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WALKER, BITER OR ZOMBIE
Translation strategies in the Finnish subtitles of The
Walking Dead

ABSTRACT

Siru Takala: Walker, biter or zombie – translation strategies in the Finnish subtitles of The Walking Dead

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With this thesis I want to discover how the different descriptive terms substituting for “zombie” are translated and study which translation strategies are used in the sentences corresponding to those terms in the Finnish subtitles of The Walking Dead. The research questions are as follows: how are the terms translated into Finnish, and how do those translations influence the translation strategies of the sentences they are embedded in? The thesis combines the study of translation strategies with observing the meaning of a linguistic storytelling element, the terms for the zombies.

The Walking Dead (2010–) is an American TV series that follows the story of a survivor group after a zombie outbreak. The absence of the word “zombie” and the usage of other terms are a part of the series’ world-building. I chose to examine episodes from two separate seasons to observe the terms as the story progresses. I identified sentences from the source text that contain a word that substitutes for the word “zombie” and categorized the terms to assist their analyzation. The categories were *a word or a phrase referring to a zombie, an insult, a pronoun, and other*. I then analyzed the example sentences utilizing the classification for the translation of culture-bound terms by Jorge Díaz Cintas and Aline Remael (2014). I modified the classification slightly by expanding the definition of *explicitation*.

My hypotheses were that the translations would be varying in nature and have a similar feeling to the source text. While this occurs at times with direct translations, several times the word “zombie” is utilized. I discovered that 40 terms out of 68 are translated as “zombie”. Other common translations include “purija” [biter], “kuollut” [dead], and “ne” [they (inanimate)]. “Biter” and “geek” have the most different translations.

Explicitation was the most popular translation strategy. *Calque* was also a popular strategy with 15 instances. *Substitution, omission, and addition* were used less than 10 times each. The subtitles are often straightforward and literal, although in many instances they resort to omissions and condensing, which is typical for subtitles. Regarding the use of “zombie” in Finnish, I concluded that regardless of the translators knowing or not knowing the in-universe feature, the translation is to assist the viewer’s watching experience by using a traditional term everyone knows.

Keywords: translation strategy, audiovisual translation, subtitling, explicitation

The originality of this thesis has been checked using the Turnitin OriginalityCheck service.

TIIVISTELMÄ

Siru Takala: Walker, biter or zombie – translation strategies in the Finnish subtitles of The Walking Dead

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Tämän tutkielman tarkoitus on selvittää, miten zombieille annetut nimitykset on käännetty ja mitä käännostrategioita on käytetty TV-sarja The Walking Deadin suomenkielisissä tekstityksissä. Tutkimuskysymykset ovat seuraavat: millaisiksi nimitykset on käännetty suomeksi ja miten käännökset vaikuttavat käännostrategioihin niissä lauseissa, joissa nimitykset ovat? Tutkielma yhdistää käännostrategioiden tutkimukseen lingvistisen tarinankerrontaelementin merkityksen havainnoinnin.

The Walking Dead (2010–) on yhdysvaltalainen postapokalyptinen TV-sarja, joka kertoo selviytyjäjoukosta zombieiden valtaamassa maailmassa. Sarjassa ei käytetä ollenkaan sanaa ”zombie”, mikä on osa sarjan maailmanrakennusta. Tutkielma keskittyy sarjan ensimmäiseen kauteen ja kolmannen kauden kuuteen ensimmäiseen jaksoon eli yhteensä kahteentoista jaksoon, jotta erilaisia nimityksiä kerääntyisi mahdollisimman monia. Tutkimus alkoi keräämällä lauseita, joissa oli nimitys zombieille, ja analysointiprosessin helpottamiseksi nimitykset kategorisoitiin ensin neljään kategoriaan: zombieta kuvaava sana tai fraasi, loukkaus, pronomini ja muu. Sitten esimerkkilauseet analysoitiin ja luokiteltiin Jorge Díaz Cintas ja Aline Remaelin (2014) kulttuurisidonnaisten termien luokittelun avulla. Luokittelua muutettiin laajentamalla hiukan *eksplikoinnin* määritelmää.

Oletuksena oli, että käännökset olisivat vaihtelevia ja säilyttäisivät samanlaisen vaikutelman kuin lähdeteksti. Tämä realisoituu useasti esimerkiksi silloin, kun ”biter” on käännetty ”purijana”, mutta ”zombieta” käytetään käännostrategiana erittäin useasti. Yhteensä 68 nimityksestä 40 on käännetty ”zombiena”. Muita yleisiä käännoiksi ovat ”purija”, ”kuollut” ja ”ne”. ”Biter ja ”geek” on käännetty vaihtelevimmilla sanoilla ja strategioilla.

Eksplikointi (explicitation) on otannan suosituin käännostrategia. *Käännoislainaa (calque)* esiintyy toiseksi usein eli 15 kertaa ja korvausta (*substitution*), poistoa (*omission*) ja lisäystä (*addition*) jokaista alle 10 kertaa. Tekstitykset ovat usein lähdeuskollisia, mutta monissa tapauksissa esiintyy poistoa ja tiivistämistä, mikä on tyypillistä tekstityksissä. Huolimatta siitä, tiesivätkö kääntäjät zombie-sanon käyttämättömyydestä, käännökset todennäköisesti suunnataan auttamaan katsojan katselukokemusta käyttämällä sanaa, jonka kaikki tunnistavat ja ymmärtävät heti.

