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Subtitles making meaning – much more than meets the eye

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The thesis focuses on the meaning-making potential of subtitling in television programmes. It aims to an interdisciplinary approach combining research into audiovisual translation work and media research. The medium television, the institution of the Finnish Broadcasting Company Yleisradio, the professional practice of subtitling as well as subtitling as a convention are analysed in the context of meaning production.

The method used in this research is based on text analysis and the ethnography of the author as a television translator. Media research concentrates on meaning-making, cultural reception of subtitled television programmes and the service qualities of subtitling on public service television. Special attention is paid to the various ways of interpreting and creating opportunities for meaning production by each member of the audience. Watching subtitled programmes and meaning making are connected with identity construction and rethinking the perspectives on audiences in media research.

Theoretical support for the ideas presented in this paper is to be found especially in the works of researchers of media audience and cultural power (Alasuutari, Corner, Ellis, Morley). Subtitled programmes are part of the televisual look and media culture in Scandinavia. Combining subtitling with contexts like culture, society, audience and audiencehood open up new ways of perceiving meaning making and its impact on us as members of the audience.

Subtitles are an everyday phenomenon, yet they have been rarely analysed from the angle of media research. They are a popular service to all viewers, not to mention special target groups like the hearing-impaired, the elderly, immigrants, children and other language learners. They are our daily reading material and offer a source of written communication to strengthen our literacy skills in a wider sense.

The development of the services, including subtitles, provided by a public service broadcasting company is a most current and interesting issue in Finland. The threats and opportunities emerging from digitalisation are many, and as it seems, subtitling that has been a rather overlooked and taken-for-granted phenomenon, is gaining ground with all its add-on features and languages.

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0 Introduction

This thesis is focused on the meaning-making potential of subtitling in a television programme as an audiovisual whole. The topic developed a special interest through the ethnography of the author as a television translator of both in-house and imported television programmes broadcast by TV 2, Tampere, at YLE, the Finnish Broadcasting Company (Aaltonen 1994).

Research into audiovisual texts on television has been growing continuously, especially since the 1990's. Translating for the media has become an established research topic. Audiovisual translating is discussed at regular intervals in the scientific journals: it was the topic of *META* in 2004 (XLIX). My own interest was initiated in the mid-nineties after finishing my thesis in translation studies on "The role and responsibilities of a freelance translator". I presented some meaning-making aspects and the context of Scandinavian culture in an international conference on Audiovisual Transfer in Strasbourg in 1995 (Aaltonen 1995). My contribution at the conference was the initial inspiration for this research. My intention is to create an interdisciplinary approach to the topic through translation and television studies, culture and communication studies.

Interdisciplinary approach in this thesis consists of combining translating experience with studies of journalism and mass communication. Littlejohn and Foss (288, 2005) note that "media messages are especially intriguing from a semiotic perspective because they usually consist of a fascinating blend of symbols that are organised spatially and chronologically to create an impression, transmit an idea, or elicit a meaning in an audience". Seen from a semiotic point of view, a subtitled television programme is an entity where one takes all the components of the programme constituting the message into consideration: moving image, sound, (caption) text and subtitles. Subtitles are organised spatially at the bottom of the screen, according to a medium-loyal convention.

One of my main claims is that subtitles are likely to increase the meaning-making potential of a television programme. I aim to analyse the meanings created in connection with subtitling. Subtitles are a text, a source of reading, used solely in the context of a television programme, but they are a meaning-making form in their own right as well.

This investigation has to do with intercultural communication and the contexts of subtitling. Some of the dimensions to be dealt with it are concepts like nationality/ethnicity, group membership,

identified shared meanings, social context, and shared cultural practices. Mendoza et al. call them boundary markers. (Cf. Mendoza et al. 2002) In this case an implicit impetus for discussing the meaning potential of subtitles lies in the ethnographic history of the author.

Translating for television, in this case subtitling, is a culturally interesting object for study. Subtitles widely known, discussed, even self-evident in nature and sometimes even considered simple. The meaning-making potential connected with subtitles contains many insights, e.g. it reproduces and reinforces the idea of knowing languages (actual understanding combined with an illusion of even profounder understanding). A subtitled television programme has a multifunction task to educate the viewers (vocabulary, concepts, general knowledge etc.). It also offers an opportunity for active language studies for learners of Finnish (and foreign languages) and thus integration into the Finnish culture and language. Subtitles are a service free of charge for all viewers, not to forget the elderly, the hearing-impaired, language minorities and immigrants.

I aim to address the concepts of the medium, institution, professional practice, subtitling as a convention, culture and the audience in the context of television subtitles as a component of the audiovisual whole. Subtitles create an additional dimension complementing the communication process and thus the entire programme. Watching a subtitled programme is an intensive, combined activity consisting of viewing and reading the subtitles at the same time. This thesis is a contribution to the discussion on the meaning-making potential of subtitled television programmes, one of the typical audiovisual television culture products in our environment. I wish to investigate the meaning-making potential from a Scandinavian perspective, from the viewpoint of a subtitling country.

Does subtitling create meanings and what kind of meanings does it create? The argumentation focuses on the meaning production through viewing subtitled television programmes.

Subtitles are a traditional and cost-effective way of managing language transfer in programme making, a typical solution of a small country.

Chapters one and two seek to analyse the medium television and the broadcasting institution of Yleisradio. In order to shed light on the meaning-making potential created by the professional practices, the subtitling process of the institution Finnish Broadcasting Company, TV 2 and the role of the television translator are explained in chapter three. Chapter four deals with subtitling as a convention and the product subtitle. An important aspect is the shift of mode (spoken original

transferred into written text, i.e. subtitles). Ivarsson (1992) was among the first to pay attention to this. The concept of a television text is the audiovisual whole (moving image, sound, graphic elements (captions, intertitles), and possible subtitling). In a television programme, everything interacts with everything else.

The communicational approach contributes the very useful notion of a context and stresses its importance to the understanding of messages. As Truax puts it, “A sound means something partly because of what produces it, but mainly because of the circumstances under which it is heard” (Truax 1994, xii). This goes for subtitles as well: they are written information that only make sense in the context of a television programme. However, scholars of the art, the technique of subtitling, emphasise that subtitles are formed to be independent entities that can be understood on their own and will make sense in their own right (Ivarsson and Vallisaari). It is obvious that subtitles contribute to the communicational whole. I wish to present viewpoints for exploring the meaning-making potential of subtitling, the meanings created by subtitles, an everyday phenomenon, trying to broaden the understanding of our Scandinavian television culture (cf. Alasuutari 1999, 6) and its current development in the era of digital broadcasting.

Chapter five discusses two central aspects of television studies, i.e. culture and audience, from the angle of the meaning-making potential of subtitling. Chapter six concludes the thesis by presenting some ideas for the future use of subtitling.

1 Medium

Television is part of our domestic culture in everyday life. In addition to being ordinary, television also has a certain prestige and influence on us as a medium. According to the newspaper of the Finnish Journalists' Association, *Journalisti* (2008, issue 2), television is the most important and the most trusted news medium for the Finns. We are known as diligent newspaper readers. If we think of the amount of time spent reading in general, television subtitles are without doubt a considerable rival to newspaper articles, if not the main source of daily reading material for many viewers. Kantola (2008) estimates that the amount of subtitles read annually by an average youngster compares with the amount of reading about twenty books.

Television programmes, in this research called also television texts, are examples of audiovisual texts. Elements of the television text are the moving image, sound and written visual information (e.g. captions, credits, intertitles and subtitles). Television studies has its roots in a mixture of disciplines.

1.1. Coherence of complementing elements

According to Ellis, (1989, 116) "the basic organization of materials is that of the segment, a coherent group of sounds and images, of relatively short duration that needs to be accompanied by other similar such segments". Subtitles are a complementing element to a segment. As Ellis points out, the emphasis lies on the coherence, which the subtitles also have to apply to. Subtitles complement the programme, as they might complement each individual segment of a programme, forming a subordinated structure of elements.

