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“Every Kid Goes Through Phrases”

Wordplay and Rickyisms in the Finnish Subtitles of Mike Clattenburg’s
Trailer Park Boys

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Master’s Thesis in English Studies
Language expertise in a specialised society

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UNIVERSITY OF VAASA**School of Marketing and Communication****Author:** Antti Iivari**Master's Thesis:** "Every Kid Goes Through Phrases" : Wordplay and Rickysms in the Finnish Subtitles of Mike Clattenburg's Trailer Park Boys**Degree:** Master of Arts**Programme:** Language expertise in a specialized society**Supervisor:** Helen Mäntymäki**Date:** 2020 **Sivumäärä:** 58

ABSTRACT:

Tekstitykset ovat yksi luetuimmista käännösteksteistä. Näin esillä oleva tekstityyppi on jatkuvan arvostelun kohteena. Tekstiä on helppo arvostella, jos se "ei kuulosta oikealta", mutta tarkkaa syytä tähän voi olla hankala arvioida. Huumori ja sanaleikit ovat olleet hankalia käännettäviä tekstityypistä riippumatta. Suora vastine ei välttämättä sisällä kaikkia lähdetekstin merkityksiä ja voi myös olla, ettei sitä voida edes käyttää tekstityksessä esimerkiksi merkkimäärän rajoitusten takia.

Tämä tutkielma on ammentanut inspiraatiota tästä nopeasti ohitettavasta arvostelusta. Ensimmäkin tutkielmassa oltiin kiinnostuneita, kuinka *Trailer Park Boys* -sarjan Netflix-tekstitykset suoriutuivat. Sarja sisältää paljon *Ricky* -nimiseen hahmoon perustuvia humoristisia sanaleikkejä, joita sarjan seuraajat kutsuvat "Rickyismeiksi". Tutkimuksessa kysyttiin lähtökohtaisesti, ovatko näiden sanaleikkien käännökset tarkoituksenmukaisia ja/tai säilyttävätkö ne lähdetekstin huumoriarvon.

Kääntäjät eivät ole päässeet yksimielisyyteen kääntämisen laatumäärittämisestä. Erilaisia mittareita löytyy, mutta ne perustuvat paljon näkökulmaan ja ovat sidoksissa esimerkiksi tiettyyn tekstityyppiin. Tässä tutkielmassa otetaan yksi tällainen laatumäärittely ja sen avulla yritetään vastata yllä esitettyihin kysymyksiin. Toissijaisena tutkimuskysymyksenä voidaan pitää tämän laatumallin arvostelua. Toimiiko se audiovisuaalisen viihteen käännöksiä analysoitaessa, vai riittääkö se vain asiatekstiin?

Materiaali on kerätty 12 jaksosta, joista 11:a löytyi määrittelyjen mukaisia sanaleikkejä. Yhteensä näitä oli 44 kappaletta. Sanaleikit kategorisoitiin Henrik Gottliebin esittämiin sanaleikkikategorioihin, joihin lisättiin ylimääräinen kategoria tarkastelua varten, malapropismit. Sanaleikkien käännösstrategiat kategorisoitiin myös (erillisen) Gottliebin teorian mukaan. Näistä saatu data analysoitiin laatuskohtien osalta George Kobyn, Paul Fieldsin, Daryl Haquen, Arle Lomelin ja Alan Melbyn yhdessä työstämän laadunarviointimallin kautta. Lopputulokset molempien tutkimuskysymysten osalta olivat odotettuja. Suurin osa käännöksistä kuului joko käännettyihin (21/44) tai kääntämättömiin sanaleikkeihin (18/44). Laatumallin mukaan jaetut käännökset olivat suurimmaksi osaksi tarkoituksenmukaisia (20/44). 10 käännöstä sisälsi käännöslaadun kannalta kriittisiä virheitä eivätkä vastanneet käännöksen tarkoitusta. Loput 14 käännöstä sisälsivät virheitä, mutta ne eivät pääosin vaikuttaneet käännöksen luettavuuteen, mutta jäivät laadullisesti tulkinnanvaraisiksi. Laatumallin toimivuus on periaatteessa riittävä analysoimaan viihteeksi tarkoitettua tekstiä, mutta käännösten laadun arvioinnin subjektiivisuus sekä arviointiperusteiden tärkeyden tapauskohtaisuus vaikeuttavat absoluuttisten laatuarvioiden tekemistä.

KEYWORDS: wordplay, subtitling, comedy series, translation, quality assessment

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1 Introduction

In this thesis I will analyse the Finnish Netflix subtitles of a Canadian comedy TV-show *Trailer Park Boys*. More specifically, I will study the wordplay and translations related to erroneous metaphorical phrases, idioms and single words that are connected to a character in the show. This wordplay is based on the character called Ricky and his misunderstandings or replacement of a word or words in a sentence with a similar sounding word to create a different meaning to the phrase altogether. Usually, the cause for these misunderstandings is mixing up words that sound vaguely similar. This type of wordplay results in humour and mainly bases itself on the low level of education of the character.

Translation and subtitling gather varying amounts of attention in different countries around the world. The subtitles are a divisive subject and attitudes towards them vary, mostly due to cultural reasons. In English-speaking countries, many refuse to watch subtitled films and subtitles are mostly seen as an aid for those impaired of hearing (Davies, 2019). Many foreign films are often frowned upon for their subtitling, which was apparent during the discussion of the film *Parasite* in 2019-2020 (Garcia, 2020). This results in arguments such as subtitling taking away from the visual representation of the film, a sentiment based in much argument. However, in countries where the majority language is spoken mainly only by the residents or in countries where the use of language is very homogenised, such as Japan or Germany, subtitling and/or dubbing hold a very important position in providing audio-visual entertainment. In Finland, almost all the foreign programming is subtitled, apart from children's cartoons, which are often dubbed (Holopainen, 2015, p. 81).

People with at least some kind of command of the source language may be keen to criticise the translations. This thesis shares that sentiment, and the main research question is how well the Finnish subtitlers were able to convey the verbal humour from English into Finnish, or whether they were able to do it at all. This is achieved by applying quality metrics from a collaborated quality assessment model by Koby, Fields, Hague, Lommel and Melby. Usually, people condemn subtitles just by "feeling" alone, and while they are

not necessarily wrong, they might not know why they are correct. Assessing the translation quality is a process usually tied to translations of different documents, not audio-visual entertainment. Netflix subtitles in particular are often under scrutiny (eg. AV-kääntäjät, 2012), so it seems like a natural choice for assessment. Quality being such a subjective research topic leads to secondary research question: which asks how the model for quality assessment works in applying it to audio-visual entertainment rather than document translation.

My interest in researching this specific material was sparked when I was casually watching through one of the episodes and decided to turn on the Finnish subtitles for one of Ricky's quips. The line was completely rewritten, but so well translated it got me wondering how much work the translator did for a single one-liner joke. That interest has since led me to works deciphering humour translation, translation quality, wordplay and puns in general.

The reason for writing this thesis is a summary of multiple personal interests:

- The complexity of transferring humour between formats or modes, such as from speech to text.
- Interesting linguistic phenomena, such as eggcorns found in idioms, expressive phrases or otherwise sociocultural references.
- The task of translating the above in a satisfactory manner.

While the subject of analysing wordplay in art and entertainment is almost as old as the crafts themselves, applying quality metrics to these kinds of texts is not common practise. Even though subtitles have been studied since at least the 1970s, the unique limitations and everchanging, contemporary field of audio-visual translation warrants for further research.

To summarise, the academic interest stems from the nature of the wordplay. How does one translate slips of tongue while still maintaining the humorous tone? I wanted to ap-

proach this from a quality perspective, limiting myself to the textual factors and presented content, mainly ignoring external factors such as platform and other social aspects of translation, such as fair compensation etc. I have also previously studied the same material in more concise manner in my bachelor's thesis with a similar research question. However, it was solely a quantitative study on translation strategies.

In the next chapter and following sub-chapters, I will introduce my primary material and how it was studied. In chapter 3 I will discuss the concepts relevant to this thesis such as (verbal) humour, subtitling and the linguistic phenomena present in the primary material. Following this I will present the analysis and my findings leading to the discussion and closing thoughts in the conclusive chapter.

1.1 Material

The primary source of material for this thesis is Mike Clattenburg's *Trailer Park Boys* (2001-), a Canadian, mockumentary-style TV-series following the lives of Nova Scotian trailer park residents. Mockumentary is a style of TV which was popularized in early 2000s by likes of tv-series such as *The Office* (2001-2013), *Parks and Recreation* (2009-2015) and *Modern Family* (2009-2020). In these kinds of TV-shows a "mock" film crew follows the characters around filming their lives. The shows are humorous in tone and often based on satire. The crew is "filming" in a style of a documentary which makes invented events seem real (OED, 2020). *The Trailer Park Boys'* storyline consists of humorous events based on the various schemes and misdeeds of the main characters *Julian*, *Ricky* and *Bubbles* and their counterparts, the alcohol abusing trailer park security officials *James "Jim" Lahey* and *Randy*. Even though it is not directly stated in the series, the humour stems from stereotypical "white trash" themes, such as petty crime and substance abuse, white trash by definition being "of poor white people of low social status" (OED, 2020). The show has been on hiatus since the passing of James Dunsworth in 2017, even though the cast has confirmed production and filming of a show relating to the series in social media.

The material is obtained from Netflix, where the show is currently presented as a “Netflix Original”, a series produced directly for Netflix distribution. This makes the show suitable for studying on the short term (in the scope of this thesis) as the show is unlikely to leave the streaming platform barring a force majeure, and for re-research, as the subtitles are most probably going to stay unchanged for the foreseeable future. The reproducibility has been somewhat of a problem with similar research, as the availability of the material between networks and DVD-releases tend to change drastically. If replicability would be the main concern, studies on wordplay would be more suitable for literary scholars, as subtitling as a medium would not be a central part of the study. The show has been previously translated and presented in Finland through Nelonen-network under the name “Roskasakki”, which directly references the white trash themes. The name could be directly translated as “[trash gang]”. The material is collected from randomly chosen episodes from each of the currently released seasons, of which there are 12 at the time of writing. The material of this thesis consists of 44 instances of English language wordplay and their Finnish translations.