Avainsanat: käännostrategiat, av-kääntäminen, tekstitys, eksplikointi

Tämän julkaisun alkuperäisyys on tarkastettu Turnitin OriginalityCheck –ohjelmalla.

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1 Introduction

Translation is a multifaceted process that requires problem-solving, concentration, and constant studying and learning to better oneself. A translator must consider many aspects, make decisions regarding translation choices, and frequently make compromises when translating (Inkeri Vehmas-Lehto 1999, 16). The choices translators make and the processes they undergo to arrive at the decisions are an interesting topic of study. Researchers have studied translation strategies for decades and have established several distinctive classifications for them. Some of the earliest translators to examine translation strategies were the French Jean-Paul Vinay and Jean Darbelnet who proposed a seven-part classification of translation strategies in 1958 that is still used as a reference today. Andrew Chesterman has been examining translation strategies for decades and has written, for instance, a broad classification in 1997 that is based on earlier work on translation strategies. Ritva Leppihalme has studied the translation of culture-bound terms, and so have Jorge Díaz Cintas and Aline Remael (2014), who proposed a classification on translation of culture-bound terms in subtitling.

The study of audiovisual translation gained popularity starting from the 1990s as the distribution of audiovisual material grew. Before that advances concerning the field were made in the form of accepting audiovisual media as an object of study and broadening its definition. (Díaz Cintas & Remael 2014, 8–10.) Yves Gambier (2007, 75–76) notes that the year 1995 marked a watershed for the study of audiovisual translation: the celebration of a hundred years of film, technological advancements, and minorities seeing the potential in audiovisual media to reinforce their identity assisted the growth of the field to its own. These researchers and their work on identifying translation strategies, their classifications, and observations on translating subtitles will serve as a basis for my thesis.

The intention of this thesis is to study the translation strategies and translation choices of sentences that incorporate a descriptive word for a zombie in the TV series *The Walking Dead* (hereafter abbreviated TWD). I am interested in translation strategies as well as fascinated with the absence of the word “zombie” in the world of TWD, which still is a zombie series. Therefore, I wanted to combine these two aspects and further examine varying translation strategies with a focus on the substitute words for “zombie” in English and the manner the Finnish translation conveys them. The research questions are as follows: how are the words themselves translated into Finnish, and how do those translations influence the translation

strategies of the sentences they are embedded in? My goal is to discover how the translators have translated the different descriptive terms substituting for “zombie” and study which translation strategies they have used in the sentences corresponding to those terms. This thesis combines the study of translation strategies with observing the meaning and contribution to the story of a crucial, linguistic storytelling element, the terms for the zombies.

The second chapter will discuss translation strategies and different classifications for them. Furthermore, the chapter will discuss subtitles and their translation. The third chapter introduces the material and then defines the methods. It offers background information on the TV series TWD and establishes the basis and the reasons for the analysis as well as why the specific topic was selected. The methods include two categorizations, the first of which is my categorization for the English terms for the zombies in the source text and the second is a categorization based on Díaz Cintas and Remael (2014). The data is analyzed in the fourth chapter. This is achieved first by introducing the terms for the zombies and their translations, and second by analyzing the group of example sentences these terms were found in. The analysis is conducted based on the classification for the translation of culture-bound terms proposed by Díaz Cintas and Remael (2014) as mentioned above. Finally, the conclusions are presented in the fifth chapter.

2 Theoretical background

2.1 Translation strategies and their classifications

Translating requires decision-making and problem-solving. Translators choose an action, that is, a strategy they think is the most suitable to solve the problem in question. (Leppihalme 2007, 365.) Chesterman states that a strategy is a kind of process and an action and, similarly to Leppihalme, describes strategies as “problem-centred” (1997, 88–89). The term *strategy* has been used to describe these actions since the 1980s (Leppihalme 2007, 365), but before it, terms such as *method* and *translation shift* were used (Leppihalme 2007, 365; Vehmas-Lehto 1999, 38, 48). Eugene Nida (1964) and Vinay and Darbelnet (quoted in Chesterman 1989) used the term *procedures*. Leppihalme speculates if all translation is strategic and notes that researches are not unanimous in their answers to this question. Some believe that only situations where the translators solve problems require the utilization of strategies. Others regard that all translation is strategic. (2007, 366.) Since translation involves constant critical thinking, the translator contemplates different ways to translate every word and sentence, regardless of how easy or direct to translate they appear to be. Therefore, it is possible to argue that all translation is strategic. Translators’ cognitive processes, their thoughts and resolutions, are interesting as well, but they are more difficult to measure or research compared to the result, that is, the translation product.

Translation strategies can be divided into two levels: global and local strategies. Global strategies concern problem-solving on a more general level that includes questions such as how to translate the whole text, such as directly or indirectly, or how to incorporate dialects of the source language into the target text. Local strategies are concerned with problems on a much more specific level, such as how to translate a word or a sentence structure. (Chesterman 1997, 90–91.) This thesis concentrates more profoundly on the local strategies. Leppihalme (2007, 368) summarizes local strategies into four main categories:

preserve, change, add, and omit. Preserving signifies that a word is retained in the target text as it is or changed slightly. Changing denotes the traditional definition of translation: changing the text into another language. Adding can allude to several actions, i.e. explanation, specification, or compensation. Omitting means removing a source text unit from the target text. (Leppihalme 2007, 368.)