Gripsrud (in Geraghty & Lusted, 1998, 18) defines that "the capacity for simultaneity between a 'real' event and its transmission and reception as audio-visual representation is central among television's *differentia specifica*, its specificity as a medium". This does not go for subtitles, as they need to be prepared and typed before broadcasting, even if they were projected live within a transmission. Subtitling causes a delay, a technical feature to be considered in the medium.

Corner (1999, 41) mentions the communicative relations with the viewer. Subtitles are a further category to have an interplay in relation to the communicative elements of television. Corner

describes voice-over as direct address. Subtitles provide the information in a different mode, i.e. in writing. They are an accompaniment, an additional dimension. Because they accompany television programmes on a regular basis, they have become a natural part of foreign-language television transmissions, a domestic source of reading, just like newspapers and books. Further Corner (1999, 87) remarks that television is a domestic medium that has marked a decisive shift in the meaning and possibilities of home life. In Finnish terms, domestic viewing of a subtitled programme also means domestic reading. For many it also means spontaneous language learning, either intentional or unintentional.

1.2. Television as a visual medium

Whether television is dominantly a sound or a visual medium, is an interesting question in the context of subtitling. Ellis notes that “sound is used to ensure a certain level of attention, to drag viewers back to looking at the set” (1989, 128) and continues that “sound holds attention more consistently than image, and provides a continuity that holds across momentary lapses of attention”. He also points out that “for TV, sound has a more centrally defining role” (ibid, 129) and that “sound tends to anchor meaning on TV” and remarks that this is “a matter of emphasis rather than any simple reliance one upon another. Sound and image exist in relation to each other in each medium rather than acting as separate entities”. According to Ellis, there is greater reliance on sound, as television “produces an emphasis on sound as the carrier of continuity of attention and therefore of meaning” (1989, 132). Subtitles accompany the sound, taking the image into consideration at the same time. Watching subtitled programmes combines the two functions of viewing and reading the subtitles. It is a known fact that viewing a subtitled programme causes an automatic reading behaviour, i.e. reading the subtitles. Ellis (1989, 130) writes about subservient partners in the image/sound relationship on television and in the cinema. In the focus of this research, written text in the form of subtitles is another partner that is very typical on Scandinavian television and in the cinema.

McCloud (1994) looks at comics as an art form and seeks to define how the human mind interprets the language of comics. One of the key themes in his work is the interaction between words and images. He defines the basic elements of comics and the ways they complement each other. According to McCloud, the relationship between the image and text can be divided into several different categories. He calls comics an invisible art. Here one can note that subtitles can be seen,

like comics, as an art form that complements the organisation of the elements of the medium television.

Television programmes are cultural texts, independent textual entities. In this thesis, a subtitled programme can be called a cultural and a culturally adjusted text. Chaume (2004) calls audiovisual texts redundant texts, i.e. texts with redundancy. The same information comes explicitly from the audiovisual channel: as an image, complemented by the sound and the partly redundant information that is provided in the subtitles. Redundancy is a vital concept in the context of audiovisual texts, such as subtitled programmes. Subtitles are a complementing element that is subservient to the other elements. There is no programme with the subtitles only or use for the subtitles alone. But where subtitles are needed, they are an essential element for the target-language viewer. Without them a programme is not satisfactory for that particular audience.

Hujanen (2002) writes about the power of schedule. There is no special scheduling for subtitled programmes or avoidance of broadcasting them, with perhaps the exception of early weekend mornings, as children under school age often are directed to watch television before the adults get up. This is a time slot in the schedule when subtitled children's programmes are not broadcast – instead, dubbed children's programmes in Finnish are transmitted.

According to the company policy, there is a certain emphasis laid on in-house production at the Finnish Broadcasting Company Yleisradio. Finnish language refers to Finnishness, and also the Swedish-speaking minority of the country will get its established share and service in Swedish-language programme content that is produced in Finland by Yleisradio. In the schedule there are often reruns of both in-house and other programmes. This goes for other broadcasters as well. Reruns of programmes can be broadcast all day long, in the morning, in the early afternoon, in the evening, and even at night.

News have their standard time slots for broadcasting. They often show news content that is subtitled material. A news broadcast without subtitles is rather an exception. Inserts, e.g. speeches, statements and interviews from the scene of the event are used to prove the authenticity and credibility of the news coverage. Subtitles are the necessary, supporting element that serve the same purpose.

Prime time high-profile conversation programmes with a slow pace, such as *Punainen lanka* and *Inhimillinen tekijä*, require a large amount of research done in preparation for each broadcast. They are examples of flagship programmes of TV 2's own production. Perhaps one could claim that the Finnish-language programmes of Yleisradio at least used to be understood as examples of high quality. Currently there is subtitling in Finnish for the hearing-impaired available as an optional digital service for the viewers. Very typically a quality documentary also shows inserts with subtitled interviews. One can thus say that subtitling as such is not a sign of lesser or higher quality, it is simply an ubiquitous accompaniment of a television programme. Subtitling is a service that requires time and expert knowledge of both the target and source language.

Especially in the case of in-house production programmes one might argue that the programmes are specially designed (selection of topic, approach, interviewees etc.) for a national audience. Subtitles are a natural dimension of such a programme: they are added if there are any foreign-language segments in the programme. Foreign-language interviews, as an example of material to be subtitled, are inserted to the programme as an interesting viewpoint for the target-language and culture audience.

1.3. Television as a medium within the context of subtitles

Television as a sound media (Ellis) gets counterbalance from subtitles. One could claim about subtitled programmes that the dominating element is the moving image (if not the subtitles themselves), as the viewer is even more attracted to the visual image, watching and reading. Subtitles are an important source of information across language and cultural barriers. Television is a visual medium especially when the viewers are watching a foreign-language programme. Watching foreign-language programmes requires special attention and an intensiveness of viewing. Reading subtitles is part of the Finns' daily television routines and viewing habits. A significant proportion of television programmes is subtitled. According to the communications manager of Yleisradio, Mika Ojamies, a dominant share of in-house production is subtitled (HS 16 May 2008). This is characteristic of Finnish television.

The immediacy of a live broadcast on television is not possible when using subtitling. A subtitled programme cannot be a live transmission, as subtitling takes some time as a sheer physical activity and also requires certain post-production technology. Yleisradio, the Finnish Broadcasting

Company is the most trustworthy broadcaster of the Finns and also a pioneer in the field of subtitles in our country.

Subtitles seem to be property of the company. Programmes/films are subtitled again when shown by an other broadcaster. The practice of using subcontractors in the process of programme making (subtitling understood as part of the programme-making procedure) has led to the rise of subtitling companies doing that share of the programme. Chapter three deals with the professional practice at Yleisradio concerning translation work.

1.4. Characteristics of the Finnish televisual look

Subtitling is a routine, taken-for-granted solution for transmitting foreign-language material. Subtitles are accessible to all viewers, they don't exclude speakers or learners of the original language from watching the programme in question. Subtitles are part of the Finnish televisual look. Corner (1995, 13) defines this concept as "both the way things look on television and the way in which we are encouraged to look at them". A subtitled programme (i.e. the combination of the programme and the subtitles) offers another visualisation of the medium television. Subtitled programmes are part of the culturally-specific media offer of the country. Typical of the Finnish broadcasting culture is a large share of foreign-language and foreign-origin material. It is worth noting that this programme material is domesticated for the national audience by the use of subtitling.

Subtitles are apt to confirm the credibility and trustworthiness of the medium television. The medium itself is confirmed, as is the message of the programme, as there is "black on white" (in this case white characters superimposed on the programme) as a proof of what is being said in the programme (medium). This again, constructs the idea of adjusted and filtered knowledge, which is one of the major claims of the thesis.