More specifically, I will be using 11 episodes, as one of the episodes chosen did not contain any appropriate wordplay. Original idea was to use one episode from each currently released season of TPB on Netflix. Identifying the instances of wordplay can be problematic, as the authors emphasis in the original script is unavailable, especially as Rickyisms are mainly been defined only by the fans of the show. For identifying purposes, English subtitles were used in tandem with the audio track to identify the wordplay in the material. This method worked well, as only one instance of wordplay could not be spotted by cross referencing English text with audio. Any alterations to conventional English grammar in the character’s dialogue were noted and written down. Most of these noted phrases were later deemed as Rickyisms based on the definitions of wordplay, malapropisms and eggcorns.

The decision why the series was chosen as material lies in language usage and erroneous usage of phrases by a single character called *Ricky*. The wordplay is mainly based on uneducatedness for which Ricky is constantly mocked by the other characters in the series. These quips have become so popular throughout the series' lifespan that the fans have coined a specific term for them; "Rickyisms" (urbandictionary, 2019). An example of this type of wordplay follows:

(1) *Ricky: The old "Keep your friends close but get your enemies toaster".*

In this example, Ricky tries to arrive to the idiomatic phrase "Keep your friends close but your enemies closer", which was popularised by the 1970s movie "*Godfather part II*". This slip of tongue could be considered an eggcorn, but due to its intentional nature as a written piece of humour, in this case it is considered as a malapropism. The terminology is explained further in later segment of this thesis. The series has proven to be adequate material for research, as I have already done some research on it in my bachelor's thesis. The kind of wordplay is somewhat rare in how it is constructed and the extent of how it is used, but it is by no means unique. Contemporary TV shows such as "Parks and Recreation" has a character with similar backstory of being a bit slow and unintendedly messing up established phrase structures for humorous effect. Then there is the namesake for the phenomenon, Ms. Malaprop from Richard Sheridan's play "The Rivals", who is constantly mixing up words in phrases in a similar way, showing this type of humour is by no means a new venture for the writers.

The humour researched in this thesis has a great deal in common with mistranslations on why it is found funny. As in a mistranslated menu presented in the Image 1 below, the wordplay in the series plays with the readers' expectations. It uses a common, socioculturally accepted norm and garbles it up enough for it to be recognized to be connected to the original phrase but changes the meaning or structure enough to cause amusement. Observe the image excerpt of a menu that used to circulate in the social media in early 2010s:

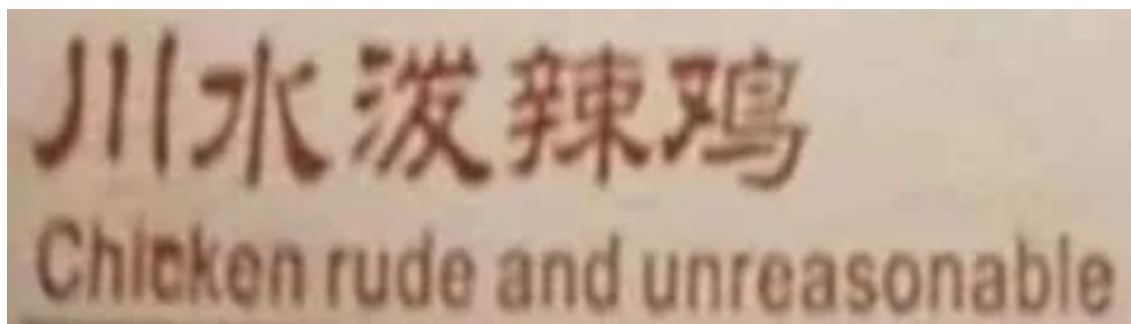


Image 1. Menu excerpt

The image is of a Chinese restaurant's menu with questionable English translations. The unusual connection of the adjectives *rude* and *unreasonable* with food item such as chicken is bound to make the reader stop and think for a moment. Usually an adept reader, especially one with knowledge that the restaurant might be a grill arrives at the conclusion that the dish in question is "jerk chicken". This form of train of thought usually is enough to cause amusement in majority of people, which is proven by the popularity of the image in social media. This could be attributed to the absurdity of the wording in such a mundane situation as ordering in a restaurant, and a later realisation of what the writer is trying to convey in this context. In contrast, this kind of a phrase in a children's television show about anthropomorphic farm animals could pass without another glance, and it is reasonable to assume the context makes the phrase funny. But here, again judging by the spread of the image in social media, it has elicited a reaction in a similar vein as a joke would.

I have chosen to abbreviate a couple of things throughout this thesis to enhance readability. The name of the series *Trailer Park Boys* is henceforth referred as *TPB*. The seasons and episodes which I am talking about are referred to as in form of "S1E1", which refers to first seasons first episode etc. Source text and target text are abbreviated "ST" and "TT" respectively, and similarly source language and target language as "SL" and "TL".

1.2 Method

The main goal is trying to investigate how well the subtitler is able to convey often complex linguistic phenomena in humorous context in a different format, and in a different language. This is achieved by first defining subtitles as a format and humour, comedy, wordplay, equivalence and quality as concepts. After the definitions, the process of analysis is perhaps easiest to show in image form (Image 2). Which is presented below.

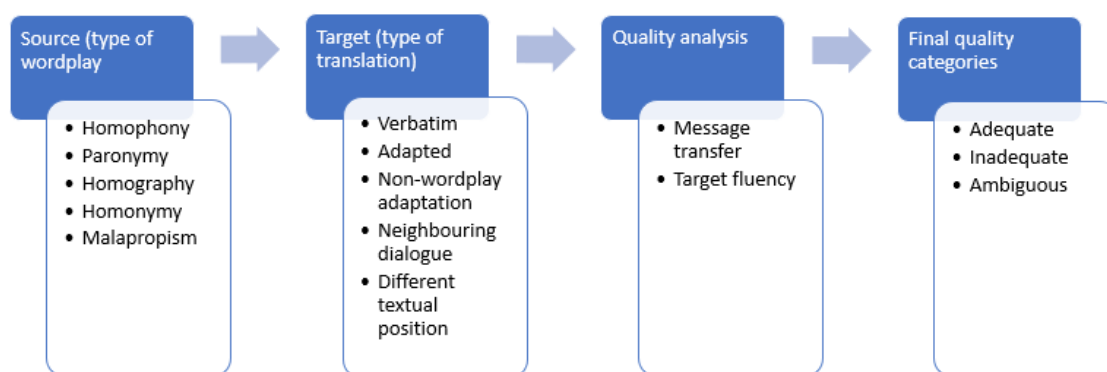


Image 2. Research plan visualised

This image visualises my method of analysis. Firstly, I categorised the source material in relevant categories according to the type of wordplay they represent. While these categories are by no means tied to any scholar and are generally accepted, I am using the categories as Delabastita (1996) and Gottlieb (1997) present them. Even though Delabastita originally presented these in relation to puns and punning, his use of wordplay and puns as concepts are highly interchangeable. Due to the humour often basing itself in made up words and nonsensical idioms which did not fall into any other categories, I chose to include malapropism as a main category for the source text wordplay. Malapropisms are speech errors, often tied to a single character and their typical use of language. These categories are explained in more detail in chapter 2.

After the material was categorised, I moved on to the subtitles, and categorised the translation decisions according to Gottlieb's translation strategies for wordplay (Gottlieb 1997). These categories show if the English language humour was transferred to the

Finnish subtitles and to a certain extent how it was done. Omitted jokes had two categories depending on whether the text was adapted, *non-wordplay adaptation* and space used for *neighbouring dialogue*. I did not deem it necessary to add extra categories for analysing the subtitles.

After the source text and subtitles were categorised, I set on to determining the quality of the translations. This was done by applying the collaborated theory by Koby, Fields, Hague and Lommet (2014). This theory aims to be more general theory between most types of translation (defined in chapter 2.6), not a specialised quality assessment for documents or subtitling. It is focused on two aspects, message transfer (denotation, connotation, nuance, style) and target fluency (grammar, word order, culturally appropriate and native sounding). If the subtitles did not have any major problems regarding these viewpoints, it was deemed an adequate translation. If the subtitling had problems in some of these areas but could otherwise be deemed as passable due to the limitations of the format, platform or the minor nature of the problem, they were deemed as ambiguous in quality. Major problems in any of these areas or multiple problems with the subtitles caused the translation to be deemed as inadequate. More details on the quality process can be found in chapter 2.6 of this thesis.

2 Translation of Humour and Wordplay

This chapter discusses the theories and definitions relevant to my thesis. First subchapter presents definitions of humour and comedy in general, followed by general definitions of wordplay and puns. These terms are often used interchangeably, and while they arguably dividing definitions could be made between them, I will refer to them only as wordplay throughout this thesis. The section on wordplay has multiple subsections referencing the narrower subcategories and terms relating to wordplay used in this thesis. Later on in this segment I will touch on translation strategies relating to the wordplay leading up to the discussion on translation of humour in the next section. Afterwards, equivalence is explained as a concept, subtitles are explored as a format and the theory chapter is finished by exploring the quality theories of Koby et al. (2014).

2.1 Humour & Comedy

Humour is a human constant. Everybody at some point of their lives has come across something they would consider as humour. It usually leads to a reaction, more often than not, laughter. Identifying humour can be as simple as that, and Artur Koestler in Chiaro (1992, p.4) simplifies the defining element of humour as a type of stimulation that elicits laughter. He also mentions that the reaction can have various magnitudes. From a “faint smile” to a “broad grin” and “explosive laughter” and obviously anything in between. Actions that lead into this reaction are considered as “funny”. Even though everyone experiences this reaction at multiple point of their lives, they might not be able to exactly pinpoint and define what makes them laugh.

For example, western humour often has multiple common denominators which are considered universally funny. These are discussed in Chiaro (1992, p. 7-10). Topics such as minorities (blonde jokes, ethnic groups), “dirty jokes” (sexual in nature), “lavatorial” (excretion-based humour) and absurd jokes (cartoons, unexpected) are a staple of any joke-book or tv-show. These topics are not divisive by any means and often blend in within

themselves. Lavatorial humour for example often is not solely harmless references to the bodily fluids, but usually merges with elements from something personal, leading the humour to be at someone's expense.

