The online community was originally founded in 2010, but it became more widely known after the events of September 2012, when more subtitlers became active in the community. The activity on the website has since waned, which suggests that it was, in fact, a medium for a specific, tumultuous phase. It is nevertheless an important source of information on how subtitlers presented themselves and defined their position during that significant stage in the development of the profession. Therefore, in order to understand the subtitlers' professional standing, the online community is a valuable resource.

3.   The Professional Project

When practitioners of an occupation want to improve the status and social standing of their occupation, they can engage in a process of institutionalisation, which Sergey Tyulenev (2014: 68-69) refers to as a "professional project". Tyulenev (2014: 69) suggests that such a professionalisation process has two objectives: "the monopoly of the provision of specific services, on the one hand, and the recognition of the profession's social status, on the other hand". In other words, the practitioners attempt to assert their exclusive right to practice the occupation, and they want others to respect and recognise that right. Both of these aims appear to be a part of the Finnish subtitlers' agenda: the subtitlers attempt to claim the authority of defining subtitling quality and professional behaviour, and they attempt to raise the prestige and status of subtitling (see Tuominen 2016).

According to Tyulenev (2014: 69-74), the professional project consists of a series of steps. The first step is that the professional group "establishes itself as having the monopoly of practicing an activity" (Tyulenev 2014: 69). This means that the professional group defines itself, names itself as a distinct profession and determines who belongs in the group. Tyulenev (2014: 71) also describes this step as "drawing a boundary between those eligible to practise the activity and those found ineligible". In addition to this step, Tyulenev (2014: 71-72) states that the professional project includes establishing examinations and training for aspiring future members of the profession, being recognised by the state, and dealing "either cooperatively or competitively, with other occupations that may claim the same jurisdiction". Finally, Tyulenev (2014: 72) remarks that a profession must "be presented as an indispensable service provider to the public" and generate public visibility for itself in order to convince the public about its importance and position in society. Tyulenev (2014: 74) suggests that one tool for increasing the status of a profession can be "conspicuous consumption", maintaining an impressive appearance in office space or online presence in order to look convincingly like a highly regarded entity. Conspicuous consumption is certainly an element in the Finnish subtitlers' website, as it is a means of presenting a united front and a professional appearance towards both practicing subtitlers and the general public.

I have previously (Tuominen 2016) concluded that the subtitlers' website and blog can indeed be seen to fulfil all five steps of the professional project as defined by Tyulenev. Although the website and blog are not the most effective medium for soliciting recognition from the state or for actively dealing with other actors in the field, the subtitlers' online presence constitutes an effort to publicise their own perspective on all of these matters, and an attempt to lobby influential actors such as educational institutions and public officials. Consequently, the subtitlers' online presence can be regarded as a professional project whose purpose is to unify the profession and to promote it in the eyes of the general public.

The focus of this article is on the first step of the professional project, defining the boundaries of the profession, claiming the monopoly for practicing it and determining who is eligible to be a member of this profession. Tyulenev (2014: 69-70) describes many ways in which translation has already accomplished these goals over the centuries. However, translation continues to be seen as something of a "cottage industry", suggesting that it is not an entirely well-defined profession, and it can be difficult for translators to assert their position as professionals (Katan 2009: 142, 149). Koskinen/Dam (2016: 254) also state as established fact that "translation has not reached full professional status, that it is not always practiced in professional settings, and that the boundaries of the field remain unstable, fuzzy and contestable". It is therefore easy to see why attempting to define the boundaries of the profession remains a central goal for translators. This is particularly true in the case of subtitlers. Subtitling is a more recently established occupation than translation in general, and its norms and practices have not been consistently defined. The subtitling field also includes an active and widespread subculture of fansubbing, consisting of non-professionals who practice subtitling for reasons other than earning a living, which may cause "market disorder", perhaps even "de-professionalisation" (Pym et al. 2016). Because of this fragmentation and destabilisation, any attempt to institutionalise subtitling as a profession would logically include an attempt to determine the boundaries of the profession. In addition, as Koskinen/Dam (2016: 257) suggest, periods of "conflicts and crises" are a productive time for boundary negotiation. Therefore, the past five years have been a suitable time for Finnish subtitlers to explore the boundaries of their profession.