1.5. Television and subtitling in the era of plenty

The offer of choice for the viewer is growing at a high speed with new distribution and digital image technologies. In the case of subtitling, the increasing amount of choice also intensifies the

importance of subtitling and underlines the service character of the medium and the public service broadcasting company Yleisradio. Ellis (2000) pays attention to the nature of the recent development of television that he calls the era of plenty by asking to what extent the current development was planned instead of arbitrary, if not accidental. He sees a change in the role of the public service broadcasting that

“is in many ways the opposite of its former role: instead of providing displays of national unity, it deals in displays of national, the better to bring about new ways of dissolving them. Instead of establishing a national form of standard speech, it increases the range of accents and forms of speech that can be universally understood.” (87)

When considering the offer of more choice and the need for developing new strategies for the new definition of public service, subtitling remains to be a practical tool to handle widening expression. It is also an appropriate technique in the search of new possibilities for social cohesion in Finnish society.

An interesting recent development concerning subtitles is the opportunity of choice for the viewer concerning the choice of the subtitling language. It is possible to offer language options in the two official languages of Finland, Finnish and Swedish, both of which can be used as intralingual subtitles, which appear in the source language. They are often condensed or compressed, and do not involve translation. (O'Hagan).

2 Institution

The Finnish Broadcasting Company YLE Yleisradio is a public service broadcaster, a state-owned limited company that operates several television channels in Finnish and Swedish (after the digitalisation reform of 2007 - 2008). There is also a number of radio channels. According to the idea of a public service broadcaster, YLE offers all the main genres of broadcasting with special attention paid to the diversity of contents. There is a wide choice of information, entertainment, distraction, popular culture etc. Hujanen (2002, 20) reports these tasks as follows: “YLE’s operations are based on a law that identifies a number of so called special functions of public service which include, among others, YLE’s role in the support, creation and development of domestic culture, as well as to furthering enlightenment and education. YLE is also supposed to offer religious programming, treat Finnish- and Swedish-speaking citizens equally and offer services in small minority languages like Sami, Roman and sign language for deaf people.”

2.1. Finland - a subtitling country

There are several foreign-language programmes, individual and series, broadcast in Finland, in all the different genres offered by the company. For the transfer of the linguistic content, YLE made, as early as in 1957, the decision that subtitles will be used. Finland is, like the other Scandinavian countries, a subtitling country. Subtitling as a technical solution for language transfer is still the by far dominant technique in Finland. The early technical equipment (Aston) used for subtitling was originally designed rather for caption texts and other graphic elements, where as newer technology (Scantitling) allows subtitling timing precision up to a fraction of a second and to high-precision editing when editing the subtitles (coding for in-time and out-time of the subtitles). This is of importance when thinking of the increasing pace and rhythm of programmes in the course of the years.

Watching subtitled programmes means in practice, first of all, that the audience listens to the original sound while watching television. The focus of this study is to discuss possible meanings that are created in connection with subtitling as an aid and a service in foreign-language programmes. The decision to apply subtitles as a rule for interlingual transmission has been a company practice for 50 years. The Finnish audience as well as the policy makers of the institution YLE have been content with this decision. The solution was awarded with a prize just last year in

2007 (HS December 2007). The prize gives reason to reflect on the impact of the chosen solution, its advantages and the meaning-making potential. Subtitling is a national specificity, typical of small countries. Österlund-Karinkanta and Moring (2007, 96) mention the positive attitudes towards multiculturalism being one of the influences supported by subtitling. They also see subtitling as a way of providing services to special groups and minorities (ibid, 112).

The broadcasting activity of the Finnish Broadcasting Company is funded to a large extent by collecting licence fees. According to a broadcasting law passed in 1998, major commercial operators in Finland must pay a percentage of their revenues to supplement YLE's public service broadcasting (Hujanen 2002, 16). This practice was, however abolished by legislation in 2007 (Hujanen 2008, 67).

2.2. More options for choice

An interesting recent development concerning subtitles in some programmes is the opportunity of choice for the viewer to choose between Finnish and Swedish both in the sortiment of the text television and the digital broadcasting technology. When thinking of the new technologies available, one might ask how much better could YLE actually meet the needs of the national and other minorities, say immigrants, the Swedish-speaking and the Sami population in Finland ? As an improvement for the future, this technology could be used for providing subtitles also in other national minority languages as an option in the text television. Subtitling is not a very costly solution for this situation.

Subtitled programmes are a product of adjusted and tailored service for the target-language audience. In some countries they are a sign of non-national media products. (Lemish et al., 545), whereas in Finland they are part of our bilingual culture also in domestic media products in both of the official languages. Increasing the options to choose between the two would offer more choice for the Finnish-language audience also. For the Swedish-speaking minority of some 6 per cent there are Swedish subtitles. They can be replaced by Finnish subtitles according to the viewer's choice by using the services of text television and/or digital technology. Another service available for the viewer is to remove the subtitles, if one wishes to view a programme without subtitling.

The Finnish Broadcasting Company is, without any doubt, a powerful national institution and instrument as a national educator and entertainer. It is a flagship of Finnishness (see Luukka 2008). Corner pays attention to the fact that national histories of broadcasting vary considerably in the degree to which radio and television were perceived to be instruments of national culture (1999, 20). Subtitles are seen in this thesis both as an element of our national culture, but also as an instrument with some additional meanings.

2.3. Meaning production through the institution

There has never been a 24-hour flow of television programming in Finland, instead there has been a rather limited choice, a set of programmes divided into their more or less regular broadcasting hours between early evening till midnight. I would like to argue that the scarce and structured offer of programmes is likely to make viewing a more planned activity. It is not easy to tell whether people are likely to watch a programme till the end due to the fact that there are subtitles. Having subtitles might affect the way programmes are watched. We are now living in an era of plenty (Ellis 2000) with a growing number of competitors to public television broadcasting. The continuous flow or even more so the 24-hour offer of programmes on the internet is changing the nature of broadcasting into the direction of a bookshelf/videotheque where one can pick free of charge a favourite programme at any time. This again is very likely to strengthen the position of the Finnish Broadcasting Company Yleiradio. From the viewpoint of subtitles the development with the internet supports their status and the experience that they can be taken for granted.

CREDIBILITY
OF THE INSTITUTION

There are some meanings that can be derived from the combination of the institution and the practice of subtitling. A public service broadcaster can be considered a guarantee of quality on the basis of the statutory position of the institution. On the other hand, subtitles can be perceived as a cultural code, the pioneer of which was this public service institution. Yleisradio can even gain more credibility as a broadcaster due to the fact that it provides its viewers with quality subtitling in all of its foreign-language programmes.

Subtitles allow an educated viewer to compare the translation with the original. The opportunity to listen to the original is apt to create trust in the quality of the programme. One might thus note that subtitles carry the meaning of a guarantee of trustworthiness and high quality.

The era of digital broadcasting entered Finnish homes only recently. The initiating period of digital broadcasting in Finland took place from September 2007 till February 2008. These months and the time after them have presented numerous technical difficulties concerning the reliability of broadcasting. One might argue that the credibility of the institution YLE could be questioned. When listing the various possibilities for technical failures, subtitling was the most common of them (Räisänen 2008), but by far not the only one. This has led to a development where dozens of thousands of Finnish households have cancelled their licence since 2007.

Before the beginning of the digital era, subtitling had a status of a basic element on television (comparable to the image or sound) in the transmissions: a failure to show the subtitles in an individual programme used to lead to interrupting the transmission, starting over, and in a case of repeated difficulties with subtitling, the programme was rerun at a later date as a compensation to the viewers. Opposite to this, the current digital broadcasts facing technical problems in subtitling are often left without an apology to the audience, not to mention a compensation in the form of a rerun.

3 Professional practice

A public broadcasting company employs a number of different types of professionals for programme making at the various stages of production. Professional translators, either permanent staff members or freelance translators, are a group of specialists needed to help overcome language and cultural barriers in television, to help convey the message of the programmes to the national target audiences.

The definitions of the work and of the role of a translator are numerous in translatology. According to Hatim and Mason, "translating is a communicative process which takes place within a social context" (Hatim & Mason 1990: 3). They see translators as linguistic intermediators. In addition to this, a translator is also a 'cultural filter'.

"Translators mediate between cultures (including ideologies, moral systems and socio-political structures), seeking to overcome those incompatibilities which stand in the way of transfer of meaning." (Hatim & Mason 1990, 223).