Geographic location is not the only dividing element in humour. Chiaro (1992, p.5) observes: "*The concept of what people find funny appears to be surrounded by linguistic, geographic, diachronic, sociocultural and personal boundaries.* Sharing any of these precursors does not necessarily mean the humour is found funny by all the participants, which Chiaro demonstrates comparing the differences of British and American humour. Even though the cultures share a common language, there is a fundamental difference of what Americans find funny compared to the British. Awareness of these elements needs to be acknowledged by both sender and receiver. Contextual jokes about daily politics for example often cease to be funny a year later (diachronicity) and deeply religious cultures or people rarely find humour on funny when the expense is on their beliefs or faith.

To summarize: the result of humour and funny things is regular, laughter. The quality and nature of the stimulus varies (Chiaro, 1992). This can be observed even on person to person basis and more in scale with cultural differences. The same type of humour that is considered universally funny in Asia would at least raise some questions or go over the heads of European people, for example. This rings especially true with language play, which sometimes results in a quip that is only funny in the original language and does not translate at all, which proves humour and language have a strong connection. This connection is heavily underlined by Chiaro throughout *The Language of Jokes* (1992). The next chapter focuses more on the subcategory of language-based humour, both in verbal and textual sense.

2.2 Translation of humour

Many of the people who hold at least of some kind of command of the English language and regularly watch American or English shows with subtitles have an idea how they could do the translator's job better. When one hears the joke and understand it while reading something completely different, it may be due to a direct translation where the humorous content is downright omitted or maybe the translation does not work in a written form in another language. As a result, people feel that the translation is somehow off, but might skip all the restricting factors in trying to provide a better solution.

The act of translation itself could be summarized simply as "*replacement of a text in the source language by a semantically and pragmatically equivalent text in the target language*" (House, 1997, p. 38). As such, humour translation in turn could be simply replacing a humorous instance in source text with a humorous content in target text. But as Chiaro (1992) puts it; *jokes travel badly*. As discussed in the segment about humour, finding a common linguistic and sociocultural values in foreign material is hard. The majority of audio-visual entertainment is currently provided by the United States' TV- and movie industry, so the problem is somewhat alleviated in Western countries. Most of the western entertainment culture coming from one place forcibly familiarises the consuming cultures to it, but there are still major problems the translator must face to present the source text in the target language. The translator has, within their own limitations depending on the medium, convey a number of different meanings belonging to another culture with a language that does not work in a similar way.

In addition, humour translation is not as easy as it seems. In fact, it is quite the opposite. Direct translations are rarely possible due to the differences in cultural values. This inherently leads the translator towards more functional approach. However, as Chiaro (1992, p. 85) puts it: "*It would appear that translators are often afraid of moving away from the text and replacing an untranslatable joke with another one which would work in the target language, even if it is completely different from the original*". This citation

held true in my earlier research, where omission was in fact the most common translation strategy. Instead of translating the humorous content as humorous content disregarding the original form, the translator's assignment becomes many times easier by just omitting the quip and following the general plot structure of the source text. Jokes which include wordplay, but also reference some form of sociocultural phenomenon seem to be the most difficult kind to render in another language. (Chiaro, 1992, p. 10-11). These could be references to local architecture, for example. Any references to the phallic nature of Washington Monument would be lost on someone who is not familiar with American culture and/or landmarks of Washington D.C.

The difficulty of translating content that plays on words compared to translating content that does not is perhaps best demonstrated by two examples in Chiaro (1992, p.87-88).

“Mummy, Mummy I don't want to go to France”
 “Shut up and keep swimming!”

Chiaro notes as that the joke does not rely on language for its punchline, it would present no problems for the translator to meaningfully translate. The only indistinct part of the joke would be the vague cultural reference to the English origins of the joke and swimming over the canal. In this case the cultural reference does not pose a relevant problem for the translator. However:

“Nothing succeeds like a parrot”

Plays on the double meaning and phonetic structure of the word “succeed”, as the word, when taken apart, is phonetically similar to the phrase “sucks seeds”. This eloquent one-liner in a text could provide a massive challenge to translate or be downright untranslatable, as it is unlikely to find similar double meaning to the word “succeed” and the avian theme.

What makes a phrase untranslatable then? Gideon Toury (1997. p. 282) mentions that for wordplay, spoonerism to be exact, to be translatable, it has to be transparent in a sense. The building blocks of the phrase or wordplay have to be clearly distinguished

before it can be tried to be reconstructed in another language. While he continues to argue that spoonerisms in particular are simple enough to always carry the possibility of being translated if the medium and target culture allows it, the medium of the material is very restrictive, and could be attributed for a great deal of the untranslatability of phrases or omissive translation strategies. However, if a humorous utterance can be deconstructed on how they work, they could almost always be reconstructed for the target culture. Regarding the previous example on parrots, a Finnish alternative could be *“Kukaan ei osaa onnistua niin kuin Onni”*. The phrase has a similar play on the double meaning of the word “onnistua” and has a similar nursery rhyme -type delivery. However, it departs from the avian theme of the original and depending on the context might miss the audience.

Regarding whether it is realistic to translate the ST content, I am going to consider the three-dimensional model of humour translation presented in Remael and Cintas, paraphrasing Zabalbeascoa, as reasoning for translation/retranslation/omission:

First, there is a vertical scale of importance: a particular instance can have top priority, very low priority or anything in between. Second, there is a horizontal scale that indicates whether humour is a priority on a global level (for the whole text) or a rhetorical device used locally (in a particular exchange). Third, there is a scale of equivalence-non-equivalence, which dictates whether there is a priority for the translation to be equivalent to the source text in certain respects and to a certain extent, or not. Is faithful translation required or should the joke be replaced by a different one? (Remael & Diaz Cintas, 2014, p.215)

This reasoning provides a basis for considering whether the translator’s decision to translate something or omit it was the correct or not relating to the context in the series. The model prioritises the “whole text” in contrast to separate instances of dialogue. The model also shows how interconnected equivalence is on these decisions, a concept which is discussed more in depth later. In the next chapter, I will discuss wordplay and its relation to humour.

2.3 Wordplay

Chiaro makes an instant and inseparable connection of wordplay and humour in the beginning of her book *The Language of Jokes* (Chiaro, 1992, p. 4-5). Wordplay is the usage of language with an intent to amuse the receiver. The most common examples of wordplay are usually some form of punning, a technique where the sender uses the double meaning of a single word in order to elicit a reaction from the receiving party. When forming the play on words, the sending party has to assume shared knowledge between the sender and the receiver, otherwise the function of the wordplay would be lost. This knowledge is based on sociocultural information held by the sender (Chiaro, 1992, p. 11). Decoding the wordplay includes understanding these common denominators by the receiver. Wordplay itself is understood to be a fairly broad subject with multiple subcategories and varying definitions, but this open-ended definition is adequate. In the next couple of paragraphs, I will present the types of wordplay, its relevance to idioms and other subcategories relevant to my material.

Idioms could be considered a sub-category of wordplay, as their meaning is often metaphorical and detached from the literal meaning of the words. However, these are usually well-established within their cultural backgrounds and the connection between the words and the meaning (connotative and denotative meanings) is easy to make for someone familiar with the said culture (Ingo, 1981, p. 104). Humorous alteration to the conventional idioms is an established form of humour. Usually there are two ways to alter the idioms, either applying another meaning to the same form of idiom (semantic transformation) or changing both, form and meaning (structural transformation) (Veisbergs, 1997. p. 157). This kind of alteration plays with the readers expectations. Usually, idioms have established a cliché-like status in their respective cultural backgrounds. Finding something unexpected and breaking the familiar patterns can be cause for much amusement and surprise.

Idioms and their alteration are a recognised and actively studied subject. According to Veisbergs (1997), over a half of the contemporary use of idioms consists of this kind of

alteration, and the base forms of idioms are rarely used. This is due to popularisation of idiom usage in newspaper articles and advertising. As such, altering the idioms seems to be such a common practise that it surpasses the usage of dictionary versions of the idioms. This was apparent in my material, as almost half of the wordplay used some form of idiom as a base for humour.

Gottlieb presents the types of wordplay often present in humorous material. Homonymy, homophony, homography and paronymy (Gottlieb, 1997, p. 210). Homophones as a term meaning different words with similar pronunciation and homonyms (or polysemes) mean the same words have multiple meanings. Paronymous words have near identical spelling or pronunciation. (Chiaro, 1992, p. 38-40). Homographic words share a similar spelling (Gottlieb, 1997). Usually when dealing with dialogue, homography cannot be found and it is based more on the medium of written wordplay and context. If the wordplay did not fit into any of these categories, they were considered to be malapropisms. This usually happened when the wordplay was based on the character traits of Ricky (such as slips of tongue), or it was based on idioms and/or resulted in words too distant to be considered in the forementioned categories. In next sub-chapter, I will present why the concept is used in this thesis and how it differs from the other similar speech errors.

2.3.1 Malapropisms, Eggcorns and other phonetic mistakes

The concept of laughing at someone's spelling or speech mistake is tied to making fun of someone's misfortune, which might as well be one of the oldest types of humour around. However, the definitions of these concepts are relatively new. Wordplay in general is to be considered intentional in its nature, but the phenomena presented in this sub-chapter play with the sender-receiver mechanics. Receiver is always the subject on this relationship, but the person or character holding the sender role varies. This results in wordplay where part of the humorous effect could be its accidental delivery, for example.

Malapropism is one of the more general definitions of speech errors. It is also one of the older ones. The term is linked to a character R. B. Sheridan's 1775 play *The Rivals* and shares similar etymology with the term *Rickyism* discussed earlier. Both terms are named after a character known for their speech errors. Mrs. Malaprop used to habitually mistake longer, harder to spell words with each other, as is mentioned in the Oxford English Dictionary entry about malapropisms: "...the expression 'the very pineapple of politeness' (for 'the very pinnacle of politeness')" (OED, 2020). In this case, the words are fairly similar, and they could possibly be considered paronymous. This is not always the case and while malapropisms could share characteristics with other types of wordplay, they could still be completely different words with no syllables or even phonemes shared.