Professional boundaries can be defined by using a variety of arguments related to professional behaviour. Koskinen/Dam (2016: 258-260) explore researchers' definitions of professional translators by assessing the researchers' references to three professional criteria: training, employment status, and practices that are not considered to fall within the professional realm. These criteria fit well into Tyulenev's model as specific aspects of how professional boundaries are negotiated. Discussions on training demonstrate what kind of educational background is expected to be a requirement for a professional translator; employment status addresses the question whether precarious, fragmented or low-status careers qualify a practitioner as a professional; and defining unprofessional practices naturally draws the line between the professional and the unprofessional. As these categories are based on Koskinen/Dam's analysis of research articles on translation as a profession, the categories appear to represent predominant themes in translation-related boundary discussions, and they are therefore useful as specific categories for the first step of Tyulenev's professional project.

Tyulenev (2014: 71) suggests that drawing professional boundaries is a consequential but not an easy task. If the boundaries are drawn too tightly, the eligible professional group will be small, but if the boundary is too broad, the group may end up including members who are harmful for the reputation of the profession. In a fragmented field such as subtitling, these questions are undoubtedly relevant. Who is a professional subtitler, and what can be considered professional subtitling? Who determines subtitle quality and working conditions? The following analysis will demonstrate how the subtitlers' website attempts to address those questions, and what arguments are used in building an image of a unified profession.

4. Research Materials

The materials analysed in this study have been published on the Finnish subtitlers' website and blog at www.av-kaantajat.fi. The website consists of three categories of articles: information aimed at subtitlers, information aimed at students, and information aimed at the general public. In addition to the articles, the site contains subtitling-related news, and calls to action both for the audience and for subtitlers. On 30 January 2018, when the material of this research was collected, there were 75 news items, 5 calls to action and a total of 32 articles on the website. Of those 32 articles, over half, 17 articles, were practical texts either introducing audiovisual translation to non-experts or offering information to students and professional subtitlers. Of the remaining 15 articles, 8 described subtitlers' working conditions and rates in an informative manner or on the basis of research, 5 explicitly presented the Finnish subtitlers' perspective on their professional circumstances, and 2 reported the results of surveys conducted by members of the subtitlers' community. The website also contains a section in English, with translations of some of the news items and articles, and some articles originally written in English.

The blog associated with the website is a collection of writings by several subtitlers on various topics related to subtitling, from descriptions of how television programmes have been subtitled to cartoons satirising the developments in the field and to explicitly critical descriptions of subtitlers' working conditions. The first blog post was published on 22 February 2010 and the most recent one on 23 April 2014, and there are 67 posts in all. Of the 67 posts, 48 have been written before September 2012, and 19 after. The turning point of September 2012 caused a noticeable change in the general themes of the blog posts, as most posts that have been written after that date deal with subtitlers' working conditions, while earlier ones discuss a broader variety of topics, although working conditions do appear as a theme in some earlier posts as well.

Some texts that appear on the website or the blog are anonymous or use a pseudonym. However, many mention the name of the author, and some authors have written several texts. It is clear that the texts are written by several individuals, but as the same names are repeated, it is also noticeable that the core group of authors is fairly small, and it would be misleading to claim that the texts present the voices of a large number of subtitlers. However, as the texts are published under the banner of the subtitlers' website, they can be seen as representative of what the community behind the website want to present as their shared views. In other words, the website appears to be largely the product of a small core group of subtitler activists, but they present themselves as representatives of the profession. They attempt to legitimise their role by making their knowledge of the field explicit in the texts, and by describing their professional experience. Their role is not questioned in the interactive sections of the community, such as comments on blog posts or the subtitlers' online forum. Thus, they come across as credible representatives of the professional community, even though it is impossible to know how accurately they represent individual subtitlers' views.

For the purposes of this analysis, I will explore those texts which most explicitly express the subtitlers' perspective on their profession and working conditions, but I have excluded texts which consist of an individual subtitler's personal narrative. In other words, the texts under study are those where the professional community, through a few individual representatives, explicitly makes its case for the boundaries of the profession.

The material for the analysis consists of four blog posts and four articles on the website, listed in Table 1.