Translating takes place between cultures. Extra-lingual and culture-specific elements are often involved. Important quality criteria for translation work are functionality and credibility. The typical options of the translator to deal with culture-specific elements are explicit translations and cultural adaptations (finding a cultural equivalent), retaining the original local flavour of the programme, and sometimes creating a new, accustomed local flavour to the translated programme (cases of strong dialects, such as the German series "Heimat" (Kotiseutu in Finnish). In the case of a television subtitler there are always the constraints of space and time, which will be described in chapter four.

Corner (1999, 71) discerns four distinct inflections of the term production: the historical contexts of production referring to the general political and economic parameters within television production. Second, he lists the institutional settings of production. Third, Corner mentions production mentalities and finally, the production practices. By production practices Corner means "the particular skills and conventions of audio-visual construction and of performance which combine to make a television programme". These four elements – contexts, settings, mentalities and practices – all have an influence on, say, the working hierarchies and role expectations in the institutionalised conventions in the practice of programme-making.

3.1. Language transfer techniques

Making use of subtitles has in Finland been a well-functioning solution for fifty years already. It can be considered proof of the practice that subtitles are part of the national broadcasting culture. “Subtitles are part of the institutional image of the Finnish Broadcasting Company” might be an overstatement, but a Finnish-language subtitle projected on a programme does create meanings that go beyond the communicational content of language transfer. One of the meanings that will be dealt with in chapter six, is promoting language learning.

Subtitles are, for one thing, a self-evident service that is offered to the viewers, automatically and free of charge. Whenever there is foreign-language content to be heard, there is always a “company guarantee” to provide subtitles with the programme. Cases when voice-over comments or narration are used instead of subtitling are rare and usually due to a situation where a current international event is being broadcast, not allowing time for subtitling. There are however some programmes using voice-over translation, i.e. documentaries that have a narrator voice in the original, and some children’s programmes.

Another alternative to subtitling and the voice-over technique is dubbing. Typical features of dubbing are lip synchronization and target-language voice-actors. There are many constraints concerning time and the dramaturgy of the translation. The technique of dubbing is a time-consuming high-cost solution. In Finland only young children’s programmes (cartoons and animations) are dubbed. Other imported films and television programmes, as well as domestic programmes with foreign-language contents have subtitles. Many countries in Europe are dubbing television countries, such as Germany, France, Italy, Spain, Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Russia (Kantola 2008).

As both the market of audiovisual content providers is, and the market of translators are growing, the Finnish Broadcasting Company has a reputation and status to guard in this development. Will there ever be a time when programmes in public service television broadcasting would not be subtitled? One can severely doubt about it, as there is a current trend of growth in the amount of subtitling. One can predict that there will be all the more options of subtitling for the viewer in future.

3.2. Stages of production from the viewpoint of translation work

Subtitling is one of the procedures that is possible even as a final part of a production, i.e. superimposing subtitles on the finished programme. Before the subtitles are ready to be superimposed, a television translator has worked on the material and produced a translation in the form of subtitles (one to three-liners, two-liners most often). The practices of involving the translator differ greatly from production to production. The translator can be involved in the making of a television programme at various stages of production, starting from the planning stage, or being called to work almost at the finishing stage.

The material given to a television translator can be a ready-made programme to be broadcast, finished in every detail concerning the content, image and sound. Many imported programmes are subtitled in the post-production phase. Subtitles are then the final procedure before broadcasting. It is common to make a subtitled copy of the programme. The work phase takes place in an editing unit together with the translator. Another common alternative is to run the pre-timed subtitles (as they have been finished and timed by the translator) from a disk during the transmission by the technical personnel of the broadcasting company. A third alternative, which used to be a former practice, is still used, but only in urgent cases (like with current affairs live broadcasts), is to involve the translator to superimpose subtitles manually in a live situation in the midst of a transmission of a programme.

A television translator is often involved at an early stage of production, assigned to go through and translate a larger amount of background, raw material for a programme. The television journalist or reporter will thus have translations to ease the task of choosing the material for the programme (editorial decisions). It is also possible to involve a television translator as early as in the pre-production stage, or in the middle of the production, before or after shooting the materials. A journalist can get prepared for interviews with the help of a translator by working out a set of questions for the interview in two or three different languages. Most expert interviewees do speak English, but a set of questions in their own languages can bring more profound and useful statements for a television interview. As the interview is going to be subtitled in any case, it is worth while considering how to reach optimal results in foreign-language interviews. The translator can also be called on duty to go through the material together with the journalist.

3.3. Who are television translators?

A company practice at the Finnish Broadcasting Company is to use experts with university training in translation in order to guarantee the quality of work. The number of television translators who are permanent staff members at YLE is very limited, consisting of a dozen translators (eleven staff members in 2007). In addition to this, for a remarkable number of broadcast programmes, freelance translators are involved in the work of the Yle channels (TV1, TV 2, FST, Extra, Teema). The freelancers are involved for more or less regular individual assignments and are paid according to the company agreements. Academic requirements for trained professionals are applied to in the case of the freelancers as well. The staff members as well as the freelancers involved in subtitling by the Finnish Broadcasting Company are qualified professionals with excellent knowledge of the working languages and culture. It is worth noting that translators are also trained experts in their mother tongue.

Finnish television translators are professionals holding an academic education in translation studies with a profound knowledge of the language and culture. They also have an orientation for the work of an audiovisual translator, i.e. the work with subtitles, which can be included in the curriculum of translation studies. When proceeding into working life, an important part of a television translator's work is mastering the technology used with subtitling. The translators will also gain insight into the routines of television programme making teams at the television company.

3.4. Expertise – what does it consist of?

The translator is in charge of the the whole linguistic and technical procedure from working on a raw-translation to a ready-made, subtitled programme. Television translation assignments include writing and editing the subtitles, proof-reading and projecting or timing them for the programme to be broadcast.

A television translator can seek to specialise in different fields, e.g. science, politics, particular geographical areas or countries including their political systems and economy. Working as a television translator can include several tasks at different stages of production for the different types of programmes. A typical case involving a translator is a ready-made programme where subtitling is

needed, either for a programme with a 100 per cent foreign-language content or a programme with some foreign-language inserts in it.

A script, not to mention a dialogue list, is not always available, say, for instance for current affairs programmes, where the interviewees speak spontaneously, or when a speech just is not available in a written form at the time when the subtitles are produced. A great deal of the television programme material comes without a dialogue list. This is a common constraint in the job, as translation is a matter of understanding. Television translators rely and they have to rely on their own listening comprehension. The technical quality of the video cassettes as well as the clarity of expression of the speakers are seldom immaculate. The translator has to rely on what is being said on the tape, even if there is a dialogue list that says something else. Translation work is precision work, it is both time-consuming and error-prone when pressed for time. (O'Hagan 2007, 163). Typical examples of television translations without a manuscript are interviews, speeches, as well as some programme types, like current affairs and talk shows.

The Finnish Broadcasting Company remunerates subtitlers (like many other experts in programme making on the basis of a particular assignment rather than by a regular monthly salary) according to an agreement called *Yhtyneet-sopimus* that defines the details and payment criteria of the assignments. Payment rates for subtitlers are based, in addition to the number of subtitles, on the amount of in-house hours needed for editing purposes of the programme. An additional payment can be made on the basis of the degree of difficulty and for technical services, i.e. delivering the ready-made subtitles in an electronic form. The payment is also somewhat higher for specifically defined, so-called "rare" languages.

3.5. Responsibility

The translator is in charge of the quality of the translation concerning content, grammar and style, as well as for subtitling as a technical performance. The translator's turn comes most often towards the final editing as a final touch to the programme. Subtitles are projected on a ready-made programme (content, image and sound). The translator's work is independent, but involves consulting the other programme makers when needed. The final version of the programme with subtitles and finished sound quality is often an instance of an all-round quality control together with the main responsible persons before broadcasting the programme.

The competence of the translator as an expert of language and culture for both the source and the target languages can be used to analyse and consult the programme being made. The translator's knowledge is an asset for the team. Programmes as media products are, obviously, constructed following the journalistic intentions of the programme makers. An important fact to be pointed out about audiovisual translations for television is that they are used solely in the context of the ready-made programmes and have no other use in their own right as publications.