Differentiating malapropisms from eggcorns, a term coined much later in the 2000s (OED, 2020), which are often based on the mishearings of different words and repeating them with confidence believing them correct. This is akin to a term *mondegreen*, in which the speaker repeats lyrics of a song or poem with similar belief but mistaking in some way. Both of these terms are also the first instances of their namesake as eggcorn originates from a person believing eggcorn to be correct spelling of acorn (Lieberman, 2003). Eggcorns can be separated from folk dialects by the personal effect of being used by just one person, not a group. Malapropisms could be considered as speech errors or slips of tongue and eggcorns in turn something learned by hearing, not reading. Also, due to the unintentional nature of eggcorns, all the verbal humour in the material is be considered malapropisms. However, this is not a problem due to the close nature of these phenomena. It is just a necessary distinction to make.

Playing with words to make a joke on someone's expense is thus by no means a new frontier for writers, but it is somewhat rarely seen in television. This kind of humour mostly exposes itself in the real world by someone one might know or sometimes in written form as a joke or somewhat rarely in literature. When analysing the material, most of the wordplay delivered by Ricky fall into some form of paronymy. When only the

speech would be analysed, the quips would be categorized mostly as either malapropisms basing themselves on uneducatedness or as an eggcorn where the character has not read sometimes even a fairly common word before (due to a same reason).

Translation of these kinds of mistakes is somewhat paradoxical in a sense. On the other hand, good subtitling always strives to correct grammatical and dialectical inconsistencies (Ivarsson & Carroll in: Remael & Cintas, 2014, p. 186), but when the error itself has such a central part in the function of the source text, the translator must attempt to retain it for the sake of functional equivalence. After all, what is left when the humour is taken away from comedy?

2.3.2 Translation strategies for wordplay

Idioms and wordplay often pose similar problems to the translator. This is probably the reason why the translation strategies for the said linguistic phenomena share many similarities. Translation strategies for wordplay and idioms overlap in many ways. In this thesis, the translation strategies by Henrik Gottlieb will be applied to both idiom translation and wordplay translation in the material.

Gottlieb presents translation strategies for wordplay specifically in subtitling, which seems a natural way to approach the wordplay in the material. The strategies are as follows:

- 1 Rendered verbatim (with or without humorous effect)
 - 2 Adapted to the local setting to maintain humorous effect
 - 3 Replaced by non-wordplay
 - 4 Not rendered, space used for neighbouring dialogue
 - 5 Inserted in different textual position, where target language renders it possible.
- (Gottlieb, 1997, p. 210)

None of these can be alone or directly associated with adequate and inadequate translations, and the translated phrases must be analysed further with other datapoints presented later in the theory section even to attempt to measure the quality of the translation. Next, I will present examples for each of the categories provided by Gottlieb. All of the following examples are from my material. The back translations are presented in brackets and are my own.

1. Rendered verbatim:

(2) *Ricky: I'm turning into Chef Boyarlee.*

T: Olen kuin keittiömestari Boyarlee.

BT: [I am like Chef Boyarlee.]

(Trailer Park Boys S10E4)

In this example, the proper noun is the target for the wordplay. Chef Boyardee is a popular line of canned pasta products in the United States. The wordplay here messes up the name and the subtitler has decided to apply the wordplay directly. This is the only case of verbatim translations and will be analysed more thoroughly in the analysis section.

2. Adapted to the local setting to maintain humorous effect

(3) *Ricky: Where there's smoke there is a wire.*

T: Ei savua ilman multaa.

BT: [No smoke without dirt.]

(Trailer Park Boys S8E9)

In this case, the original idiom of “where there is smoke there is a fire” was identified. The writers have applied a homophonous wordplay between the words “fire” and “wire”. The translator has used the (direct) Finnish equivalent of the idiomatic phrase, “ei savua

ilman tulta”. Similar wordplay is applied in the equivalent word of “tulta” (fire). The resulting phrase has been thus formed similarly and adapted to the local setting.

3. Replaced by non-wordplay

(4) *Ricky: It's basically peach and cake.*

T: Se on helppo homma.

BT: [It's an easy job.]

(Trailer Park Boys S4E7)

Here the phrasal idiom “piece of cake” is altered in to form “peach and cake”. The original idiom was altered structurally to lose its connotative meaning and gain a new one, which is concrete, but nonsensical in the context. The subtitler has chosen to completely omit the wordplay and the idiom from the translation and only applying the underlying, connotative meaning to the translation.

4. Not rendered, space used for neighbouring dialogue

(5) *Ricky: Those aren't **ball berries**, they're fucking pieces of gravel from the rollerblading accident we had.*

T: Se on sora ruillaluistelunnettomuudesta.

BT: [It's gravel from rollerblading accident.]

(Trailer Park Boys S10E4)

The wordplay is based on the paronymy between the words “ball bearings” and “ball berries”. However, the surrounding sentence is considerably long for interlingual subtitling. Due to this reason, subtitlers more often than not have to adapt the sentence in a written, more shortened form. The Netflix subtitling character limit per line is 42 characters. However, it also has multiple limitations on how the sentences can be split between those lines, so fitting the phrases can pose a problem. Here only the relevant, story-centric part of the dialogue is translated. The translator could have split this in to

different subtitling blocks, but chose to use only one, 42 character long line and focus on the neighbouring dialogue.

For Gottlieb's last translation strategy, replacement to a different position, no example was found in my material. The next chapter of this thesis focuses more on how equivalence is one of the more central parts in translation act.

2.4 Equivalence

Regarding the main interest in this thesis (whether the humour was translated in the material and how) and other definitions basing themselves closely to the concept of equivalence, it needs to be defined in its own subsection. Equivalence itself could be described as a relation between the ST and TT. The relation must be inherently strong enough to carry the meaning of ST to TT, but not overpowering as to distort the use of TL for the sake of closer relation to the SL. Equivalence is one of the central concepts of translation in general, and so is often relied upon in the research of other themes and quality assessment (House, 1997).

The concept of equivalence was first popularized by Eugene Nida in the 1960s and later refined by Nida and Charles Taber in *The Theory and Practice of Translation* (1969). They introduced the theories of "dynamic" and "formal" equivalence, relating to sense-for-sense and word-for-word translations respectively (Venuti 2012). Nida and Taber treated these concepts as polar opposites, citing: "...[one] must choose content as opposed to form, meaning as opposed to style, equivalence as opposed to identity, the closest equivalence as opposed to any equivalence, and naturalness as opposed to formal correspondence." (Nida & Taber 1969). Dynamic equivalence thus striving for the translation of content as opposed to stylistic and linguistic similarity of formal equivalence. This theory has been the base for multiple translation scholars studying equivalence in translation, for example Newmark (communicative/semantic) and House (covert/overt) (Venuti 2012).

From the concept's inception, equivalence has been tied to translation quality. Nida and Taber presented a list of multiple applications of dynamic equivalence and priorities which translator should follow. Relating to expressive texts in the Bible, they mention that the poetic accounts should be presented as such, not as a directly translated "dull prose" (Nida & Taber, 1969, p. 25). Interpolating this, according to them, expressive text should be always translated as expressive text.

Nida and Taber also present a fundamental form of what translators should follow when presented with a translation task:

- 1 contextual consistency has priority over verbal consistency (or word-for-word concordance).
 - 2 dynamic equivalence has priority over formal correspondence
 - 3 aural form has priority over written form
 - 4 forms that are used by and acceptable to the audience for which a translation is intended have priority over forms that may be traditionally more prestigious
- (Nida & Taber, 1969, p. 14).

Nida and Taber present fundamental concepts of equivalence relating to Bible translations, but they hold as true even when considering translations of contemporary, non-religious texts. They also show how functional and dynamic equivalence is directly connected to how people generally deem a good translation, and thus how they assess quality.

Juliane House is another scholar who has been applying equivalence concepts to translation quality assessment since the 1970s. Her theory is very text-centric and is mainly based on analysis of source and target texts (House, 1977). She defines translation as an act of transferring "meaning", which consists of semantical, pragmatic and textual elements and thus: *"...an adequate translation text is semantically and pragmatically equiv-*

alent...” (House, 1977, p. 103). However, to begin evaluating what is adequate, the elements which are measured must be defined. House breaks the concepts down to smaller, measurable elements, one of which the function is most central. For the texts to be equivalent, they must share a function, but they also have to employ similar means to achieving that function. Any deviations from this equivalence are dubbed “errors” by House. These errors have two categories in *overt* and *covert* errors. These error categories are what House uses to build the theory of her quality assessment model. The measurable errors share certain elements with the quality assessment model used in this study (such as comparing denotative meanings), but more on the other model in later chapter (2.6).

However, the theories of Nida & Taber and House point out how equivalence is one of the more fundamental concepts in translation and translation quality assessment and needs to be noted in the discussion concerning either. In the next chapter, I will present the conventions, limitations and devices of subtitling in brief.

2.5 Subtitling

As mentioned earlier, subtitling is the most common form of translation for TV and movies in Finland. Subtitling is common within smaller language communities which did not establish a tradition in dubbing due to economic reasons (dubbing requires more effort compared to subtitling) or other historical or political factors. Dubbing is more common within large, homogenized language communities, such as France. In France, French was pursued to be a lingua franca during the period where foreign films started circulating in the 1930s, which has led to a strong dubbing tradition which continues today (Film Reference Encyclopedia, 2020). Other countries with similar, strong dubbing history usually follow a similar pattern for their prevalence in dubbing, such as Italy and Germany.

According to Diaz Cintas and Remael (2007), subtitles are a written text presented over an image, which recounts the dialogue or other discursive elements presented in said

image. Reading them on their own is not sensible, and as such the subtitles become an inseparable form of media on the image and cannot be separated from the said context (Diaz Cintas & Remael, 2007, p. 8-9). Subtitles also inherently carry some limitations. The character limit of subtitles and synchronising text to images can create timing challenges. Oftentimes it is necessary to omit something a character is saying just to keep up with the pace of the dialogue.