Type	Author	Title	Publication Date
Blog posts	Lauri Mäkelä	"Työ ei ole harrastus" [A job is not a hobby]	30 Oct 2012
	Lauri Mäkelä	"Vastine BTI:n tuoreimpiin väitteisiin" [A response to BTI's latest claims]	13 Dec 2012
	U	"Ulkoistetut uusinnat" [Outsourced reruns]	28 Feb 2013
	U	"Kenelle haluaisit tehdä av-käännöstöitä?" [Who would you want to subtitle for?]	12 Sept 2013
Articles	Anna-Maija Ihander/Jukka Sorsa	"Av-käännösalalla tuulee" ["The stormy subtitling industry"]	2010
	Kaisa Vitikainen	"Miksi käännösala vaatii muutosta?" ["Why are translators calling for change?"]	15 March 2013
	Lauri Mäkelä	"Minkä puolesta suomalaiset av-kääntäjät taistelevat?" ["What are Finnish subtitlers fighting for?"]	6 July 2013
	Tiina Holopainen	"Av-kääntäjän asiantuntijuudesta" ["On the expertise of a subtitler"]	no date

Table 1. Research material

As the titles indicate, these texts are presented as the views of the entire profession by referring to "Finnish subtitlers" or subtitlers in general, and by explaining subtitlers' views and experiences as a response to comments made by a subtitling agency. Most of these texts have been published after the events of September 2012, but one is undated, and one is from an earlier period, when working conditions and professional practices were already a relevant topic, although the community was not quite as large and active as it became in 2012.

5.   Determining Professional Boundaries at www.av-kaantajat.fi

In the following analysis, I will use the three professional criteria discussed by Koskinen/Dam (2016: 258-260) to categorise Finnish subtitlers' discussions on the boundaries of their profession. First, I will investigate whether translator training or other education is presented by the subtitlers as a requirement for membership in the profession. Then, I will explore how the heterogeneous working conditions are addressed in the subtitlers' definitions of professional boundaries, and whether freelancers, in-house subtitlers and those working for direct clients or multinational agencies are equally accepted as members of the profession. Finally, I will analyse how the subti-

tlers describe professional and unprofessional behaviour, and how they draw a boundary between the two in their texts.

5.1. Translator Training

Koskinen/Dam suggest that it is unclear whether translator training is a necessary prerequisite of being considered a professional translator (Koskinen/Dam 2016: 258). The Finnish subtitlers' texts also reflect ambivalence on this topic, although education is repeatedly emphasised. In the subtitlers' texts, academic education is typically expressed as a self-evident expectation that does not need to be explained. For example, when criticising translation agencies for deteriorating working conditions, Mäkelä (2013) suggests that

> their purpose appears to be to transform a profession requiring university-level expertise into an occupation that practitioners grasp only superficially. The secrets of the trade will be kept by just a few individuals, while the masses sitting at the conveyor belt will be easy to control.[1]

In other words, an academic education is taken for granted as a prerequisite for a subtitling professional, and the perceived inappropriate practices of subtitling agencies are characterised by disregard for this norm. Future threats are being portrayed as including diminished training and diminished expertise. Similarly, this quotation from Tiina Holopainen's advice to aspiring subtitlers presents academic training as a pathway towards a good subtitling career: "But first of all: graduate! It may not increase your rates, but it will increase your confidence and thereby your professional pride." In this way, education is suggested as a boundary between professional and less than professional practices in the field.

However, the descriptions of academic training do not specify what kind of an academic education a subtitler is expected to have. They do not name a translation degree as a prerequisite or as a boundary for the professional field. In fact, some texts make a careful point of not drawing the boundaries of the profession narrowly around those with a translation degree. For example, Holopainen spends an entire paragraph describing how, "in principle", translator training provides the best foundation for a career as a subtitler, but that some people have natural subtitlers' instincts regardless of their education. She explicitly acknowledges self-taught subtitlers "who do their work with solid expertise, developed over years of experience" (for similar comments by other translators, see Ruokonen in this issue). This comment is a way of extending the boundaries of the profession to include a group of pioneering subtitlers, many of whom have no translator training because they started their careers at a time when training either was not available or was new and not well known. Consequently, the professional community appears to accept a variety of academic backgrounds, as well as practical experience, as being within the boundaries of the profession. Similarly, Koskinen/Dam (2016: 259) point out that in discussions of professionalism, experience in the field can compensate for or be more valuable than translator training.