The role and responsibilities of a television freelance translator at TV 2 were the topic of my previous thesis in translation studies (Aaltonen 1994). One of the main findings in the thesis was that the expertise of a television translator can successfully be made use of as a cultural mediator in the journalistic process of programme making.

Special cases among the products of the Finnish Broadcasting Company YLE are documentaries where a Finnish-language narrator speaks instead of using subtitling. In translating documentaries the translator acts as a director for the Finnish sound version of the programme. In addition to writing the translated texts for a narrative text of the programme the translator directs and supervises the work of the team making the narrative sound for the programme.

Typical of the Finnish subtitling culture is that the programme makers as well as the viewers often have strong language skills in understanding the language of the programme (English). The work of the subtitler is displayed for comparison with the original and thus open criticism. Finns pay serious attention to what they read in the form of subtitles, and if they have any remarks, they don't hesitate to have their say in, e.g. in letters to the editor in the press.

3.6. Meaning production through the professional practice

Expertise goes hand in hand with quality. YLE uses professionals, which brings a label of quality into the programmes. A subtitled programme is a quality product that has been domesticated and refined for broadcasting.

“Subtitles can maximize the the viewer's enjoyment of the original semiotic resources while minimizing the mediator's intrusion”. (Pérez González 2006, 270)

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| LABEL OF QUALITY |
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The professional practice, i.e. the choice of subtitling as a language transfer technique for Finnish television was quite obviously based on economic realities (Österlund-Karinkanta and Moring, 112). This decision has undoubtedly had enormous unforeseen cultural impact. These cultural meanings are presented in the following chapters.

4 Subtitles

Subtitles make a contribution to the power of the composition as a whole. The semiotic consequence of this new dimension is that subtitles can and do convey meaning. The aim of this thesis is to identify and analyse the meaning-making potential of subtitling. Subtitles are a semiotic enrichment of the programme. Hull and Nelson research into the meaning systems of multimodal texts (2005, 252).

4.1 The convention of subtitling

Subtitling is, as stated earlier, a standard language transfer technique, a widely accepted, cost-effective solution following the language policy used at the Finnish Broadcasting Company. As a rule, foreign-language content is subtitled. Exceptions to this rule are, most typically, documentary soundtracks with voice-over narratives, children's programmes and direct live broadcasts.

Subtitles are a common commodity, they are present practically in our everyday watching. For many viewers, they are an important source of reading, for some they offer perhaps the largest dose of reading material of the day. They represent a written mode of addressing the viewers of a target language and culture.

Subtitles are a conventional mode that could be called a cultural code. Chaume (2004, 854) defines these written texts in the following:

“Audiovisual translations have already become a genre with specific characteristics, easily recognised by their addressees” .

Television programmes are multimedial texts that involve visual and audiovisual elements, i.e. they are to be seen and heard. Reading subtitles is often an integral part of viewing and receiving a televisual text. For the viewer, the whole content is complete first when the images and sounds are combined with written and spoken text. As a translation, subtitles seek coherence with and subordination to the image (Chaume 2004 a). An important factor concerning subtitles is that they are used only in the context of a television programme. They don't make sense in their own right, nor are they used as such, without the context they were designed for. The translator's text is based

on the whole audiovisual television programme. Subtitles are contextualised by the image and the sound. They make use of the changing visual and auditive context, the interplay of the elements. Jerslev (1992) compares subtitled programmes with a fixed cultural code.

”If the subtitles are to be easily understood in the short time available, each subtitle must be a *coherent logical or syntactical unit*.” (Ivarsson 1992, 96, my italics). Each subtitle is likely to make sense in its own right, even though they are not used without the context of the television programme. Subtitles have no use as publications elsewhere. As independent entities, subtitles in different languages can already to some extent be used as add-on options for the viewers. It is up to the viewer to choose the language and whether to turn on or off this language option (O’Hagan 2007). With the digitalisation of television, this is becoming the case also in Finland.

Translating subtitles includes a shift of mode from spoken expressions to written language. The change of mode is an important factor to be taken into consideration. Subtitles are a semiotic enrichment to the programme. They are an adaptation for the target audience, aiming to take cultural differences into consideration, crossing over language and cultural barriers. The original talk may be informal, familial or official in style, representing many different registers. The spoken address becomes a written message on the screen. The shift from the spoken mode to the written mode is not a modulation 1:1. Instead, the translator needs to note that written text is usually stronger in expression than words expressed in an auditory manner. This goes for the use of swear-words as well, as printed word stands for more. Swear-words have often been diluted to milder ones, but since recently it seems that bad language is no longer banned on the television screen, neither in the cinema.

Subtitles are high quality written texts to be used in the context of a television programme. They transmit information by complementing the acoustic and visual channels of communication. Subtitles are based on the original sound and projected in the tempo of the programme. Typical features of the content of subtitles are that they are correct in content, coherent in style, grammar and spelling. They are translated by university-trained experts who are specialised in the medium television. Subtitles are a product that is processed for an audience of the target language and culture.

Condensing and abridging are terms often used when writing about subtitling, but the work of an audiovisual translator consists of *interpreting* situations in a pithy way (Ivarsson 1992, 5, my

italics). I would like to agree with Ivarsson and Vallisaari who see subtitling as interpreting, rather than translating. Subtitling is about making adjusted interpretations on the terms of the situation, considering the spatial and temporal restrictions. Unsurprisingly, there is no place for translator's notes. "Untranslatable" cultural references and/or culturally specific elements are dealt with the translator's proficiency, considering the space and time available.

4.2 Visual convention and other constraints of the form

Subtitles are a visually harmonious intervention following a visual convention: white type-writer like, standard-size letters, written in a standard font and placed in a standard location at the bottom of the screen. Most typically subtitles are two-liners, they are white in colour, they have a standard font and size, and they are used in their standard location. More radical experimentation with the physical composition of the subtitles has rarely taken place (cf. Runoraati). Film subtitles for the hearing-impaired make an exception: subtitles are projected in different colours representing the different characters. Other background sounds and noises, when required for understanding, are marked additionally. There are some common ortho-typographical conventions in the profession, one of which is that in the subtitles for song lyrics, *italics* are usually used (Chaume 2004 a).

"Generally speaking, a subtitle is a one or two liner, each line consisting of about 30 characters, and is a logical entity that contains the information for 5 to 6 seconds of the program and is visible at the bottom of the TV screen during that period. The length and duration of a subtitle depends on various visual and phonic contextual factors." (Vallisaari quoted in Virkkunen 2001, 64)

Virkkunen, who refers in particular to the translation techniques used in opera surtitling, points out the importance of including signs and happenings from the whole stage in the surtitles (Virkkunen, 69). This goes for subtitling as well. Subtitles are natural and clear in style (Ryömä in Virkkunen, 51).

Subtitles are designed to coincide with the original dialogue, but sometimes also to take the cuts of the image into consideration. Subtitles do not interfere with the visual image of the programme in a disturbing way, instead they complement it smoothly. Subtitles represent written communication and thus obey the limitations of it. "At the same time, the soundtrack helps to replace some of the information omitted from the subtitles" (Chaume 2004 b). The duration of exposure will allow the

viewer to follow the programme and read the subtitles. Timing the subtitles follows a basic logic of showing the subtitle for as long as it is reasonable to show it, and then moving on when it is time to proceed. The viewer will have time not only to read, but also understand. Good timing is essential for the quality of a subtitled product. The length of exposure for subtitles as well as the length of a subtitle can vary from language to language. Spatially, subtitles can consist of a maximum of three lines. Chronologically, they escort the programme in a precise tempo, sometimes being adjusted with a one-tenth of a second precision. Easily legible, they blend into the overall visual composition. Subtitles are simultaneous with the sound content, following the flow of the programme, its pace and rhythm. They make use of the speech-image relations. If something is obvious from seeing or hearing, the written-mode content can be condensed. Subtitles are apt to complement the message rather than exclude things, even though they are terse and condensations are often necessary.