When dealing with texts in multiple modes, culture-bound phrases often present even more difficult challenges to the translator than they would in other formats. Repeating from earlier section: culture-bound phrases are linguistic material that contain references which are not immediately obvious to any other culture than the one the text belongs to (Remael & Diaz Cintas, 2014, p. 200). In the case of subtitling: the target texts mode does not allow any reiteration or explanation due to the limitations of the media. The subtitler has to consider the number of characters and synchrony between the image on screen and the text, for example. This is why culture-bound phrases often become untranslatable in any adequate way.

It is worth noting that ST language subtitles and their translations read very differently. With Netflix, especially, it has become easy to compare English subtitles to the translated subtitles. It is worth noting that English subtitles are often more stylistically in line with the spoken dialogue than the translations. This is due to the different conventions in intralingual and interlingual subtitling (Holopainen, 2015, p. 89). Same-language subtitles are usually written word-for-word and often prioritising those with hard-of-hearing. Interlingual ones tend to omit parts the subtitler deems unnecessary in order to keep the flow of dialogue going.

This thesis in particular deals mostly with “marked speech”. A term refers to language that is characterised by non-standard language features or features that are not neutral in a sense. The form of language may be standard, but its form is stylised to be in line with a character or person (Remael & Diaz Cintas, 2014, p. 187). The Rickyisms are a

central part of the character's way of speaking, obscenities and errors included and should therefore be mostly translated. Or as Remael and Diaz Cintas put it:

Changes in register and style may render films more homogeneous, and changes that affect character representation ultimately affect the message of the film, i.e. the content that is subtitling's priority. (Remael & Diaz Cintas, 2014, p. 187)

But, omitting certain things is not out of the question, as often is necessary in subtitling.

They continue:

On the other hand, not each and every swearword needs to be translated in order to convey characters' registers and/or personalities: peppering their speech with the occasional well-placed expletive will often do the trick. (Remael & Diaz Cintas, 2014. p, 187)

Again, these relate to quality and equivalence in a sense that while omitting certain elements is unavoidable due to the notion and limitations in subtitling, most of the function and character building should still be present. If omission becomes the main strategy for the translator, they could be considered as failing to provide a good translation. Or as Gottlieb puts it: "The audience was cheated of a good laugh" (Gottlieb, 1997, p. 211).

The next chapter ties up the theory section, presenting the quality assessment metrics.

2.6 Quality

Defining quality of a translation has been an ongoing challenge for translation scholars since the initial stages of translation studies. Translation quality assessment is mainly applied to official documents from legal field, multinational companies, machine translations or translator training (Depraetere, 2011). However, most of the models for quality assessment are highly function-based, which allows the application of the theory in other areas if the function of the text is easily identifiable. In the case of audio-visual entertainment, it usually is not, apart from very general distinctions. However, comedy-based texts usually have but a single goal; to make people laugh. The search for a function-based system to evaluate quality led me to two collaborated models by Koby et al. (2014) labelled "broad" and "narrow" definitions of translation quality.

The broad model defines the act of translation little more openly, and includes, for example, transcreation and localisation within itself. These are usually not considered when defining translations for academic purposes. The model focuses more on the agents than the textual concepts:

A quality translation demonstrates accuracy and fluency required for the audience and purpose and complies with all other specifications negotiated between the requester and provider, taking into account end-user needs. (Koby et al., 2014, p. 416)

The key here is that all the definitions of quality are done by the actors and are their adequacy is mainly determined by the requester. This model does not offer much in the scope of this thesis, but it is worth noting for the diversity of quality assessment applications in translation. The broad definition of the translation quality presented by Koby et al. is theoretically always met when looking into the texts focused on in this thesis. The requester (in this case Netflix) has accepted the work of the translator and released it for distribution. Without a public uproar by the end users (audience) on the inadequacy of the translation, it is always assumed the quality needs of the subtitles have been met.

Netflix subtitling could be assumed to lack in quality due to aggressive deadlines and inadequate compensation (AV-Kääntäjät 2012). However, evaluation of social aspects would be a different kind of research altogether. It is worth mentioning that the lapse in quality could be attributed to the neglect of the specifications mentioned in the broad definition of translation quality. These neglects could be related to working conditions, lack of interest due to insufficient compensation etc.

Moving on to the narrow definition of translation quality, it is far more text-centric:

« A high-quality translation is one in which the message embodied in the source text is transferred completely into the target text, including denotation, connotation, nuance, and style, and the target text is written in the target language using correct grammar and word order, to produce a culturally appropriate text that, in

most cases, reads as if originally written by a native speaker of the target language for readers in the target culture. » (Koby et al., 2014, p. 416-417)

Breaking down the elements discussed in this definition, denotation and connotation refer to the literal and cultural/personal associations of the words. For example, *keyboard* is currently most commonly understood as computer peripheral, but could also carry another meaning depending on a person as a bulletin board for storing physical keys. Nuance refers to the correspondence of tones between SL and TL. Style correlates to the conventions of either format or writer. Last sentence of the quotation refers to the conventions of a good translation, such as the elements mentioned in the theory.

Quality-wise it is also important to take notice why the phrases were omitted from the TT. According to Gottlieb, any kind of omission from the original could be attributed to three factors: language- or media-specific constraints or human constraints. The first one relates to not finding an adequate counterpart for the untranslatable elements in the original text. The second one is linked to the type of language transfer used, whether it is literary or subtitling, for example and the last one relates to the human based constraints, such as lack of time, talent, interest or experience (Gottlieb, 1997, p. 216). Omissions caused by media-based constraints must be considered a good form of translation, as the conventions of the medium are often set by the requester or general tradition of the industry. Language-based omissions and human constraints could be mistaken for each other. Human restrictions always diminish the quality of the translation. Language-based restrictions could be considered neutral, as the humour is so ingrained in the source culture, the target text is almost always bound to lose the content without a rewrite. Rewritten jokes would not be considered omissions in this case and would be held to the quality analysis of the actual translated material.

The quality metrics underline the transference of style and nuance from ST to TT. However, these elements might be hard to transfer from spoken to written form. Just the shift of modes from spoken to written format often causes stylistic elements and em-

phasis to vanish just from the rewriting process. This might be unavoidable, but it highlights a problem with generic/general quality assessment guidelines for the use-case of subtitling. However, subtitling still presents all the elements needed for quality analysis. Subtitles can still possibly carry a number of stylistic elements, nuance and cultural matter typical for a translation.

Even though the quality assessment model aims to be applicable to *different sorts of translations* (Koby et al., 2014, p. 417), it is worth noting that general purpose translation theories are problematic because different source text formats have different purposes. As Holopainen (2015, p. 83-88) states: factual-based texts and audio-visual texts have several differences. For example, the goals vary from providing information (factual) to viewer experience (audio-visual) and coherence from verbal to polysemiotic respectively. The factual texts are usually delivered in formal style whereas audio-visual texts carry multitude of different styles, from spoken to simplified. The differences might vary even between text types themselves. A generic manual and specialized assembly instructions are both factual texts, but one is intended for large audience and one for experts.

The conclusion being, with so much variance in definitions of different text types, it is difficult to form an encompassing theory even to evaluate a part of them. Not even speaking of the most of them. Even with these inherent problems, this generic quality assessment model is worth exploring. The results might indicate the need for a more specialised model, or in other hand might be at least somewhat comparable to other kinds of texts analysed with the same model.

Quality as concept is highly subjective. The method of analysis chosen in this thesis mainly reflects the opinions of the particular researchers in question. However, when the method of analysis consists of analysing functional parts of the text, such as mirroring the connotative meaning and grammar, as it does here, it is possible to attempt to make educated guesses on the objective quality of the translations. The results of this

thesis are by no means an objective truth, but an attempt to assess the quality of subtitles in audio-visual material partly to see if the quality assessment model works when applied to material outside documents and other factual texts.

These are the points I am focusing when determining and quality of the translations in my analysis. I am going to present the analysis in the next chapter.

3 Analysis

In this section I will present the analysis of a part of the collected *Rickyisms*, a type of wordplay occurring in the show *Trailer Park Boys*. My focus is to assess how well the the wordplay in the series was translated, which is mainly achieved by applying Koby et al. quality evaluation metrics to the translated subtitles. The source text analysis begins with identifying the wordplay. After identifying the wordplay, its counterpart in the TT is analysed applying the theory of translation strategies by Gottlieb. The resulting phrase pair is then investigated for equivalence, style, nuance and other quality factors explained in the earlier section. If omissions were present, they are categorised further into subsections of human-based, media-based and language-based omissions. This approach will allow me to apply quality definitions even to the omitted material. The secondary research question is how the used quality model worked in assessing the quality of the audio-visual content.

The examples I decided to use were mostly chosen on their merit to demonstrate the challenges of wordplay-subtitling and their respective solutions. However, due to the nature of how the wordplay presented itself in the series sporadically and the subjectivity of the translator's decisions, some of the examples in the analysis section are from the same episodes. It is not the optimal way to present the complete picture, but this does not skew the results, but more likely shows how translators personal efforts achieve more presentable content in general.

Translations are marked as "T" in the analysis section. Back translations in this section are mine and they are presented in square brackets are marked as "BT". If multiple instances of wordplay were included in the same sentence, they are considered different instances.

3.1 Wordplay in the material

In this chapter I will present the total quantity of wordplay in my material. The material was gathered from 12 episodes with 11 episodes including relevant material. The idea was to include one episode from each released season at the time of writing, but the episode I chose for season one included none. There were, in total, 44 instances of wordplay across the episodes researched. This averages around 4 quips per episode. The wordplay was categorized by its type in the ST (homonymy, paronymy, homophony, homography, malapropism). The translations were categorised according to the translation strategies presented by Gottlieb with malapropisms added as the humour and the wordplay did not always fall straight into Gottlieb's wordplay categories.

The amount of translated wordplay in the Netflix translations seems to depend on the season and subtitler. Some of the chosen episodes had the majority of the wordplay translated while others almost exclusively used omission of the humour as main strategy. One of the chosen episodes contained no wordplay (S1E5) and the most wordplay was found in the season 8 episode at 7 instances. Out of all the material, I have determined there to be 22 instances of malapropisms, 15 paronyms and 7 homophones. There were no instances of homographs or homonyms in the material.