Omitting something may be done due to various reasons. In subtitles, omission can occur, for instance, due to limitations in space and time, and a term not existing in the target text (Díaz Cintas & Remael 2014, 206). Leppihalme's categories do not strictly include only one action but are more of a general description what these terms include and which situations they can be used in.

The classification of procedures, or strategies, proposed by Vinay and Darbelnet in 1958 consists of seven procedures of which the first three are direct and the rest are indirect translation methods (quoted in Chesterman 1989, 62–69). Vinay and Darbelnet also note that several procedures may be used in a single sentence (quoted in Chesterman 1989, 69). The procedures are as follows:

borrowing means preserving a word from the source text just as it is in the target text. *A calque* is a borrowed unit, but every one of its elements is translated literally. *Literal translation* signifies translating as literally as possible with few changes. *Transposition* denotes changing the word's word class to another. *Modulation* means changing the message slightly when a direct translation would result into something that is grammatically correct but not quite idiomatic in the target language. *Total syntagmatic change* signifies changing the whole message as the part of the source text cannot be translated directly. For example, this strategy is implemented when one translates idioms and proverbs. And finally, *adaptation* is to create something new for the target text as there is something in the source text that does not exist in the target culture.

Especially relevant to my research are the direct translation strategies *calque* and *literal translation* as I observed in my analysis that the translations are often straightforward and literal, although in many instances they resort to omissions and condensing.

Chesterman (1997, 92–112) lists three main categories, syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic. They include 30 strategies which he expanded upon already existing strategies. Syntactic strategies manipulate form. *Loan* and *calque* are a united strategy under this category, opposed to Vinay and Darbelnet's *borrowing* and *calque* being separate, and Chesterman mentions that using the strategy is a premeditated choice. Both strategies', *loan* and *calque*, translation result can be traced to the same source, their difference being the language they are presented in, and thus the rationale is discernible. Semantic strategies, which have to do with

lexical semantics, manipulate meaning. (1997, 94, 101.) In my analysis, I will mostly discuss aspects relating to the syntactic and semantic strategies with an emphasis on *explicitation* of the pragmatic strategies. Pragmatic strategies manipulate the message and the information the text delivers. One of these is *explicitness change*, which contains strategies that manipulate the message to more explicit or more implicit, that is, to a more general or more specific message. (1997, 107–109.) I will cover *explicitness change*, or *explicitation*, more profoundly when discussing Díaz Cintas and Remael (2014).

The strategies, their use, and classification have evolved over time; different researchers use different terms for the same, or similar, strategies. For instance, Vinay and Darbelnet's (quoted in Chesterman 1989, 62–69) definition of *transposition* differs considerably from Díaz Cintas and Remael's (2014, 204). The former define it as changing the word's word class to another, but the latter define it as replacing a cultural concept with another one the target audience is more prone to understand.

Leppihalme (2001, 139–148) has proposed a categorization for strategies translating realia, also known as culture-bound terms. The strategies are *loan*, *calque*, *cultural adaptation*, *superordinate concept*, *explicitation*, *addition*, and *omission*. Díaz Cintas and Remael constructed a categorization for realia as well, which expands on prior classifications. Their classification consists of *loan*, *calque*, *explicitation*, *substitution*, *transposition*, *lexical recreation*, *compensation*, *omission*, and *addition*. (2014, 201–207.) The latter is similar to Leppihalme's classification, as some of the categories overlap. However, their definitions of *explicitation*, for example, are different since Díaz Cintas and Remael include *superordinate* in it (2014, 203). *Superordinate* is “a type, title, or category that includes a group of things within or under it” (Cambridge Dictionary 2020, s. v. “superordinate”).

Explicitation is relevant to my thesis and I have an additional definition to it. According to one of the comic's creators, Robert Kirkman, the TV series TWD does not utilize the word “zombie” at all, and no one is familiar with zombies of popular culture as they do not exist, either (Corey Hoffmeyer 2016). Hence, the threat of the zombies is unprecedented to the characters and they do not immediately know how to defeat them. The characters invent names for them, but often these terms are replaced with “zombie” in the subtitles. The use of the word “zombie” could make the “walkers” more recognizable to the audience and attach them to a term already familiar. Should that be the case, the term explicates to the audience what the antagonists are like and assists them in following and understanding the story faster

than the confused characters. Therefore, “zombie” operates as an explicating term. While not necessarily a generalizing *hypernym* or *superordinate*, it does explain the antagonists’ behavior and how they can be killed. There are, however, problems with the usage of “zombie” in the subtitles: it does not take into consideration the idea that “zombies” do not exist in the world of TWD and, in a manner that a usage of a *superordinate* does, loses some of the specific meaning of the term in the source text.

2.2 Subtitling

In this chapter I will discuss *subtitling*, a form of *audiovisual translation*, and especially *text reduction*. Díaz Cintas and Remael (2014, 8) define subtitling as

a translation practice that consists of presenting a written text, generally on the lower part of the screen, that endeavours to recount the original dialogue of the speakers, as well as the discursive elements that appear in the image ... and the information that is contained on the soundtrack ...