4.3 Quality and institutional image

From the viewpoint of the institution, the subtitles are a like a company label on the product. They represent part of the institutional image of the company. The viewer/reader immediately recognises the programme as a quality product, a programme that is styled and processed for the target-language audience. Lay-out, positioning and the delivery of subtitles all follow the convention. The end-product is culturally respected. They are accepted as a guarantee of quality that is confirmed by the name of the translator as a proof of quality. Should subtitling be missing or face technical difficulties, the reactions of the audience are immediate and critical.

CONFIRMING THE CONTENT

Subtitles are taken for granted. What are the implicit meanings they carry? Subtitles are apt to intensify the impact of the programme by confirming the message and credibility of the audiovisual whole. This is one of the implicit meanings that subtitles help to make.

Automatic reading behaviour is likely to produce more intensive watching. For many adults, reading subtitles is a major source of their daily written information. Reading subtitles is a mental

effort, but widely accepted among the Finnish viewers. As a matter of fact, Finns are eager to point out possible mistakes in the work of the translator. Reading does not spoil the authenticity, it clarifies and gives the viewer/reader a chance for faster comprehension of the content and thus improves the literacy skills of the viewer.

5 Meaning production in the context of culture and audience

Meaning production is a question closely connected with research into culture (see Ridell 1998, 29). Different contents make sense in a particular way for a particular audience in the context with a particular culture. Hall (in Ridell 1998, 33) defines the special nature of culture as a practice that produces meanings. According to Johnson (ibid, 33), languages, rituals, discourses, ideologies and myths etc. are examples of systems of meaning production. The combination of the original-language material and the subtitled programme is an instance of meaning production that makes sense for its target audience. Ridell (1998, 36) also pays attention to the ideological role of the mass media. In the case of Yleisradio the reasonably wide international offer of languages and cultures on Finnish television (despite the dominant position of the English language) can be seen as an ideological choice of the broadcasting company. Becoming international is clearly an intended choice of a small country and nation. Internationalisation is embedded in our broadcasting ideology.

5.1 Finnish way of viewing

Watching television is a domestic phenomenon, a private performance in its nature, taking place in the sphere of a home. It is something we can call an intimate and personal experience. Subtitles are part of the Finnish television culture. They are used widely in Finland, also in cinemas, which is likely to intensify the subjective experience. Ellis writes about the circumstances in which broadcast television is received and refers to them as a generator of “complicity with the television viewer” (Ellis 1989, 111 - 112).

Generally, Finns consider subtitles to be a well-functioning solution with many advantages. This thesis deals with the meaning-making potential of subtitling. The concept of audience, as it is understood in this thesis, needs some clarification. Höijer (1999, 180) refers to Ang who sees at least two ways of conceptualising the audience: the institutional view and the social world of actual audiences (audiencehood). Audiencehood emphasises the personal practices and experiences in watching in everyday life.

Alasuutari aims at grasping our contemporary media culture and its role in everyday life, “both as a topic and as an activity structured by and structuring the discourses within which it is discussed”

(1999, 6). The concept of reception needs reflection on the audience's notion of themselves as members of the audience.

Evans and Hall state in their introduction to visual culture that "meaning is constituted not in the visual sign itself as a self-sufficient entity, nor exclusively in the sociological positions and identities of the audience, but in the articulation between viewer and viewed, between the power of the image to signify and *the viewer's capacity to interpret meaning.*" (Evans & Hall 2004, 4, my italics).

Morley (1999, 20 - 21) points out about meaning construction that

"to recognize that the meaning of the text will also be constructed differently depending on the discourse, knowledges, prejudices, or resistances brought to bear on the text by the reader. One crucial factor delimiting this will, of course, be the repertoire of discourses at the disposal of different audiences, and the individual's position in the social formation will tend to determine which sets of discourses a given subject is likely to have access to, and thus to bring their encounter with the text."

5.2 Meaning-making potential

The meaning-making potential of subtitling seems to a new perspective on television research. The following ideas of meanings are very close to each other. Actually, they might seem even too intertwined and overlapping. One might question, for instance, could not the meanings of "targeted national audiencehood" (5.2.3), "domestication" (5.2.5), "selection and agenda setting" (5.2.8) and "consciousness of editorial decisions" (5.2.11) be combined in one or two instead of four. I would like to argue at this stage that these subheadings are more like a collection of ideas put in the same basket for further analysis and discussion than ready-defined classifications. The point here is rather to pay attention to the variety of possible angles to have a closer look at the opportunities of meaning production. Subtitling is not the only feature of television programmes that makes meanings in all the ways presented here. However, it is a very typically Scandinavian feature of television culture. Also an interdisciplinary approach seems to make sense for the purpose of a better understanding of our situation.

5.2.1 Intentional, attentive watching

Watching a subtitled programme is an intensive activity, combined with non-conscious perception. When watching a subtitled programme, there is a balance of activities (looking, listening and reading). Reading can to some extent compensate the listening activity (listening becomes somewhat less intense), especially if the viewer does not understand the language. One can also listen to the tone of voice rather than the content. The original sound of the programme can be heard, which underlines the authenticity of the original.

David Morley refers to the media having a “straightforward, predictable and automatic effect on their audience. It has come to be recognised that audiences are active in various ways, as they select from and reinterpret, *for their own purposes*, the media materials that they consume” (Curran & Morley 2006:39, my italics).

Subtitling is alleged to have an intensifying influence and maybe even influence on whether the attention span is widened and programmes are watched more from the beginning to the end.

5.2.2 Automatic reading behaviour

Watching a subtitled programme leads to automatic reading behaviour. Viewers in subtitling countries have a positive attitude towards reading subtitles. A Finnish viewer/reader of subtitles does not complain about reading. Maybe the fact of being an active subtitle reader is likely to create positive attitudes towards reading, obtaining information through reading.

EASYNES OF READING

5.2.3 Targeted national audience

Ellis defines television's regime of vision as a regime of glance rather than the gaze (Ellis, 1989, p.137). The cinema is known to create a gaze and so do subtitles. To the viewers of dubbing countries, reading subtitles, is an additional, and not necessarily a popular activity.

What is the difference that subtitled television programmes have made for the Finnish-language audience? A subtitled programme is not just culturally and linguistically adjusted, it is apt to create an atmosphere of cultural collectivity and "identity" due to the language targeting. A subtitled programme is an example of culturally tailored information.

TAILORED FOR US

The idea of providing services by a broadcasting company includes offering the service of the subtitles as well. Subtitles are included in the price of the license fee. Finnish-language subtitles are a default setting, but the choice is growing, thanks to digital broadcasting, between the options of subtitles in Finnish, Swedish as add-on options. Reading subtitles is a widespread practice in Finland. They are part of our cultural knowledge. A great majority of imported programmes are in English language. Finns are eager to watch them because English is becoming "a third domestic language" and because there is a strong feeling of pro-Americanism prevalent in Finnish culture (cf. Lemish et al., 548).

Subtitling meets the need of a small cultural and lingual area, a small target group. Finnish-language subtitles are needed only in Finland. The Finnish way of viewing is attentive and concentrated, which means active watching (not just listening from the other room) alone or together with other people in the room where the television set is. Internationally seen, typical of the Finns is a rather moderate number of daily viewing hours (cf. Höijer 1999, 184). Viewing often involves reading subtitles, as the share of foreign-language programmes and content is considerable.

5.2.4. Tolerance of foreign influences

Reading subtitles is part of our television social manners, requiring a certain level of attention allowing the viewers to actually read the subtitles and understand the message. It is important to

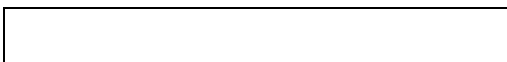
note that Finns appreciate very much the fact that they can listen to the original (while reading the subtitles). English is the most popular foreign language, but other cultures are welcome, too. The number of languages heard (and subtitled) on Yleisradio's channels, say, during a year, is quite respectable in comparison with the typical dubbing countries. Due to the dominant share of subtitled programmes (60 per cent in 2005) reading subtitles can be described as an intrinsic component of television viewing in Finland (Österlund-Karinkanta & Moring). Not everyone might agree with the opinion that there is remarkable openness towards multiculturalism in Finland, but in the terms of television programmes there are grounds to bring up this argument.