Occasionally, education is addressed in more critical and negative tones, either as a potential source of newcomers who weaken subtitlers' professional status, or as inadequate in preparing future subtitlers for their profession. Thus, for example, Vitikainen (2013) talks about "opportunists, often newly graduated translators and translation students, who have taken the opportunity and applied for a job in one of the subtitling agencies in order to accumulate work experience at the expense of the future of the profession". Vitikainen thus describes these newcomers as a risk to the profession rather than as its members or future members. Similarly, Ihander and Sorsa (2010) mention students of translation and foreign languages who look for work opportunities but who do not understand the working conditions well enough to stand up for themselves and for the profession. Although these criticisms are mostly directed at students or new graduates, they implicitly also point the finger to universities as not having adequately prepared newcomers to the

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1   The quoted texts from the subtitlers' website have been originally published in Finnish, and the translations are by the author of this article.

realities of the profession. This point is made more explicitly in Holopainen's article, which criticises "shortcomings in the teaching of audiovisual translation" and calls for increased and more systematic training, as well as continuous professional development and on-the-job support that would socialise new subtitlers into the profession. University training is thus again indicated as a typical and favoured, but not an entirely unproblematic route into the profession.

Translator training is also brought into the discussion in another negative way, as an institution that is at risk if the working conditions of subtitlers and other translators are not stabilised. Several of the analysed articles and blog posts claim that if the working conditions are not improved, it will not make sense to train new translators. For example, Vitikainen (2013) states that the "results of this struggle will point out the direction of the entire translation industry. If the direction is downwards, universities should give serious thought to whether it makes sense to train professionals into a field where it is impossible to make a living." As I have argued previously (Tuominen 2016: 115), this could be seen as an implicit challenge for translator-training institutions to "draw their own boundaries for acceptable professional behaviour" and to agree with the boundaries drawn by the professional field. In this way, education is recruited as an outside validator and collaborator into the boundary work: if the actions in the field become too unprofessional, the professionals hope for support from academia in the form of an authoritative voice that reinforces the professionals' views.

In conclusion, the subtitlers present academic training as an implicit, automatic criterion for inclusion in the subtitling profession, although they do not specify a requirement for a degree in translation studies. In addition, they admit to exceptions, particularly in the group of experienced subtitlers who have gained a high professional status, expertise and skills through a long subtitling career. Consequently, academic training is used as an argument for the prestige of the profession, but not as an absolute requirement for inclusion. Educational institutions can be seen as an important partner in fostering the profession and, on the other hand, a target of lobbying. Finally, educational institutions can even be presented as a threat to the profession, if they are seen as producing graduates or students who are willing to do subtitling work opportunistically under poor working conditions. Thus, some students and recent graduates are described as falling outside professional boundaries, and universities are given the task of preventing such a scenario from taking place.

5.2. Working Conditions and Employment Status

Koskinen/Dam (2016: 259) mention the increase in precarious working conditions and the resulting "disputes of inter-field hierarchies", or the preference for some types of working conditions over others, as a prominent characteristic in academic discussions of translation as a profession. As was mentioned above, such hierarchies have been a significant feature of the Finnish subtitling field, particularly after the arrival of multinational subtitling agencies. Working conditions therefore emerge as a central theme in many of the texts under study.

The key question in this regard is whether subtitlers might attempt to draw the boundary of their profession in such a way that it excludes some of the most precarious and lowest-status circumstances. Indeed, the subtitlers' website repeatedly and forcefully criticises poor, precarious working conditions and low rates as a source of problems for the profession. Problematic working conditions are also presented as a reason for quality problems, such as in Vitikainen's (2013) text, where she remarks that a large international subtitling agency "forces its translators to work as pseudo-entrepreneurs and offers ludicrous rates and tight deadlines. Under the prevailing working conditions, it is no wonder if the outcome of the work is not satisfying to the subtitler." Quite significantly, Vitikainen portrays the subtitler as dissatisfied with the conditions and the quality of the work. Therefore, Vitikainen does not paint the subtitler as outside the boundaries of the profession. Rather, she presents the working practices as beyond the norms and boundaries, and the practitioners as resistant to the problematic practices. This offers a manner of inclusion within the profession for even those who are working under precarious conditions, and places only those re-

sponsible for the poor working conditions, such as subtitling agencies, as outside the boundaries of the profession.