The material had a number of made-up words, which was quite problematic considering the definitions of general wordplay. For example, homophonous wordplay by definition results in a similar sounding alternative with a different meaning. Hence, the result of the wordplay has to contain some form of meaning, which was not always the case with Rickyisms. In these cases, I decided to disregard the resulting words, and focused on how the resulting wordplay was formed. As an example, throughout a particular episode Ricky refers to horses as "*hornses*", which is technically has no meaning, but is paronymous in form. Again, this could have been categorised as a malapropism, a speech error, but due to abundance of other distinctions such as idiomatic forms, I have chosen to draw the distinction here.

The combined results can be seen in Table 1 below.

Total number of wordplay	44
<hr/>	
Wordplay categories	
Paronyms	15
Malapropisms	22
Homophones	7
Homographs	0
Homonyms	0
<hr/>	
Translation strategies	
Verbatim	1
Adapted	21
Non wordplay	19
Neighbouring dialogue	3
Moved	0
<hr/>	
Quality categories	
Adequate	18
Inadequate	10
Ambiguous	16

Table 1. Results

3.2 Examples

Examples in each category include at least one example from all the quality categories (adequate, inadequate, ambiguous). The sub-chapters are titled after the types of wordplay present in the material.

3.2.1 Homophony

Most of the wordplay in the series is based on colloquial phrases and idioms and the resulting wordplay is often very far from the original phrase or idiom. Some of the wordplay consists of similar sounding words with different spellings. These homophonous instances usually relate to learning the language by speaking and not reading, hence mixing up the two words. These are common mistakes to make even outside comedy TV-shows. However, when the character is to be portrayed as somewhat dumb, the writers have to somehow underline or exaggerate these instances. Maybe for this reason this category was the rarest in my material apart from the ones that did not occur in the first place.

The first example comes from S11E3, where Ricky decided to hold an ice-hockey camp for children for a hefty participation fee. After receiving a phone call from a customer questioning if their child would participate, Ricky yelled out:

- (6) *Ricky: If you want the fucking spot, bring your kid Monday. If you don't, I don't give a fuck. **Paul's in your court.***

*T: Jos haluat paikan, tuo muksu maanantaina. Jos et, aivan sama. **Sinun puutoksesi.***

BT: [If you want the spot, bring your kid on Monday. If not, all the same. Your deficiency.]

(Trailer Park Boys, S11E3)

In the ST, the humour is based on a homophonous replacement of the word ‘ball’ in an idiom “Ball is in your court”. This leads to the idiom being structurally modified, where both the form and meaning have been changed. Idiom derives its meaning from sports, where possession of the ball often means it is your turn to make a play or a decision (OED, 2020). Colloquially it usually means transferring the responsibility of a decision to someone else or implying one has nothing else to do on the matter. By replacing the word with similar sounding proper noun “Paul”, the phrase seeks to derive humour mainly from the character’s mistake on this fairly common idiom. Contextually, the idiom is used correctly and the only problem in this case is mistaken replacement of the noun in the phrase.

The translation does not substitute the idiom, but rather adapts it to the target culture. The original idiom has a direct, almost word for word counterpart in Finnish in “Pallo on sinulla” [“You have the ball”], which seems to be a direct adaptation of the English language idiom with little to no background in Finnish culture. Most of the Finnish material found online containing this idiom is fairly recent promotional material for advertising campaigns, which supports the theory that the idiom was adapted to Finnish language through the influence of English. However, the sentiment of the idiom, which might be similar to the phrase “your loss”, is shared within couple of phrases, such as “oma häpeä/vika [your [own] shame/fault]. This phrase is usually used when one does not plan to or did not act when it was your responsibility. The subtitler has chosen to play on this sentiment, rather than use the close, equivalent idiom, which even though it does not seem to originate from Finnish culture is likely understood by most of the audience. The translated phrase “sinun puutoksesi”, succeeds in applying similar distortion to the phrase, as the word “puutos” is not typically one to be connected with such sentiment. Hence the translation is more of a functional equivalent of the source text than formal.

Quality-wise, the translation carries over the connotative meanings of the phrase and neighbouring dialogue. Denotative meaning is lost on omission of the (repeated) obscenities which is often the case in subtitling. While losing the curse words in neighbouring

dialogue, the tone still remains fairly loyal to the original text. The colloquial tone in the translation follows the original enough to carry over the connotative meaning, while still retaining grammatical form in TT. Similar phrase could be realistically uttered by native speaker. The only questionable element of the translation is the idiomatic content, which as mentioned, is tone-wise in line with the original. In the subtitles there are no elements which could make the translation inadequate. The humour in the original line was retained, even though the joke itself might miss its target in both languages. Thus, the subtitles in this case have no major problems quality-wise.

In the second example, Ricky is trying to underline how he is done with petty crime:

(7) *Ricky: Do you remember what I **telled** you, I'm fucking done!*

T: Minähän sanoin, että se paska saa riittää!

BT: [I told you I'm done with that shit!]

(Trailer Park Boys, S10E4)

This example is a tricky one. “Telled” instead of “told” is a type of a spelling or writing mistake a non-English speaking person would make early in their studies. The joke is rather subtle, not a central part of the line, and realistically could be only spotted in writing and could be attributed to the accent if this mistake was consistent. The reason for this omission is not obviously apparent. The line itself is using half the screen space available for dialogue and similar play with tense exists on Finnish language. The fact that the humour has a somewhat of a throwaway nature is seen in the subtitles. The joke is omitted and replaced with the original meaning of the phrase without alterations. This solution’s main purpose is to move the dialogue forwards. The wordplay here might have been hard to spot for the subtitler, and arguably the value of the humour and character building through this sentence is rather vague. Or they could have just followed good subtitling conventions and moved the dialogue forwards at the expense of a rather indiscernible quip. Either way, calling this solution inadequate would be too harsh considering the content. However, with other, at least comparable solutions available for the

translator, this is by no means the most enjoyable solution. Thus, the translation is ambiguous in quality.

The last example of homophonous wordplay comes from Ricky in season 5 in a scene where he is trying to convince his on/off -wife he has his life together.

(8) *Ricky: I got **golds** now.*

*T: Minulla on **tavoitteita**.*

BT: [I have goals now.]

(Trailer Park Boys, S10E4)

The joke itself is nothing special, just another on character quip which was omitted in the translated subtitles. What makes it interesting that the English Netflix subtitles also seemed to have missed the wordplay and substituted it with “goals”. This is rather easy mistake to make, as the nature of the homophonous wordplay is finding different words with similar pronunciation. That is however the most what makes this bit interesting. The joke was obviously missed by both English and Finnish subtitlers. One might have been due to another, but in this case, that does not really matter. There are no choices left to analyse and it is automatically (by my analysis methods) considered to be an inadequate translation.

3.2.2 Paronymy

Paronymous material was the second most common form of wordplay out of the three analysed. This was the category I used when the ST and TT wordplay resulted in word pairs that were relatively close to each other in form and pronunciation. Most of the content in this category were single words not directly connected to a phrasal form. However, idiomatic sentences were still considered paronymous if the word pairs exhibited paronymous wordplay. Due to how Finnish morphology works, adapted instances were often very successful in carrying over the humour or possibly adding to it.

The first example comes from a simple exclamation:

(9) *Ricky: Jack Pop!*

T: Papakymppi!

BT: (derivative of) [Bull's eye!]

(Trailer Park Boys S8E9)

ST plays with the “jack pot” exclamation, a phrase used when striking lucky or finding something you are looking for, for example. The resulting phrase is nothing special in a sense: It is very typical in-character wordplay in the series. In Finnish, there is no equivalent for the jack pot -exclamation. The closest equivalent is a translation to the phrase “bull’s eye!”, which is sometimes used in a similar manner to “jack pot” in Finnish.

Both the ST and TT wordplay function similarly. ST replaces one letter from a word to create similar meaning, which is what the subtitler has chosen to do in this case for the TT. The meaning of the resulting phrases does not seem important in this context, as the humour most likely stems from the action of mixing up the words, not their meaning. However, it might be worth noting that “pop” could refer to soda and “papa” has multi-lingual connotations to paternal figures or images.

Addressing quality, the denotative meanings of the phrases are dissimilar. However, the phrases are very much equivalent in connotative meaning with no need to search for other alternatives in TT. As mentioned in the earlier paragraph, the formation and structure of the phrases is very similar. The chosen phrase is also culturally appropriate, and direct translations of the ST phrase could have led to confusing results. There are not any problems with this translation/subtitle and therefore consider it an example of adequate translation of a paronymous wordplay.

In my material, paronymous wordplay was the only type that a verbatim translation strategy was used on. Verbatim translations in the subtitles generally retain the humour but have unique problems.

(10) *Ricky: I'm turning into Chef **Boyarlee**.*

*T: Olen kuin keittiömestari **Boyarlee**.*

BT: [I am like Chef Boyarlee.]

(Trailer Park Boys S10E04)

In this segment, Ricky is proud of his achievements in the kitchen and refers himself to as “Chef Boyarlee”, a nonexistent figure by first glance, referencing most likely to Ettore Boiardi. Boiardi is more known by his anglicised name, Hector Boyardee, which is a name found on the side of the side of canned pasta products, especially in the US (Siegel & Norris, 2011). The root of the humour here would be relating excelling in the kitchen to canned food and/or messing up the namesake (or possibly just the product) with a made-up name. Even though the result of the joke is made up proper noun, I would consider it paronymous.

If the humour is to be retained in this context, the subtitlers choices are twofold: either choose to retain the form in ST or adapt and rewrite it to a local setting with similar cultural background. The first option is obviously easier, and most of the times a better option. This is how the subtitler chose to translate the phrase: by retaining the cultural reference without any adaptation. Both options have different problems however, which affect the quality of the end product. Rewriting and finding culturally relevant, equivalent and concise enough reference for subtitles from target culture could be very work intensive. If such a thing does not exist straight away in the translator’s head, the research process takes time away from the actual translation. There is a possibility this could be a less of a problem in other translation medias, but the increasing demand of subtitles has caused the deadlines to grow even stricter (Fernández, 2019). However, a verbatim translation of a joke including a proper noun heavily tied to another culture risks losing a relevant component in the subtitles. There is no space for footnotes to

clarify the reference and very limited space to express the message. This usually leads to the humour having secondary priority and at least one of the elements in reference, humour or message, tend to be compromised.