I will not concentrate on the length, the amount of lines used, temporal synchronization of the subtitles, or technical aspects, such as shot changes and timing in the subtitles, but rather on the language used in the subtitles. The subtitling from English into Finnish in TWD is interlingual subtitling which signifies translating from a source language to a target language with a change from oral to written form (Díaz Cintas & Remael 2014, 17). As there are three main components interacting in an audiovisual program, the spoken word, the image, and the subtitles, translators have several aspects to consider, such as the viewer’s speed at reading the images and the text simultaneously, synchrony of image and sound, and spatial and temporal limitations. There are usually one or two lines of subtitles. (2014, 9.) Díaz Cintas and Remael estimate that “an average viewer can comfortably read in six seconds the text written on two full subtitle lines, when each line contains a maximum of some 37 characters” (2014, 96). On TV, the maximum of characters per line is usually 37, but it varies depending on guidelines, software, and the event the subtitling is for, such as film festivals (84). However, in Finland there are 33–34 characters per line on average, and the two lines are visible 4–5 seconds (Esko Vertanen 2007, 151).

Evidently, translating subtitles has challenges and problems. Not everything that is spoken in the source text can be conveyed into idiomatic target language in the limited space. Díaz Cintas and Remael (2014, 145) note this need for reformulation and omitting and state that “the written version of speech in subtitles is nearly always a reduced form of the oral ST [source text]. Indeed, subtitling can never be a complete and detailed rendering.” The visual

images of the audiovisual program support the audio (2014, 51), and therefore can compensate for some missing parts in the text. Vertanen states that the translator should remain faithful to the source text and try to convey its style and feel as well as possible, but due to restrictions for space and time, translators can omit parts of the text such as leading clauses, names, titles, adjectival attributes, place names, and temporal words. (2007, 150–152.) Thus, a viewer in the target audience who does not speak the source language does not receive every piece of information from the source text as opposed to a viewer who speaks the source language.

Díaz Cintas and Remael (2014, 146) discuss *text reduction* and present reasons for conducting it. The reasons are as follows: to give viewers enough time to understand the subtitle, to give viewers enough time to read, watch, and listen, and as the lines are limited to two, to operate under their limitations: their content depends on time, reading speed, and the speed of the spoken source text. Units can be omitted partially by condensing and rewriting to be more concise, or totally by deletion or omission. These strategies are often combined, and it depends on the context which to use. (2014, 146, 149). They also state that unfortunately there are no rules to when to reformulate and when to omit. One suggestion is to eliminate what is not relevant in the context to the viewer or listener, but before omitting, the translator needs to consider if the omission could lead the viewers to misunderstand something. (2014, 148, 162.) The strategies for reducing text varied considerably in the results of my analysis: popular strategies were, for instance, use of simpler sentences, use of passive voice instead of active voice, and use of pronouns.

Díaz Cintas and Remael's classification of translation strategies for realia presented above can be used to study subtitles, and as they state, some of the strategies are more frequently used when translating subtitles than others (2014, 201–202). Culture-bound terms, also known as realia or cultural references, are “extralinguistic references to items that are tied up with a country's culture, history, or geography, and tend therefore to pose serious translation challenges” (2014, 200). I chose to use this classification in my analysis since it can be used when analyzing subtitles, and it has, in my opinion, refined and detailed definitions of the terms. The terms I analyzed are not culture-bound terms, per se, but they present a challenge for the translator due to their usage in a new context. Terms such as “biter,” “lurker,” or “geek” were not invented for the series; however, they are used in a new context, referring to a new object. Moreover, they are unique and new terms in the mythology of TWD. This new

context beckons the translator to think about how to convey the new meaning into Finnish and if the translated term conveys the same feeling as the term from the source text. I observed that the translations in TWD were more on the literal side, and therefore a few of the translation strategies that involve creating completely new words or meanings were not relevant to it.

3 Material and methodology

3.1 The Walking Dead

The Walking Dead is an American post-apocalyptic TV series that follows the story of a survivor group in a world where a zombie outbreak has occurred. TWD is based on a comic book created by Robert Kirkman, Tony Moore and Charlie Adlard. Kirkman has also worked as an executive producer and screenwriter for the TV adaptation. Frank Darabont adapted the comic into a TV show and was the show's first showrunner as well as a writer. After Darabont, Glen Mazzara, Scott M. Gimple and Angela Kang have served as showrunners. The first episode of TWD premiered on October 31, 2010 on the TV channel AMC, and at the time of writing, the series is on its tenth season.

The first season introduces the world of TWD and depicts the effects of an apocalyptic disaster. The season is set in the state of Georgia in the United States. In Atlanta, Sheriff's Deputy Rick Grimes wakes up in a hospital from a coma after being shot on duty. Rick discovers that some time has passed and the whole world seems to have been isolated save from the mounds of dead bodies and the undead creatures that roam the earth. Rick sets out to Atlanta to search for his wife and son and encounters a group of survivors with whom his family is living. The group leaves in search for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention where the center's last remaining doctor tells Rick that everyone is already infected. The third season tests the Atlanta group's perseverance and establishes dynamics with new acquaintances. The season's first six episodes are set in a prison where the group finds shelter and in the Woodbury community whose members are introduced as the new antagonists. Season one was, in comparison, more contained a story, whereas season three expands the world by introducing several new plots, characters, and perspectives on surviving in the world of zombies.