On the other hand, the texts do put some responsibility on subtitlers to resist negative developments and to join their colleagues in fighting for better conditions. Vitikainen (2013), again, states:

> As long as subtitlers agree to work for peanuts, all they will be offered is peanuts. The only way to bring about change is if every subtitler – or at least a large enough group of them – refuses to work for rates which do not correspond to the demands of the work and to the education and experience of the subtitler.

One blog post, titled "Who would you want to subtitle for?" (U 2013a) addresses subtitlers directly and places the responsibility for working conditions on them personally: "By working for an unfair agency you support its work and enable it to keep chugging along. The subtitling industry is small in size, and everyone's actions matter. What is your choice?" Such a personal appeal foregrounds the call for all subtitlers to become a part of the campaign for better working conditions, and implicitly defines this shared struggle as a characteristic of the professional community.

Personal appeals are repeatedly used to convince subtitlers to join the united subtitlers' front and to thus remain within professional boundaries. Holopainen carefully includes everyone regardless of professional circumstances in her statement:

> If we subtitlers take the moral and professionally based ethical responsibility for the quality of our translations, we should also determine the minimum requirements which will allow us to achieve the desired quality. […] This is where the entire field has work to do, even though the problems are perhaps more pronounced in "agency subtitling" right now. That is mostly due to structures and does not reflect the potential and skills of agency subtitlers.

Holopainen thus refrains from directly criticising subtitlers working for agencies, includes them in her definition of professionals, and faults problematic structures rather than practitioners. Consequently, subtitlers working under different employment statuses are all included under the same definition and invited to join the same struggle for better working conditions. The subtitlers' unity, both among those working for agencies and across various professional statuses, is described as an empowering development that builds the subtitlers' professional community.

To conclude, the texts that have been examined suggest that subtitlers of all employment statuses, and working under any conditions, are invited into the professional community. Although no boundaries are drawn between different employment circumstances, subtitlers are expected to accept the mission of the subtitlers' united community and resist undesirable working conditions. This again reveals a similarity with the findings in Koskinen/Dam's (2016: 260) article, where they discover a frequent, implicit preference for established, in-house working conditions, although a variety of other circumstances are also recognised as legitimate. In the Finnish subtitlers' case, all working conditions are accepted as legitimate, but a preference for more stable conditions can be detected: even though poor working conditions are not presented as a criterion for exclusion from the profession, a refusal to work towards better conditions might be seen that way.

5.3. Professional and Unprofessional Practices

The third category in defining the professional community and its boundaries consists of behaviour and actions that are considered either professional or unprofessional, either acceptable within the boundaries of subtitling as a profession or not. In addition, a distinction can be drawn between professional and non-professional, or translation as a paid job in contrast to unpaid or volunteer translation work (Koskinen/Dam 2016: 260-261).

Quite naturally, subtitle quality is a central factor in defining professional practices, and it is a frequent theme in the texts under study. One blog post, "A response to BTI's[2] latest claims"

2   The acronym BTI refers to the subtitling agency Broadcast Text International.

(Mäkelä 2012b), claims that, as experts, subtitlers are the only ones who can fully define what subtitle quality means:

> Subtitling is a creative profession that requires language skills, ability to condense, information retrieval, concentration and endless processing and polishing of different alternatives. An average viewer, or even a translation agency, cannot define the quality of a translation. Fundamentally, the only people able to do that are the professionals, the translators, in the same way as only architects are fundamentally able to assess the quality and functionality of architecture.