TOLERANCE
OF CULTURES

Subtitles as a technique for language transfer does not exclude other viewers (not even native-language viewers of the programme, not to mention viewers representing a third language and culture). Anybody watching television in Finland can have support for language learning, either in the language of the programme, or in Finnish, thanks to subtitling. A viewer in the target culture can recognize subtitles as a part of the self-evident cultural reality. One can say that Finns get their daily share of training in reading by viewing subtitled programmes.

5.2.5 Domestication

Subtitles are something that all programmes with foreign-language content have in common: news, current affairs programmes, documentaries, feature programmes, non-fiction, drama art and music etc. They are easy to produce, affordable, complementary in nature to the audiovisual whole – they are a practical solution for the needed language transfer. Foreign cultures are available to the Finnish-language audience. Through subtitling they become something more than just available: a subtitled programme can be perceived as culturally understandable, domesticated, no matter how distant the topic and the culture of the original may be.



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| DOMESTICATED CONTENT |
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Will there ever be a time that subtitles would not be wanted or needed? For particular genres maybe, like cult shows transmitted live. But the current development with a growing share of programmes with subtitling options proves quite the opposite. Subtitling is becoming a more and more popular service, as the audience appreciates the freedom of choice. Once you have the choice, widening the offer with more add-on options (subtitles for different viewer groups) are likely to bring additional value.

5.2.6 Appreciating the original

Some of the meanings presented in this thesis are intentional (language learning), while others are less intentional, even undeliberate (credibility, tolerance). Another one is valuing the original. This brings reliability, authenticity, as everything is being shown in the original. For the fans of Marilyn Monroe, it is not a minor detail to hear the actress speak in her original voice instead of a bunch of changing voice-actors.

A subtitled programme confirms the reality presented in the programme and the subtitles are perceived as a confirmation of the message, as was stated earlier.

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| APPRECIATION OF THE ORIGINAL |
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In the idea of processing a programme for a target audience underlies the idea of filtering the media content. Behind the idea of filtering is the service or practice of selection, selecting the programmes to be broadcast for a particular audience. Television is a medium that can be used for educating oneself and others. Not just any programme is broadcast, or subtitled, there is undoubtedly the idea of selection lying behind broadcasting. Subtitled programmes represent certain quality, one could argue. They are legitimate material for broadcasting and relevant for this particular Finnish-speaking audience. Somebody in the broadcasting company has selected them for the audience. The

majority of the programmes show cultural respectability. Swear words are used in subtitles only to a limited extent.

5.2.7 Criticism from the audience

Subtitled programmes are even likely to help the viewers make critical judgments on the programmes. Learning foreign languages is a basic asset in the Finnish education system. Every viewer is in principle able to make comparisons between the subtitles and what s/he can see and hear. A linguistically competent viewer can verify the quality of the content of the subtitle, even style and the functionality of the subtitles.

“SEE FOR YOURSELF”

The Finnish audience has, internationally considered, a high level of mastering of the English language, which is the most common language in connection with subtitling in our country. Finns also have a well-trained eye for the quality of the subtitles. Subtitles have without a doubt an important role to play in the process of language learning. Occasions of less adequate quality in subtitling, such as mistakes in figures, often get immediate critical viewer feedback in public, (e.g. in the viewers’ letters to the editor in the newspapers and the broadcasting company itself). Time constraints in the work of a television translator sometimes hamper the quality of the translation, e.g. in numerical details, if the translator is mistaken and makes a six out of a seven in the original. Subtitling thus offers a natural source of impulse for interaction between the audience and the institution.

IMPULSE FOR INTERACTION

Another issue open to critical views are new slang expressions as a proof of translatoric credibility. An interesting insight to this problem is presented by Pérez González (2006). His examples date back to Japan, where fans are active in dubbing their favourite series on websites.

One might say that Finns are true fans of subtitling and also eager would-be-subtitlers, judging by the frequency of comments on, in particular, film names and their translations. Responsible for the names of series and films, however, are in practice the importing companies and their producers, not the individual translators.

5.2.8 Selection and agenda setting

Subtitles can be interpreted as a cultural code (cf. Jerslev). Finnish-language subtitles imposed on a television programme immediately gives the cultural sign of a programme subtitled by experts, a sign of credibility and quality. Having the subtitles is a proof of quality. Quality control of the programmes to be broadcast concerns not just the final content all in all, but also each of the components in particular. Each technical detail of the programme is under expert supervision. The choice of programmes and programme material also has an agenda-setting function. Somebody has considered this piece of information important enough to be broadcast and (in the case of foreign languages) translated, i.e. subtitled for the national target group.

TARGETED AND TAILORED
PROGRAMME MATERIAL

Subtitles are written high-quality texts to be used in the context of a television programme.

Subtitles transmit information through the acoustic and visual channels by complementing them.

Subtitles are based on the original sound and the tempo of the program. As stated earlier, there is no use for them in their own right, without the context of a television programme.

5.2.9 Widening general knowledge

The audiovisual translator can use certain domestication strategies, e.g. “unobtrusive manipulation and the use of target culture frames to orient viewers and provide them with an effective cognitive framework that enables them to interpret new realities consciously and process them quickly despite their foreignness” (Perego 2004, 161). Translating cultural references takes place by domesticating/introducing something close to it that is known to the viewers in the target language and culture.

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| <p>ADDITIONAL VALUE: EDUCATION FOR ALL</p> |
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Subtitles have an educating function that concerns not just the content matter of the programme, but also orthography, widening into general knowledge. They offer something additional to the message already created by complementing the message with a written-mode supplement. This is worth mentioning, as television programmes as a rule have larger audiences than newspapers. A subtitled message is a confirmed message, as a spoken message becomes a written one (cf. “black on white”, even though this is the opposite, a white font on the darker screen).

On the basis how the viewer receives the message and construes meanings can be argued that subtitles help create an atmosphere of reliability. Written information as a visual component specifically designed for the needs of the target audience helps verify the authenticity of the content and keeps away the threats of manipulation and censorship of content. Seeing and hearing things with your own eyes confirms the message. What you hear is what you also see.

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| <p>EYE-WITNESS TRUSTWORTHYNESS</p> |
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5.2.10 Audience equality and integration

Subtitles help create a language community. They make us feel that we are part of a social community of viewers. Every Finnish viewer knows that, as a rule, foreign-language programmes are subtitled, i.e. anybody can join the audience at anytime. A subtitled programme is a freely accessible commodity. No special requirements concerning the educational background of the individual are made. Subtitles are an open, welcoming component of the medium television. They help keep the viewers equal, as subtitling is done for the average viewer. The sentences are whole and designed to be easily understood within seconds. The viewer can easily understand that the

programme is filtered for the target-language audience in question. Subtitled are culturally filtered. A viewer can rely on the quality of the work, as subtitles are specifically processed for the target group. They represent the companies on the Finnish market. The television companies, including the Finnish Broadcasting Company, strive to use competitive experts to do the job. It is a sign of quality.

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| EGALITARIAN COMMUNITY |
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Subtitling is also a most foreigner-friendly media convention. Anyone who has access to Finnish television and wants to learn the language can benefit from the daily training in reading Finnish subtitles. This method could be used much more effectively in the integration of immigrants and by encouragement to independent learning.

The community of address sets up a different relation between viewer and representation. The distance between viewer and image is reduced (Ellis 1989, 139). This goes for subtitling as well. The programme can be viewed as becomes a tailor-made representation. On the other hand, a subtitled programme is open to any viewer, also those who don't need the subtitles, making all viewers equal. The idea of cultural segmentation (including that by class and income) (cf. Corner 1999, 21) does not necessarily differentiate Finnish broadcasting and viewing. From the viewpoint of 'the public sphere' (see Corner 1999, 21) subtitles are a neutral and 'democratic' way of offering information to all viewers.