The reason why I am focusing on this source of material is two-fold: First, I find TWD, especially its first few seasons, to be full of complex characters, its plots interesting and that it delivers horror and drama in a good balance. Second, perhaps the most interesting aspect in the series' mythology, is that the characters do not use the word "zombie" at all, but they rather replace it with alternative terms that can vary from person to person and from group to group. Examples of these words are "walker" and "biter." Robert Kirkman has stated that the word "zombie" does not exist in the world of TWD the TV series since traditional zombie movies do not exist in the world, either (Hoffmeyer 2016). This aspect has fascinated me

since the first time I watched the series and therefore I wanted to examine it further. I have observed that the terms are often translated as “zombie” in the Finnish subtitles, and I would like to research further the translation strategies behind the decisions. In the analysis, I presented the various terms for zombies in English and Finnish and found that “zombie,” or the Finnish version “zombi,” was the most popular translation strategy for the terms and therefore *explicitation* was used in abundance. I concluded that the sentences that had a term for a zombie were generally translated with “zombie” or a *calque*, and *omissions* and *substitutions* with pronouns did not occur as frequently. Altogether, several distinct strategies were implemented that also overlapped.

3.2 The methods

To reiterate, the intention of this thesis is to study the translation strategies of sentences that incorporate a descriptive word for a zombie. My method for analyzing the example sentences from the series is in two parts. I will display the translation choices for the terms for zombies and then I will analyze the example sentences utilizing the classification for the translation of culture-bound terms proposed by Jorge Díaz Cintas and Aline Remael (2014). Therefore, I established two categorizing methods.

First, I identified sentences from the source text that contain a word or a phrase that substitute for the word “zombie” or describe a zombie in some manner. I subsequently categorized the terms into categories that are as follows: 1) *a word or a phrase referring to a zombie*, 2) *an insult*, 3) *a pronoun*, and 4) *other*. In my analysis, I will especially focus on the findings in the first category which includes most entries, such as “walker” and “biter.” Moreover, I presume that a distinction between *a word or a phrase referring to a zombie* and *an insult* is in order. Several types of imaginative words fall into the former category. They have to be used repeatedly and in everyday language by the characters, whereas the insults in the latter appear rarely and are more emotionally charged verbal attacks on the antagonist, the zombie. The third category includes instances of “they,” “one,” or “other” used, and the fourth includes miscellaneous words or phrases that refer to zombies or the people they used to be.

Second, I categorized the translation strategy or strategies used in the sentences that incorporate a word for a zombie. I analyzed the example sentences utilizing the classification for the translation of culture-bound terms proposed by Jorge Díaz Cintas and Aline Remael (2014, 200–207). The strategies I utilize are as follows:

1) *Calque*: a literal translation of a term. 2) *Explicitation*: a strategy to assist the reader's understanding of a term by replacing it with a more specific or general one depending on the context. 3) *Substitution*: a term substituted with a shorter term due to limitation of space. 4) *Compensation*: overtranslating or adding something in another instance to atone for a shortcoming somewhere else in the text. 5) *Omission*: excluding i.e. a term or a sentence. And lastly, 6) *Addition*: adding information to aid the reader.

I have made two slight modifications to the categorization by Díaz Cintas and Remael. First, of the nine strategies they proposed, *loan*, *transposition*, and *lexical recreation* are not included in this study as they are not relevant to it. In the Finnish subtitles of TWD, the translators did not borrow any terms that refer to a zombie but mostly translated them literally or changed them into "zombie." Therefore, I excluded the strategies in my thesis that create new or modulate structures and meanings excessively as those barely occurred barring omissions and condensation of message. Second, *explicitation* is used in this thesis with a slight modification to the definition of Díaz Cintas and Remael. They define *explicitation* through using a *hyponym* to specialize or using a *hypernym* or *superordinate* to generalize a term's meaning (2014, 203). While "zombie" is not necessarily utilized as a *hypernym* to "walker" or "geek," for instance, it is, however, conceivably utilized in the subtitles to clarify to the reader what the creatures are. Therefore, as the category of *explicitation* will include translations such as "walker" into "zombie," I acknowledge this strategy as a form of generalizing the meaning of the term. Thus, those examples are classified in the second category.

I will be focusing on the first season and the first six episodes of the third season of TWD. The episodes are available on Viaplay the streaming service. I chose to examine episodes from two separate seasons in order to observe how the characters use the terms at the beginning of the story and if new terms appear when the story progresses. Overall, I will examine 12 episodes whose length varies from 45 minutes to little over an hour. The first season already has a variety of terms used when referring to the zombies as well as varying strategies when translating them. There was no information on the translator or translators of the first season, but the first six episodes of the third season had two translators, Päivi Vuoriaro and Ilse Rönnerberg.

4 Analysis

The chapter begins by introducing various terms for zombies I have discovered as well as how they are translated into Finnish. Then, I will examine the translation strategies for the example sentences of the terms. I selected various sentences that include a term for a zombie and their Finnish subtitles from Viaplay. Additionally, my English translations of the subtitles are in square brackets below them. I will refer to the episodes the examples are from with the number of the season, the number of the episode, and the name of the episode in quotation marks. For example, the combination 01x03 “Tell It to the Frogs” signifies the first season’s third episode named “Tell It to the Frogs.”

My hypothesis before examining the subtitles further was that the translations would be considerably varying in nature similarly to the terms in the source text. I expected the translations to have a similar feeling to the source text, and while this occurred at times with direct translations, i.e. “biter” to “puriija,” several times the word “zombie” was utilized, although, as stated before, the absence of the word is a part of the world-building in the series. I also hypothesized to encounter “walker” translated as “kulkija” [walker/wanderer] since I had seen the translation before in the subtitles of the TV release, but I did not find any instances of “kulkija” in the episodes I examined.