In other words, the status of a professional would not only mean the competence to produce excellent subtitles but also the exclusive ability to recognise them. This argument is used to emphasise subtitlers' particular expertise by disregarding the quality assessments of other stakeholders, such as subtitling agencies and audiences. Although this statement is a logical conclusion from the argument that subtitling requires specialised training, it is remarkable how forcefully it sets subtitlers apart from others. For example, Mäkelä does not make an attempt to reach out to the audience as a participant in defining what kinds of subtitles would be most effective in the viewing context. Indeed, some audience studies (see, e.g., Gottlieb 1995, Lång et al. 2013, Tuominen 2012) suggest that it is difficult for viewers to assess the quality of subtitles, which supports Mäkelä's argument. However, Mäkelä (2013) elsewhere calls on viewers to complain of poor quality to pressure subtitling agencies to take quality seriously, revealing that his argument concerning the ownership of quality pronouncements is not entirely consistent. Nevertheless, the repeated appeals to subtitlers' unique ability to produce and recognise high quality are a significant element in the subtitlers' attempt to claim professional standing.

Another prominent theme related to quality is the value placed on Finnish subtitling traditions, which are seen as promoting high quality. Local traditions are presented as a substantive basis for the subtitlers' arguments against multinational agencies' practices, and the local subtitling tradition is assumed as a shared ideal for all subtitlers. One practice criticised by Mäkelä (2013) as an unwanted change in the local traditions is the use of so called first translations or, what Mäkelä describes as an even more problematic practice, template files (see Georgakopoulou 2006: 117). When using first translations or template files, subtitlers do not timecue their own subtitles and use, instead, a timing template that may not always follow local norms. Subtitlers are often not allowed to adjust the timing template at all. The use of first translations or templates is also condemned by Holopainen: "In agreeing to do second translations, the subtitler ends up abandoning her or his responsibility as a guardian of the Finnish language." First translations or templates are therefore a good illustration of a change in the subtitling process that is advocated by multinational agencies but opposed by professional subtitlers, and opposition to this practice can be seen as a signal of membership in the professional community.

Furthermore, the blog post "Outsourced reruns" (U 2013b) makes a pointed comparison between the Finnish subtitling tradition and new, multinational practices:

> The importers may hold broader rights to some existing translations. There is, however, one fundamental problem with all of them: the quality is not what we have come to expect from MTV Media. You can see this by taking a look at Netflix subtitles. The same cheap and careless quality is now making its way to a national broadcast channel.

The local tradition is once more raised above anything produced in a multinational, streamlined subtitling process, and multinational working practices are implicitly placed outside the Finnish professional subtitling norm.

From the above examples, it becomes clear how local traditions are being used to define professional practices. The expectation of adherence to local practices is accompanied by an expectation of loyalty to the professional community. As we have seen above, the boundaries of the professional community tend to be drawn quite broadly, and what is placed outside the boundaries is unprofessional working practice or unacceptable behaviour by subtitling agencies. There are fewer examples of references to subtitlers as unprofessional or as outside the boundaries of the

profession. However, one example of this kind can be found in Vitikainen's (2013) article, where she states: "This subtitlers' front is historic. Unfortunately, it is not completely united. Many subtitlers have made great sacrifices for the profession, but for some reason, others have not been able to give up their work and are still contributing to the agencies' actions with their work." Among the texts analysed for this article, this is an unusually direct reference to subtitlers who fall outside the boundaries of acceptable professional behaviour. This statement suggests that, although the united front of the subtitlers is often described in empowering and inclusionary terms, it can be used to reinforce the boundaries of the community by excluding some subtitlers.

One way of highlighting practices that fall outside the boundaries of professionalism is to predict the downgrading of professional translation into a non-professional activity, a hobby. Some texts argue that negative developments may lead to professionals exiting the field. As the blog text "A job is not a hobby" (Mäkelä 2012a) puts it: "This small profession that is important to all Finns is being dismantled hastily and replaced with low-cost labour and amateurs." The same blog post suggests that deteriorating working conditions may lead to a situation where only students and language aficionados would be willing to work as subtitlers, and even they would give it up quickly when disappointment sets in. This argument is a rather straightforward way of connecting professionalism with reasonable working conditions, and of reinforcing the idea that agreeing to work under poor conditions is comparable to amateurs taking over.