A subtitled programme offers a culturally adjusted, processed product, but it does not exclude those viewers who do not (need to) make use of the complementary service, subtitles. Thus one might say that subtitled programmes are likely to both adjust and widen the potential audience of a programme.

5.2.11 Acquiring literacy skills in the native language and learning languages

Without any doubt, a high percentage of the children living in Finland have television subtitles as an efficient aid in *learning to read*. This has been stated at numerous occasions. Subtitles are also a

proven, highly effective method for foreign-language training. Reading subtitles has worked wonders for the Finns' knowledge of languages, especially in the case of English as the major foreign language on Finnish television. This is one of the factors used for explaining the Finns' knowledge of English (literacy skills and listening, even pronunciation (cf. Österlund-Karinkanta and Moring).

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| <p>ILLUSIONARY LINGUISTIC SELF-CONFIDENCE</p> |
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Watching a subtitled programme is likely to create an illusionary feeling of understanding and thus “mastering the language”. The audience is able to compare the subtitling with the original sound of the programme and to verify the authenticity of the content. This is likely to build up a (sometimes false) linguistic self-confidence that goes beyond the actual knowledge of the language.

Translators provide the programmes with the complementing element for the national audience, the subtitles. They help the viewers to understand the language of the speakers in the programme and thus the journalistic intentions of the programme makers. Subtitled programmes might even help create the illusion on understanding the original, the illusion of knowing the language spoken in the programme to a much greater extent than actually is the case. Creating this illusion is one of the hidden meanings of subtitles.

Reading the subtitles even can create an ephemeral psychological illusion of understanding/almost understanding the original, an ephemeral illusion of “I can understand this”. This experience is apt to convey the idea of the self as an “international viewer” that is ready to receive multicultural influences in the original language.

Dubbed versions of foreign-origin programmes, which are rare in Finland, are mainly children's programmes. They may be broadcast at marginal hours of the day like early weekend mornings, whereas subtitled programmes are meant for viewers who can already read.

A ready-made programme is a selection of choices made by the maker (i.e. journalist) of the programme. In foreign-language passages (i.e. inserts) of the programme the viewer can rest

assured he gets to hear and see the authentic version of the original (authentic from the viewpoint of the language content).

Viewing, i.e. watching and reading the subtitles improves people's mastery of English

In Finland, like in other Nordic countries, being used to reading television subtitles has repeatedly been given an explanation for the high level of knowledge and the popularity of English. Successful language acquisition is effective through an access to subtitles. But reading subtitles is a free lesson in Finnish language and culture for immigrants and foreigners, a practical method to train Finnish.

Danan points out how subtitle and caption reading can help "students how to consciously adopt effective learning strategies, which ultimately play a fundamental role in improved listening skills and successful language acquisition" (2004, 68). In practice this means studying up-to-date use of language as well as current cultural dimensions of the country in question.

Visual clues and context enable the spectators to view the message of the televisual text as much as listen to it (Baltova in Danan 2004). Listening to subtitled programmes improves one's listening comprehension and pronunciation skills, the mastery of dialects, widens the vocabulary etc. It elicits and intensifies learning, not to mention general knowledge for different kinds of learners by presenting the combination of visual, auditive and written information all in one.

New concepts, latest developments and innovations of technology, medicine and natural sciences etc. often appear first on television (together with the press media). Subtitles unfold things and teach new terms and concepts.

Foreign cultures and influences are brought closer to the Finnish audience, they are made more familiar. Public service television can provide a counter-force to widening information gaps.

The importance of subtitles as reading material for children, the elderly and the hearing-impaired and immigrants and other language learners is also worth noting.

5.2.12 Consciousness of editorial decisions

Subtitled programmes are 'adapted', complemented versions for a local audience. They are localised, domesticated versions, processed especially for the target-language audience. One might

argue that this somewhat contradicts the idea of “receiving the original”. Here one should remember that editorial decisions are made before editing or buying the programme, i.e. there is always the phase of selection and choosing material for the target audience.

“ORIGINAL” VS. ADAPTED
AND/OR SELECTED MATERIAL

For the viewers who are aware of this problem it is likely that they complement their views on the world by following the events from various channels, institutions and media.

5.2.13 Attracting international audiences

The option of offering English-language subtitles would open the market for Finnish audiovisual products on a global level. At least it would ease the process of getting acquainted with Finnish culture and developing an interest in the country’s cultural products. This is a challenge for the conventional practice, but not impossible if there is an interest on the international market. There might be an increasing demand for products designed especially for the international market. On the other hand, in many genres broadcasting companies abroad prefer their own national in-house programmes. Another hindrance is simply the choice of the language transfer technique and thus a matter of the costs: dubbing productions in the dubbing countries are rarely made of periferic programme products. A possible solution would be to make English-language productions (originals) for sale on the international market. Production for broadcast television has become increasingly internationalized (Ellis 1989, 213). There is a growing tendency for co-productions to be launched involving more than one national broadcast institution. This is the case for quality series, television films and crime series, for instance.

OUR PLACE IN THE WORLD

Subtitles are, however, likely to remain as a choice, as a service and as a typical feature of Finnish television culture. There is a growing need for service for the viewers. When thinking of the location of Finnish culture on the “world cultural map”, one tends to see Finns in the periphery, as observers rather than presenters or agenda setters.

In a book published in 1998, Geraghty and Lusted pay attention to the fact that television is blamed for, among other things, for imposing foreign values on whole populations, as through satellite provision, foreign television becomes more commonly available (1998, 4). To a Finnish and Scandinavian reader this idea sounds peculiar. One might say that in Scandinavian culture having the versatile foreign influences is one of the main attractions and reasons for watching television. As stated earlier, watching subtitled programmes promotes our literacy (linguistic and cultural) and widens our general knowledge, which is a desired function of television.

5.2.14 ‘Personalisation’ services

Subtitles are an optional linguistic support for the viewer to opt in. O’Hagan calls the language options essential add-on features. In her article on audiovisual translations in DVDs O’Hagan predicts that audiovisual translation as a means of language transfer is becoming part of the product globalisation process. In Finland the viewers can choose between Finnish and Swedish subtitles, (intralingual subtitles, i.e. subtitles in the source language, are condensed or compressed, and they do not involve translation. Subtitles exist as independent entities and can be used in language learning according to the choice of the viewer. (O’Hagan 2007, 160)). This is apt to increase the self-esteem of the viewer.

As mentioned earlier, providing subtitling services in the form of add-on functions is very important to many special groups, such as the hearing-impaired, the elderly, immigrants etc.

Geraghty (1998, p.155) concludes her essay on Audiences and ‘Ethnography’ by stating that

“Work on television audiences has been important in recognizing that ‘television watching’ is not simply a question of looking (or not looking) at a screen. It has indicated that there is no one way of viewing which is determined by the television set itself; that television watching makes sense within a variety of contexts which may link it to social arrangements (viewing in a family, discussing it in a work group) or to other entertainment and communication formats (cinema, computers).”

6 Conclusion

The thesis aims to bring up aspects of cultural reception in Scandinavian television culture that are connected with subtitling, the “invisible” but natural element of our viewing habits. Subtitling is a cultural phenomenon that becomes more interesting when approached from an interdisciplinary perspective. The meaning-making potential deserves to be revealed and recognized.

Subtitling is a service that is increasing its popularity. The opportunities for new options are open and need to be seized. The viewer makes the decisions when choosing add-on options for watching. Does the Finnish Broadcasting Company seek to improve its position in the growing competition by offering more choice for the viewers? Another asset of the institution is the quality of subtitles in a practice of professional production.

The current situation of the digitalised Yleisradio is undermined by uncertainty. Dozens of thousands of television licences in our country have been cancelled and there seems to be no end to the technical problems in broadcasting, subtitling being one of the most irritating adversities for the viewers. Raising the awareness of the undisputable strengths of the company, e.g. the various meanings connected with subtitling as a component of programme making, can help to form a wider view of the possible solutions to the problems. As for companies in dubbing countries there might be a lesson or two to learn from the Scandinavian way of seeing things.

There is much more than meets the eye.

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