4.1 The terms

I categorized the terms for zombies as follows: 1) *a word or phrase referring to a zombie*, 2) *an insult*, 3) *a pronoun*, and 4) *other*. For the second category, there were eight instances where a character insults a zombie in an emotional outburst often laden with curse words. The insults were imaginative, but difficult to place in a category. For instance, in 03x02 “Sick” two prisoners use the word “freak” to describe the zombies to the Atlanta survivors. In some instances, such as this one, it is unclear if the person is throwing an insult or if the term is established with the group. The prisoners use the term twice on separate occasions, and therefore it could be transferred to the first category, although “freak” is a common insult in the real world. “Freaks” is translated as “kaikkia” [everyone] and “ällötykset” [the disgusting things]. The example below is a clear instance of a rather long insult aimed at a zombie by a character who is angry and frustrated.

01x03 “Tell It to the Frogs”

Original: “Look at it [the deer], all gnawed on by this filthy disease-bearing motherless proxy
bastard!”

Subtitle: “Katsokaa nyt. Se saastainen ja tautinen paskiainen nakersi sitä!”

[Look, now. The filthy and disease-bearing bastard gnawed on it!]

On several cases the pronouns “they,” “one,” or “other” are used with their direct Finnish equivalents, and therefore they make up the third category. Finnish has two words for “they” which have a different purpose: “he” refers to people and “ne” refers to inanimate objects, but “ne” can also refer to people in spoken language. Accordingly, “they” was always translated as “ne” in the subtitles. The use of “ne” could support the views of most of the characters who do not see zombies as people anymore and believe that one can kill zombies without feeling remorse. The fourth category is the smallest, containing entries such as sentences with verbs such as “come back” or “turn” that were translated accompanied by a noun, “zombie,” in the subtitles, or names, i.e. Leon Basset, which was the person’s name before he turned into a zombie (01x01 “Days Gone Bye”). In the next section, the focus is on the first category which offered an appropriate base for analyzing the translation strategies.

In the English source text, in the twelve episodes I examined, there were 68 instances of someone referring to the zombies with a term that was often used or seemed to be established among the characters. They belong to the first category and can be observed in Table 1. The most common terms for describing the zombies were “walker,” “geek,” “the dead” or “the dead people,” and “biter.” Notably, “geek” was not used in the third season at all, and “biter” was introduced in the third season. The people from the newly introduced Woodbury community used “creeper” and “lurker” once, but mostly used “biter” to differentiate them from the Atlanta group, who in the third season used mostly “walker.” “Those things” was also often used in the third season.

Table 1. The most common terms for zombie

Walker	The dead/ the dead people	Geek	Those things	Biter	Creeper	Lurker
34	5	10	4	12	1	2
All						
68						

In the Finnish target text, the translations for the aforementioned terms were “zombie” or “zombi,” “kuollut” [dead], “hän” or “ne” [he/she or they (inanimate)], “puriija” [biter], “vaanija” [lurker], and “hiipijä” [creeper]. The data can be observed in Table 2. Out of 68

terms, 40 were translated as “zombie,” most of which were originally “walker.” “Walker” was translated into “zombie” 31 times out of 34 appearances. “Walker” was also translated twice as “ne” [they (inanimate)] and it was omitted once. The word “biter” was translated with the most varying array of strategies along with “geek.” “Biter” was mostly translated as “purija” [biter], but there were exceptions: it was translated once as “zombie,” once as “ne” [they (inanimate)], once as “kaltainen” [alike/similar], and omitted twice. “Geek” was translated as “zombie,” as “ne” [they (inanimate)], or omitted, likely due to the nature of the word and the unusual context it is used in. A more modern definition for “geek” is of a nerd or an enthusiast, but Merriam-Webster (2020, s. v. “geek”) offers a third definition of “a carnival performer often billed as a wild man whose act usually includes biting the head off a live chicken or snake.” The definition describes zombies rather well, although the zombies of TWD do not exclusively crave the victim’s head or brains.

Table 2. Frequently used terms referring to zombies and their translations

	Walker	The dead/ the dead people	Geek	Those things	Biter	Creeper	Lurker
Zombie/Zombi	31		5	3	1		
Kuolleet/Kuollut [The dead (Plural/Singular)]		5					
Hän or Ne [He/She or They (inanimate)]	2		2		1		
Omission	1		3		2		
Purija [Biter]					7		
Hiipijä [Creeper]						1	
Vaanija [Lurker]							2
Yhtenä noista [(As) one of those]				1			
Kaltainen [Alike]					1		

4.2 The strategies

Calque

The terms that were consistently translated with their direct translation, and therefore categorized as calque, were “the dead” or “the dead people” that were translated as “kuolleet,” such as in the example below.

01x05 “Wildfire”

Original: “Do not enter the city. It belongs to the dead now.”

Subtitle: “Älkää menkö kaupunkiin. Se on nyt kuolleiden hallussa.”

[Do not go to the city. It belongs to the dead now]

Other calques include “biter” to “puriija,” “creeper” to “hiipijä,” and “lurker” to “vaanija.” Of these, “creeper” appeared once and “lurker” twice and they were translated as calques every time. “Biter” appeared twelve times and was translated into “puriija” seven times.