In this case, the message was directly translated and while the message and reference hold up, the humour might be amiss for most of the target culture readers. The problem here is that while Chef Boyardee is a fairly well-known product in North America, the canned pasta products are not as popular in Europe, especially in Finland. The connection between canned food and performance in the kitchen fails to form due to cultural limitations, thus the connotative meaning could be considered lost. Denotative meaning is fairly similar and any changes in the literal meaning could be attributed to the native form of the phrase. Even though at first glance nothing is omitted from the subtitles and the form of the translation is appropriate, the problems with connotative meaning and cultural adequacy raise concerns for the quality of the translation rendering the translation ambiguous from quality perspective.

Another example comes from misusing a colloquial phrase “free loader” in a scene where another character is trying to make sure Ricky’s son gets a glass of orange juice. Ricky lashes out:

(11) *Ricky: He’s going to drink some fuck off juice. Why don’t you pour yourself a big fucking glass and chug the whole fucking thing, you **free boater!***

*T: Suksi vittuun -mehua. Kaada itsellesi lasillinen, saatanan **siipeilijä.***

BT: [Fuck off -juice. Pour yourself a glass, fucking free loader!]

(Trailer Park Boys, S10E4)

The original ST phrase again is a common, on-character mix up between similar sounding words “loader” and “boater”. There seems not to be anything more to the wordplay than what the face value exhibits. The surrounding dialogue is somewhat different, but

it works in the TT. The extra sub-ordinate clause is omitted but it does not contain any relevant information for either the joke or the general dialogue.

The translation is more of a direct one, with the subtitler choosing to use the unaltered phrase and translating it instead of the wordplay. In this case it works. First off, the English equivalent of the word consists of a phrase with two words that change their connotative meanings when put together which makes equivalent wordplay problematic in Finnish. Then again, wordplay does not affect the surrounding dialogue and could have easily been included in the character limit of the subtitles, just with a bit of rewriting.

There are no inherent problems with the subtitle. The joke is omitted, but the surrounding dialogue contains a great deal of in character subtext already. The dialogue is delivered in a heated manner and depicting that could carry importance over including of the joke. The omission could be seen as to be a result of media-based restraints, even though there would be space to translate the actual wordplay. The dialogue already carries plenty of flavour for a subtitle for just 2 screen spaces. The style differences mainly result from the transformation from spoken to written word. The translation has some stylistic compromises, but by the chosen quality standards, this is a good example of an adequate translation while the humour itself is omitted.

The last example in this section concerns an inadequate translation in the subtitles. In this scene Ricky is rather uncharacteristically trying his luck on parenting:

(12) *Ricky: You gotta remember, every kid **goes through phrases**.*

T: Muista, että kaikilla on sellainen vaihe.

BT: [Remember that everyone has that kind of a phase.]

(Trailer Park Boys S8E9)

The joke itself is a very on character mess up on similar sounding words; “phrases” and “phases”. The resulting sentence is nonsensical, but not absurd. The humour of the phrase stems from former character building and joy of spotting the wordplay itself, not

necessarily the knee slapping humorous quality of the one-liner. The intended humour is not central part of the episode's story line and is not highlighted during or after the dialogue in question, so the act of omission itself seems justified at glance.

The resulting translation is mostly equivalent to the original meaning of the phrase, without application of the Rickyism. The alterations are typical for subtitles, such as "every kid" – "kaikilla" (BT: everyone) and "you gotta remember" - "muista" (BT: remember). The tone differences could be explained with mode changes from spoken to written word. However, the humour is absent from the translation. In this case the decision to omit it is not unreasonable. The resulting phrase's purpose is to move the dialogue forwards, but it is worth noticing the translation of the humorous content would not have taken much space from the subtitling, as the wordplay is happening within a single word and the resulting line of subtitling is not demanding space for neighbouring dialogue. This rules out media-based omission. The language is also not very complex in this case and the wordplay is happening within a single word without culture specific references or other complicating factors. The only possible reason for omitting the joke is the translator's decision or carelessness. As such, the equivalence problems of the subtitles in this case could be explained to be due to following media-based conventions. The omission of humour being the result of either translator's negligence or intentionally going against the source material is enough for the translation to be considered as inadequate.

3.2.3 Malapropism

Malapropisms were the most common form of wordplay in the material. This was to be expected as a great deal of the wordplay is based on adaptations on idiomatic content, where the other types of wordplay apply either partially or not at all. Consider the first example, where Ricky is underlining how obvious the answer to the question is:

- (13) *Bubbles: Do you think she'll gonna be that mad Ricky?*
*Ricky: **Does a bear shit on the Pope?***

T: Bubbles: Oletko aivan varma, että hän suuttuu?
Ricky: Paskooko karhu paavin päälle?

BT: [Does a bear shit on the Pope?]

(Trailer Park Boys S10E04)

The English language wordplay here is the combination of two, fairly well-known idioms: “Does a bear shit in the woods” and “Is the Pope Catholic?”, both of which are rhetorical questions begging “yes” for an answer. This seems to be a fairly established connection as Wiktionary, an open dictionary website, has a listing for a version of a similar phrasing “does the Pope shit in the woods?” (“does the Pope...”, 2020). The writers of the show seemed to have gone in a more vulgar direction with their version, but the connection between the two is apparent. The humour of the phrase is strongly rooted in the absurdity resulting from the combination of the phrases.

The ST phrase is directly translated in the subtitles. The presented humour works fairly well in Finnish. The main problem with the translation is that neither of the phrases has established target culture background. While both phrases can technically be understood without any background, the combination of the two only leaves target culture readers with the absurd side of the joke. In 2019 Finnish F1 driver Kimi Räikkönen somewhat famously used one half of this phrase (“does a bear shit in the woods?”) in communication with a fan on social media (MTV Uutiset, 2020). The praise he received for his way with words in multiple media outlets indicates Finnish people are still somewhat unfamiliar with the phrase, and it could be considered to be an anglicism of sorts. Other mentions of the usage of the phrase is restricted to occasional mentions on message boards dated in late 2010s and the equivalent Wiktionary entry for the Finnish counterpart is dated and first posted in 2020. The other half “is the Pope catholic” sees even less use and the combination of the two gets matches for couple of comment sections, most likely fuelled by its use in the series in question.

The denotative and connotative meanings are as identical as they can be due to direct translation of the sentence. A great deal of the nuance is lost when the parts of the combined phrases lose their meaning partially or completely when translated. With nothing omitted, style remains the same. Jokes are usually extremely complicated pieces to translate when they combine two idioms. Usually translators and subtitlers could struggle with just one. For the amount of work, there are no easy alternatives for the translator here. However, this results in a non-culturally appropriate translation that feels and reads like a directly translated piece from the ST. While searching for an alternative way to translate the joke in question is laborious and possibly results in a worse translation, the problems do not cause enough concern to not consider this as an adequate translation. The problems do not necessarily hinder the readability of the subtitles in any major way. There are simply no better alternatives.

The second example comes from another idiomatic sentence.

(14) *Ricky: What Julian doesn't **grow won't burn him***

*T: Ei kerrota Julianille. **Tieto lisää puskaa.***

BT: [Let's not tell Julian. Knowledge increases the bush.]

(Trailer Park Boys S4E7)

Here the idiom is semantically altered. The original proverbial idiom is “what you do not know will not hurt you”. The ST wordplay could be considered to be paronymous, especially with the “grow” and “know” word pairing, but “hurt” and “burn” are farther apart than that. When treating the ST word choices as a whole, it leans more on a character-based word replacement than mixing up similar sounding words, which in this series seems to often be the case. Even though the “burn” and “hurt” are almost synonymous the interaction between “burn” and rest of the altered idiom is more of a malapropism than a paronymy. The resulting sentence is nonsensical, but fairly subtle.

The resulting translation is however closely paronymous and more of a classic example of why paronymous wordplay is considered funny. “Tuska” and “Puska” being somewhat

similar sounding, vastly different in meaning and close enough in written form to almost consider as homographs, highlight the humour more than the subtle and easily overlooked joke in the ST. “Tuska” being the Finnish word for the concept of pain and “puska” translating to “bush”. The sentence structure of the translation is altered towards presenting the Finnish equivalent of the idiom. Splitting the sentence in to two allows the subtitles to present the information (Julian does not need to know) and the idiom in its correct form.

The original form of the phrase seems to be derivative of a biblical passage in the Ecclesiastes: “For with much wisdom comes much sorrow; the more knowledge, the more grief” (Ecclesiastes 1:18: NIV). The concept of the idiom is common one even contemporarily, and there are multiple alternatives to it in English language. Phrases such as “ignorance is bliss” and “turn a blind eye to something” lean towards similar connotative meaning while being similarly proverbial in nature. The phrases in these forms have been in recorded use in the English language since late 1600s and 1700s, according to OED (2020). The form used in the series is more of a colloquial expression of similar sentiment, suitable to an everyman such as Ricky.

The denotative meanings of the ST and TT phrases do not match, while connotative does. The different approach alters nuance of the translation, but stylistically it is very similar in form. The second part of the joke is omitted in favour of more culturally appropriate translation. This omission could be seen as language-specific one, as the Finnish equivalent of the idiom is very simplified, and as such could be justified. From an equivalency perspective the translation leaves something to be desired. However, the end result reads as it isn’t a translation at all and arguably works better than the original. Many equivalence-based viewpoints would punish rewriting, but in this case and with this quality assessment template I would consider the translation adequate.

In this scene in season 4, Ricky was proposed:

(15) *Ricky: Did you just ask if I wanna **get married by you?***

T: Kysytkö, haluanko mennä naimisiin?

BT: [Did you ask if I want to get married?]

(Trailer Park Boys S4E7)

Ricky seems to have on-going problem with verb structures relating to getting married. In addition to this, Ricky has often referenced “proposing” as “proposaling”. During episode 7, both of these forms showed up and coincidentally, both of them were omitted. Getting married to someone or by someone carry a vastly different meaning. Thus, mixing these up already has a strong footing as a joke.