It is worth noting that when the subtitlers discuss negative scenarios of subtitling as a non-professional activity, the widespread phenomenon of fansubbing, or fans engaging in subtitling as a way of participating in the fan community, is not mentioned (on fansubbing, see, e.g., Pérez-González 2014: 78–84). The subtitlers' discussions focus exclusively on commercial subtitling practices. Fansubbing remains separate from this discussion, and the concepts of unprofessional practices and non-professionals doing subtitling work are used to determine the boundaries of the professional community. A non-professional in this context would be someone working as a subtitler who does not follow the professional practices advocated by the professional community, and someone who does not see subtitling as a profession requiring specific expertise or stable working conditions.

Rather interestingly, some of the subtitlers' texts draw professional boundaries in a perhaps counterintuitive way, by specifically including individuals who no longer work as subtitlers. Vitikainen (2013), for example, presents a long list of jobs which subtitlers have taken after resigning from their subtitling jobs or after refusing to accept freelance subtitling work. Yet, these individuals are called subtitlers and referred to as participants in the subtitlers' struggle for better working conditions. In this case, the subtitler's identity emerges from previous experience in the field combined with a belief in the objectives of the community, as well as a refusal to work under circumstances which the subtitlers' community has defined as outside professional boundaries.

These examples of arguments condemning unprofessional behaviour and praising subtitlers' expertise demonstrate how the subtitlers' argument is built on a message of special skills that deserve special recognition. The boundary of the profession is drawn in such a manner that it distinguishes those who have a unique understanding of subtitling quality and traditions from amateurs and advocates of poor and unprofessional practices. The boundary of the profession is drawn between those who are committed to following the traditions, norms and conventions of the profession and those willing to import new practices that subtitlers claim to be a threat to quality.

6.   Discussion and Conclusions

The preceding analysis suggests that the act of defining professional boundaries is a noticeable feature in texts on the Finnish subtitlers' website. The texts under analysis contain a number of arguments that fit under each of Koskinen/Dam's (2016) three categories. As the website and blog can be considered manifestations of a systematic attempt at a professional project, the subtitlers have needed to define what 'professional' means, and who is included in this definition.

As Tyulenev (2014: 71) has pointed out, it can be difficult to draw the boundaries of a profession in a convenient way, to include enough practitioners to be viable but not too many to make the definition too vague. This challenge may have influenced the subtitlers' approach to professional boundaries, because it is clear that they are carefully attempting to be as inclusive as possible, yet avoid voicing approval for practices they consider inappropriate. Consequently, they do not limit the profession to those who hold an academic degree in translation studies. Instead, they express translator training as a logical route to the profession but simultaneously praise self-taught subtitlers with a long experience in the field. Similarly, they do not exclude those subtitlers who are working under recently introduced, less desirable working conditions, but, instead, they invite these subtitlers to join the community and demand improvements. However, they do threaten to exclude those who might continue to seek poor subtitling work opportunistically, despite knowing of the problems in the field. Furthermore, they criticise new subtitling practices as going against the highly valued Finnish subtitling traditions, but do not systematically exclude those who have been willing to adopt these new practices. In some texts, those working under these new requirements are criticised and portrayed as traitors to the profession, but the criticism is voiced more frequently against the subtitling agencies which are importing these new practices into the Finnish market.

In other words, the subtitlers' texts do exclude some groups from the definition of professional, namely those who do not show sufficient respect for the profession. However, the boundary is most often drawn between subtitlers, who are portrayed as professionals trying their best under difficult conditions, and agencies and clients importing unwanted working practices or maintaining poor working conditions. In this way, the boundary of the profession becomes a means of inclusion and a sign of shared community for subtitlers. The subtitlers present themselves as part of a single professional community, struggling against outside forces undermining their status, and all subtitlers who are willing to join this struggle are welcomed into the community. This is, of course, in many ways a strategic choice, an attempt to expand the subtitlers' community into a noticeable and influential presence, and a defensive move to counterbalance the discourse of the subtitling agencies or clients, which undoubtedly favours modernising and streamlining subtitling operations and abandoning older practices.