Explicitation

The most difficult instances to categorize were the ones where a term, such as “geek,” “walker,” or “biter,” was translated as “zombie” or later with the Finnish spelling of “zombi,” as well. I categorize this as explicitation. The zombies are always named after an attribute of theirs: They roam aimlessly, and their first instinct is to bite their prey when they catch it, and therefore people call them “walkers” and “biters.” “Zombie” combines these features and generalizes the creatures, makes them instantly recognizable to the audience, and attaches the concept to something already familiar. In the episodes I examined, every translator chose to translate terms to “zombie” on several occasions, but the spelling varied as Päivi Vuoriario opted to use “zombi.” When the translator changed between the fourth and the fifth episode from Vuoriario to Ilse Rönning, so did the spelling back to “zombie.” The two examples below show the phrases “most of the walkers” and “one of those things” translated into “zombi.” The space restriction of the subtitle could be a factor here as well: the sentences are considerably shorter in Finnish, meaning the usage of “zombi” is to conserve space.

03x01 “Seed”

Original: “Most of the walkers are dressed as guards or prisoners, looks like this place fell pretty early.”

Subtitle: “Zombit ovat vartijoita tai vankeja, eli paikka tuhottiin jo varhain.”

[The zombies are guards or prisoners, so the place was destroyed very early.]

03x02 “Sick”

Original: “I’m fine. Look, look at me, I’m not changing into one of those things.”

Subtitle: “Voin ihan hyvin. En muutu zombiksi.”

[I’m feeling okay. I won’t turn into a zombie.]

A different instance of explicitation is in 03x04 “The Killer Within.” “Purijat” [biters] has replaced “something” to explicate what the character is speaking of. The sentences are also restructured and separated by a period mark.

Original: “You’d think one soldier would drive away, especially against something so slow.”

Subtitle: “Luulisi, että joku heistä olisi selvinnyt. Purijat ovat hitaita.”

[You’d think that one of them would’ve survived. Biters are slow.]

The terms in these examples could be categorized as substitution, but I chose to include considerably shorter substitutions there, such as the usage of pronouns.

Substitution

I categorized instances that had a term for a zombie replaced with a pronoun as substitution. Substitution is a form of explicitation, but the aspect that differentiates them is spatial constraints: a long term is replaced with a shorter term on purpose, because the space does not allow the usage of the longer one (Díaz Cintas & Remael 2014, 204). I found several instances of the words “walker” or “biter” translated with this strategy, such as the one below in 01x02 “Guts” where “geeks” is translated into “ne” [them].

Original: “I’m drawing the geeks away, how?”

Subtitle: “Miten minä ne harhautan?”

[How do I divert them?]

In 03x05 “Say the Word,” an idiom “grist for the mill” was used to describe the zombies that the Woodbury community wanted to study. It signifies “something that can be used for a particular purpose” (Merriam-Webster 2020, s. v. “grist for the mill”). The translator had substituted the idiom with the plural form of “zombie.” Also, the subject changed from “you” to “the research team.”

Original: “You can take the research team to get more grist for the mill.”

Subtitle: “Tutkimusryhmä voi hakea lisää zombieita.”

[The research team can get more zombies.]

In an example from 03x03 “Walk With Me,” “biter” was translated into “purija” in its first appearance in the sentence and to “kaltainen” [alike/similar] in its second appearance, therefore not following the repetition in the source text’s line but providing idiomatic Finnish, nonetheless.

Original: “Walk with the biters, they think you’re a biter.”

Subtitle: “Jos kulkee purijoiden joukossa, ne luulevat meitä kaltaisikseen.”

[If you walk among the biters, they think we are alike.]

Omission

Omission is a very frequent strategy in the subtitles of TWD, and very expectantly so, since subtitles have limited space and cannot include every piece of information from the source text as discussed in 2.2. In 01x02 “Guts,” a line was effectively simplified in a hasty scene with several people speaking at the same time. The active voice was changed to passive voice omitting the “geeks” who heard the shots, and the clause “you popping off rounds” was simply manifested as “your shot.”

Original: “Every geek for miles around heard you popping off rounds.”

Subtitle: “Sinun laukauksesi kuultiin.”

[Your shot was heard.]

In the next example from 01x02 “Guts,” the reference to the zombies is omitted due to the need to condense the message to fit the subtitle. The translation is simple and transfers the essential meaning of what the speaker is saying that he cannot see the manhole covers as well as where they are possibly located, but the translation does not include the threat of the “geeks” between the group and covers.

Original: “No, [the manhole covers] must be all out on the street where the geeks are.”

Subtitle: “Ei näy. Kaikki ovat kaduilla.”

[Can’t be seen. They’re all on the streets.]

The two examples below show the omission of whole sentences “armed guards on the fence” and “won’t the fire attract walkers?” In 03x03 “Walk With Me,” the guards are already introduced in the episode before this exchange, which could explain the omission. The other information, however, is new, and therefore crucial to tell the audience at this point. The act of keeping the biters away is omitted, too.

03x03 “Walk With Me”

Original: “Noise and light kept to the bare minimum, armed guards on the fence and controlling the perimeter to keep the biters away.”

Subtitle: “Äänet ja valot pidetään vähissä, ja aluetta partioidaan usein.”

[Noises and lights are kept to the minimum and the area is patrolled often.]