Both replacements would be easy to include in Finnish due to how the morphology works. Neither of them are. Language-based omission is ruled out on the grounds of how easy it would be to include the said joke in Finnish. Just altering the suffix would suffice and result in adequate content. However, this line is already very close to the maximum number of characters for a Netflix subtitle. Altering it necessarily would not put it over the character limit, but it is in the middle of a dialogue between two characters. This could also possibly be an oversight, but being so close to the character limit and moving the dialogue forwards gives this decision the benefit of a doubt. It would be a bit too harsh to consider this as downright inadequate. It is debatable, hence ambiguous.

The next example is also based on idiomatic sentence, but in this case, it is omitted:

(16) *Ricky: What I started realizing about Trinity is that now she's at that age where it's **gorilla see gorilla do**.*

T: Tajusin, että Trinity on siinä iässä, että hän matkii.

BT: [I realised Trinity is at that age where she's mimicking.]

(Trailer Park Boys S3E8)

This is another example of wordplay where spotting it might be part of the appeal. The joke is not necessarily well hidden but might be easy to overlook if not paying particular

attention. The original phrase “monkey see, monkey do” refers to the learning by mimicking primates are known for doing. In this case, replacing monkey with gorillas is a minor shift in tone. Gorillas evoke more thoughts of using brute force in people, rather than learning the usage of for example, tools like smaller primates referenced in the phrase. The original saying seems to have caught on in the early 1900s, originating from newspaper articles (OED, 2020). The original etymology of the phrase is uncertain (Whitman, 2013), but as many other catchy phrases, after it had caught on it still lives to see regular use today.

The translation is omitting the idiom completely and replacing it with the sentiment of the original saying without any alterations. At glance, this is the easiest solution to the problem the translation places upon the translator. Finnish does not have an equivalent phrase or saying to easily replace the original phrase. Even the sentiment does not carry over to any easy to add, established sayings. When I tried to search for alternatives, I found cases where the “monkey see, monkey do” was used verbatim in midst of Finnish texts or titles. This could indicate that the omission has language-based value for omitting the humour from the ST sentence. Then again, the original phrase is not that complex. The innate connotative meaning could be summed up in Finnish as “matkii kuin apina”, which translates directly as “mimics like a monkey”. While the mimicking sentiment is present in the subtitles, the comparative adjective is absent. This leads to a feeling that the translation is somewhat incomplete, at least when the reader understands the spoken ST equivalent.

An argument could be made that the space for the joke is used for other dialogue. This seems to not be the case, as the original English subtitles use 2 spaces for Ricky’s dialogue, whereas Finnish subtitles only use one. There would be room to expand the sentiment, if that could be done in a satisfactory manner. This rules out media-based reasons for omission.

While the reasoning could sway either way on this example. The quality assessment criteria I have chosen shows a lot of disparities between the ST and TT. Connotative meanings are similar, but they are delivered in a different fashion. Denotative meaning, style and nuance shift are wildly different compared to the ST. Even the resulting sentence in the subtitle does not really feel like it was written by a Finnish native due to the odd sentence structure. For these reasons, it was considered as inadequate translation from the material.

The next section is the conclusive one. I will present my thoughts on the material, analysis and results. I will also offer a comment on the method this thesis was conducted and if the quality assessment methods I have chosen could be used for non-document texts in the future.

3.3 Quality model

In this chapter, I will comment on the Koby et.al. “narrow model” of quality assessment for translations. I will address the concerns I had applying the model to audio-visual translation and subtitles specifically. To begin, the writers proposing the theory admit neither of the “broad” and “narrow” models of quality assessment are not perfect (Koby et.al., 2014, p. 417-420). They state that while the main quality metrics of fluency and accuracy are extensive, they are not comprehensive. This is shown by breaking them down into smaller elements to evaluate texts more thoroughly in the narrow model compared to the broad one. They also point out that both models could benefit from a set of error categories to create another quality metric (Koby et. al., 2014, p. 418), among other concerns.

What I noticed when comparing the quality labels I used (adequate/ambiguous/inadequate), was that while most of the adapted content was adequately translated to Finnish, some of the translation decisions were questionable. Adapting the joke to Finnish was never outright inadequately carried out, but there were a few ambiguous cases. This was

true in reverse with omitted humour. While most of the omissions were inadequate, media- and language-based restrictions of subtitling made me consider some of them as adequate in cases where the space was used for neighbouring dialogue and ambiguous in cases where cultural content deemed the texts somewhat untranslatable.

This highlights the problem different text types and the examined areas in the translations. As multiple scholars have repeated, quality is a complex subject to measure. The quality model I chose to use was somewhat simplified and was designed for ease of application. While applying its metrics on 44 instances of wordplay, I noticed that certain areas of analysis hold a greater value in other cases than it does in another. In some cases, it seemed that the stylistic equivalence between the texts held a greater importance than the connotative message, for example. The scale of importance between elements fluctuated. Observing and analysing this brings a lot of subjectivity into the equation of analysis. What this means is that absolute quality metrics for general text analysis most likely will not exist in the foreseeable future. Some form of subjectivity and especially human judgement is necessary to determine if the text is reasonably adequate or inadequate. It is left to be seen if machine translations gather enough wide-spread applications to sometime arrive at universally accepted quality metrics for translations. Currently this seems to be the motivating factor to developing generic quality metrics for translation.

One of the goals of the said quality model was to provide *“urgently need[ed] way compare different kinds of translations as objectively as possible, with an emphasis in identifying problems”* (Koby et.al., 2014, p. 415-416). Even when the theory itself has a lot of room for improvement, I do believe it has achieved this goal. The metrics they have chosen are relevant and fairly easily applicable by language professionals. The theory provides data for further research and is fairly consistent. Would audio-visual material benefit from more specialised quality metrics? Certainly. Also, for my purposes, I needed to assess if the possible omissions from the translations, a use-case that did not exist in the

quality model. However, usage of omission to an extent it is used in subtitling is uncommon in most of the other medias and could be considered as a special case. However, I ended up needing to use Gottliebs omission categories in this study. This could be seen as one requirement for more specialised quality assessment tools for audio-visual texts.

4 Conclusion & Closing Thoughts

This thesis studied the Finnish subtitles of Mike Clattenburg's Trailer Park Boys on Netflix. The main focus was to see how well humour and wordplay was transferred from the spoken source text to the written subtitles, with a secondary research question of assessing the quality model itself. This was achieved by identifying the wordplay, analysing how it was translated and investigating if the subtitles were adequate from a quality standpoint.

The results of ST material categorisation were not surprising. The only somewhat unexpected result would be the complete absence of homonyms, which is using the same word in a different context changing the meaning of the phrase. Examining the other results leads to a conclusion that this kind of wordplay seems to be out of character for Ricky, as most of the erroneous phrases he uses tend to involve mixing up whole words or even phrases and not just small, contextual cues. In the subtitles, the usage of translation strategies was more surprising. The majority of wordplay was adapted to the target language (21/44) followed by omission and non-wordplay adaptation (18/44). There were only four cases where the space for wordplay was fathomably used for neighbouring dialogue and 1 verbatim translation of a proper noun. Out of all the translation strategies, only the strategy of moving wordplay to a different textual position was unused. This was somewhat surprising, as my previous quantitative study of the translation strategies used on the same show pointed towards omission being the most common strategy. However, this study has a larger sample size, and the scale of usage of adaptive and non-wordplay strategies is very close. Exactly half of the wordplay occurring throughout the show was somewhat surprisingly adapted to the subtitles in some form, retaining the humour. With 22 instances of humour retaining strategies (rendered verbatim, wordplay adapted) used in the subtitles the translators have arguably done a fairly good job. Even though half of the source humour was adapted to the subtitles, some seasons contributed to this more than the others. There were some episodes of a particular season where all the jokes were translated and some where none were. While this is not necessarily a bad thing, it shows how the different Netflix subtitles are per season to season

basis, even though the subtitlers are following similar guidelines. The subjectivity of translation process plays a big role in translation quality.

Regarding the quality analysis, most of the translations were adequate (20/44) followed by 14 ambiguous cases with only 10 being inadequate. These results can be seen, depending on perspective, from expected to appalling. On other hand, Netflix is notoriously questionable to when it comes to sourcing subtitles, and the results could be seen as “you get what you pay for” scenario. On other hand, if nearly 20 percent of the work somebody puts in is unacceptable and almost half of the remaining portion is somewhat questionable on a quality front, there are bound to be some major problems.

Regarding the quality model, the main question left here would be if I believe these numbers were affected by the choice of the quality assessment model. While I do believe that audio-visual translation is a medium that would benefit from specialised translation quality metrics, ultimately, I believe Koby, Fields, Hague, Lommel and Melby are onto something here. Their text-centric theory was applicable for research purposes and presents a somewhat definite number of results which could be used in data comparisons. While I believe both ends of the spectrum of analysis in “adequate” and “inadequate” translations would remain close to the same if this research was reproduced, the number of ambiguous cases is concerning. 14 debatable cases which could in theory swing to either end is too much, even for a theory that aims to be general and generic between all the different types of texts. However, I believe the theory has achieved its goal, and it is worth looking into and developing moving onwards.

Unless specifically researching the nature of subtitles themselves, wordplay would be easier to study elsewhere, possibly in literature. The type of wordplay presented here, mostly consisting of malapropisms, has its roots on the 18th century literature and often appears in humorous literature (eg. Mustonen 2016). However, it has been popularised by the rise of mainstream sitcoms and even to greater extent, the boom in mockumentary comedy series. Malapropisms and other slips of tongue have been used in television

to portray characters in less-than-favourable light at least since the 1980s, and when dictionary.com gathered a list of the tv-characters most known for this, 5 out of the 14 were from recent or still running mockumentary-style series. For comparison 4 were out of older sitcoms, 3 from dramas (Dictionary.com, 2020). However, while the current tv-climate might be the best time to study this type of wordplay and its translations, the reproducibility is going to become a problem in the future. While certain editions of books may be hard to come by, the revisions between editions are usually fairly minor. Whereas the iterations of translations between tv-series' releases on physical media, different networks or streaming platforms usually mean the translations are redone. This is because the subtitles and translations are separate creative content from the original show. This, however, hurts the reproducibility of theses such as this. Therefore, I would recommend only to study subtitles and subtitling as forms of media separately from wordplay, which is also plentiful in literary field, for example.

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