The fact that subtitlers largely draw their professional boundaries between subtitlers and outside forces, rather than between different groups or individuals working as subtitlers, reveals a different subtitling field from the fragmented and heterogeneous field that was predominant before the initiation of the subtitlers' professional project. The newly defined professional boundaries act either as an indication of a changed attitude towards colleagues working in different circumstances, or as a tool for attempting to transform the professional community into something more unified and empowered. Certainly, the boundaries have a strategic purpose of inviting subtitlers to adopt a unified understanding of their profession. The negative visions of activities taking place outside the professional boundaries are employed as a call to action, a challenge for aspiring subtitlers, viewers, training institutions and others with an interest in subtitling, to participate in the boundary work and in excluding unprofessional practices.

The use of boundaries as a tool for building a more cohesive community provides an example of how a heterogeneous group of translators can attempt to change its standing with the use of texts that describe their profession from their own perspective, and by using the kind of framing that is suitable for their message. The boundary work can be used as a way of disseminating a positive message of the profession, a message of competent and highly educated experts doing important work. In this, the texts are reminiscent of translators' narratives discussed by Dam and Zethsen (2016). In their analysis, Dam and Zethsen (2016: 182-183) found that, despite its downsides, some translators are quite satisfied with their work, proud of it and recognise its value, even if the surrounding society does not. They list many characteristics that are similar to what the Finnish subtitlers have used to define boundaries of their profession, such as academic education, cultural significance of their work, and the creative challenges that are part of the work. However,

whereas in Dam and Zethsen's study the translators derived internal satisfaction from these factors, in the case of the Finnish subtitlers, they are using similar arguments to attempt to build a community and to elicit recognition and respect from others.

The Finnish subtitlers' case provides interesting material for analysis, because it contains texts written by subtitlers themselves. It offers the researcher an opportunity to observe how translators discuss their work spontaneously, rather than in an interview or questionnaire, and how they attempt to persuade others of its significance in an authentic context. Of course, it is important to keep in mind that subtitlers alone could never change the standing of their own profession. Other actors in the field, including translation agencies, their clients, translators' associations, and educational institutions, have their own interests and may characterise the work differently. Therefore, the subtitlers' endeavours represent a partial view of the field, and they only tell how the subtitlers would like to define their professional boundaries. However, the subtitlers' perspective carries particular significance, because, as Abdallah (2011: 185) suggests, one reason for subtitlers' weak professional position has been their inability to participate in defining the terms under which subtitling work has been undertaken. The Finnish subtitlers' website is a sustained attempt to make the subtitlers' voice heard and to allow them to participate in defining their own profession. It is therefore significant to explore what kinds of norms the subtitlers are attempting to insert into the discussions on subtitling.

It is difficult to assess the success of the subtitlers' professional project on the basis of the website and blog alone. The blog has not been updated since 2014, and there are few recent additions on the website, suggesting that the activity of the community has decreased. However, the website contains news about some concrete developments, such as the signing of a collective agreement for subtitling agencies in 2015, and a renegotiation of the agreement in 2018, which constitute meaningful steps towards stabilising the working conditions. Thus, it seems that the subtitlers' community has had some success in presenting itself as a unified professional group and has gained some influence, and its activity has moved to other venues besides the online community. However, this does not mean that its problems have been solved. The news items on the website also mention disappointments in the collective agreement negotiations, and numerous appeals towards various stakeholders in the subtitling industry, suggesting that the subtitlers' work to improve their working conditions is still ongoing.[3]

The website and blog present a snapshot of a specific moment in Finnish subtitlers' history, and only a longitudinal study of the community would reveal how lasting the professional community has been, and what effect it has had on the subtitling industry. It would also be of interest to study other stakeholders, such as representatives of subtitling agencies, their clients, or audience members, to discover how others view the subtitling profession and how their words and actions may influence the discourse of the subtitlers. Furthermore, individual subtitlers' experiences of professional community and identity would be another interesting avenue of further study, and methods such as oral history (see McDonough Dolmaya 2015) could uncover enlightening narratives and experiences behind the public texts on subtitlers' identity. However, even on their own, the Finnish subtitlers' website and blog present a fascinating case of a visible, concerted attempt at a professional project and professional boundary work.

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3   See http://www.av-kaantajat.fi/?x103997=Select/List for a list of latest news stories on the subtitlers' website (in Finnish).

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