The Atlanta group are discussing whether to burn or bury the walkers they killed in 03x04 “The Killer Within.” The reference to fire is left out, but within the context it is still possible to decipher what they are planning to do.

03x04 “The Killer Within”

Original: “Won’t the fire attract walkers? Maybe we should bury ‘em [the pile of bodies].”

Subtitle: “Pitäisikö ruumiit haudata?”

[Should (we) bury the bodies?]

Addition and compensation

Addition of information is a form of explicitation (Díaz Cintas & Remael 2014, 207). This can be seen in the example below with the use of the verbs “come back” and “turn” in English. In every case in the third season a sentence containing one of these verbs was translated by adding a noun, “zombi,” or a pronoun to explain further what the verb is referring to. Moreover, the short sentences are turned into a more cohesive sentence in the example.

03x01 “Seed”

Original: “If I come back, what if I attack it? Or you, Rick, Carl...”

Subtitle: “Jos muutun zombiksi, mitä jos käyn vauvan, sinun tai Rickin kimppuun?”

[If I turn into a zombie, what if I attack the baby, you, or Rick?]

Different strategies can overlap in a sentence, and this instance could also be interpreted as the use of *compensation* or even *explicitation*. Compensation entails overtranslating or adding something, and consequently, “zombi” is added here.

4.3 Final thoughts

I focused particularly on the translation of the terms and their influence on the sentences they are embedded in. To summarize, 40 terms were translated as “zombie” out of 68. I

categorized these appearances as explicitation, and therefore explicitation was the most popular translation strategy concerning the terms. Calque was also popular strategy with 15 instances counted. Substitution (7), omission (6), and addition (5) were used less than 10 times. Omission dealt with a variety of terms, but mostly with “geek.” There were instances where other terms and pieces of the text were omitted due to limitations of space, as well. “Biter” and “geek” were translated with the most varying array of strategies. Passive voice was used in the Finnish translations on several occasions. This is normal since the Finnish language utilizes passive voice very frequently (Annastiina Viertiö 2000). My hypotheses were proven partially correct. “Zombie” was used more than I presumed, and literal translations were not as frequently utilized as I expected, but they mostly carried similar connotations as the source text’s terms.

It brings a color to the show when another term, possibly a more imaginative one, is used, and when the translation follows suit by utilizing i.e. a direct translation. “Walker” and “geek” give a different impression. If “zombie” is used in their stead in the translation, it contradicts TWD’s idea of utilizing all these new terms regarding the zombies. Notwithstanding, Leppihalme (2007, 370) provides an example of a text passage where the translator either decided that a reference was unknown to the readers or the translator did not understand it and therefore did not translate it properly. Similarly with TWD, the translators could also have considered the general public who neither do not know nor care about the idea of not utilizing the word “zombie,” and therefore elected to ease the general audience’s watching experience by using a familiar term. Alternatively, the translators might not have known this fact and therefore the translation loses some of the charm of the source text. Although, when translating the terms for zombie, the visual cues are there to explain as well. There possibly is not a need to constantly refer to the features the zombies have, which the naming system seems to be based on. “Zombie” is therefore a simpler term to use. For instance, the word “geek” did not have a literal translation at all, and as I discussed in 4.1, “geek” could produce too distracting a translation.

While the non-existence of the word “zombie” is an interesting aspect of TWD, it was not fully considered in the translation, but rather simplified to follow the zombie tradition. Yet, it is a choice a viewer can quickly accustom to.

5 Conclusions

I am interested in the usage of varying terms referring to zombies in TWD and I studied translation strategies with a special focus on the terms with Díaz Cintas and Remael's (2014) classification of translation strategies. I presented two research questions: how are the terms translated into Finnish and how are the sentences they are embedded in influenced by the terms? I covered translation strategy classifications which show the evolution of translation strategies. Translation strategies can be divided into global and local strategies, the latter of which were discussed in this thesis as I examined translation on word and sentence level. I discussed the defining features of subtitling and the challenges the craft possesses, as well as *text reduction* and *omission* since they are prevalent and necessary strategies in subtitling. I utilized the strategy of *explicitation* in a distinctive manner compared to Díaz Cintas and Remael (2014) as I included the word "zombie" in it as a sort of generalizing *hypernym*.

With the modified classification, I analyzed example sentences that included a word for a zombie or a reference to one. I discovered that the most frequent translations for them in Finnish were "zombie" or "zombi," "kuollut" [dead], "hän" or "ne" [he/she or they (inanimate)], and "puriija" [biter]. The most frequent strategies used were *explicitation* and *calque*, followed by *substitution* and *omission*. The subtitle lines were frequently condensed using simpler sentences, passive voice instead of active voice, and substituting with shorter words, such as pronouns. I discussed the fact that the Finnish subtitles use the word "zombie," although the English source text purposefully does not, and I concluded that the translators elected to use this strategy in order to assist the general public in understanding the world of TWD immediately and not distracting them with overly eccentric translations, or due to them not knowing of this "rule" and translating with a term everyone knows. Nonetheless, the results are similar.

The manner these terms contribute to the multimodality of TWD the TV series could be examined as a possible continuation for this study, since multimodality is such a prevalent element in our everyday lives. Moreover, another possible direction to take could be a comparative study between the original TWD comic in English and the Finnish translation concerning the translations of the terms for zombies or translation strategies in the comic book in general.

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