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LURKKI, HIIPIJÄ OR CREEPER?

How Minecraft's Finnish translation has changed over time

ABSTRACT

Aku Jaatinen: "Lurkki, Hiipijä or Creeper? How Minecraft's translation has changed over time"

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In this bachelor's thesis, I analyse four different versions of the video game Minecraft: Java Edition in an attempt to find out how the game's Finnish translation has changed over time. My data set includes game versions from January 2012, August 2012, 2016, and the present day. My focus is on the game's fantasy elements since they are the ones that require the most creativity from translators. These fantasy elements include the names of creatures, materials, and items.

I categorise my findings based on Ritva Leppihalme's translation strategies of realia, culture-bound terms that have no direct equivalent in a target language. These strategies can also be applied to irrealia, or fictional realia. My data shows that calque, or direct translation, is the most popular translation strategy for Minecraft's fantasy elements.

Minecraft: Java Edition is translated into different languages through an online cloud-based platform called Crowdin, which anyone can contribute to. This type of collaborative online community translation is commonly referred to as crowdsourcing. In this thesis, I will also address the influence that this non-professional, community-based translation method has had on the game's translation.

I discovered in my analysis that the earlier versions of Minecraft's Finnish translation used to show more creativity and many names of creatures, blocks, and items were in Finnish, but in recent updates, many names have been changed completely back to English or partially translated. This is likely due to the influence of the Minecraft Official Glossary, which, according to Minecraft Wiki, is a guide for translators made by Mojang, the game's developer. The glossary sets rules for translating the game's different elements into other languages. Since the style guide's publication, many names, such as *Creeper*, *Enderman*, or *Nether*, have had to remain in English throughout all localisations of the game. This is done for the sake of universality and to make facilitate fan interaction online.

Keywords: Minecraft, irrealia, video game translation, crowdsourcing

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

TIIVISTELMÄ

Aku Jaatinen: "Lurkki, Hiipijä or Creeper? How Minecraft's translation has changed over time"

Kandidaatintutkielma

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Kandidaatintutkielmassani analysoin Minecraft: Java Edition -videopelin neljää eri versiota selvittääkseni, miten pelin suomenkielinen käännös on muuttunut ajan myötä. Aineistoinani ovat pelin versiot tammikuulta 2012, elokuulta 2012, vuodelta 2016 sekä pelin nykyinen versio. Keskityn pelin fantasiaelementteihin, eli esimerkiksi olentojen, erilaisten materiaalien sekä esineiden nimiin, sillä ne useimmiten vaativat kääntäjiltä eniten luovuutta.

Luokittelen havaintoni Ritva Leppihalmeen reaalioiden käännösstrategioiden perusteella. Reaaliat ovat tiettyyn kulttuuriin sidottuja termejä, joille ei ole suoraa vastinetta kohdekielessä. Näitä käännösstrategioita voidaan soveltaa myös irreaaliaan eli fiktiiviseen reaaliaan. Analyysini perusteella suosituin käännösstrategia pelin fantasiaelementeille on *calque*, tai suora käännös.

Minecraft: Java Edition on käännetty eri kielille Crowdin-nimisen pilvipohjaisen verkkoalustan kautta, ja kuka tahansa voi osallistua käännöstyöhön. Tällaista yhteistoiminnallista verkkopohjaista käännöstyötä kutsutaan yleisesti joukkoistamiseksi (*crowdsourcing*). Tässä tutkielmassa käsittelen myös sitä, miten tällainen ei-ammattimainen, yhteisöpohjainen käännös menetelmä on vaikuttanut pelin kääntämiseen.

Analyysini osoitti, että Minecraftin aiempien versioiden suomenkielisessä käännöksessä oli enemmän luovuutta ja monet olentojen, materiaalien ja esineiden nimet olivat suomennettuja, mutta viimeaikaisissa päivityksissä monet nimet ovat vaihdettu kokonaan takaisin englanninkielisiksi tai käännetty vain osittain suomeksi. Tämä johtuu todennäköisesti "Minecraft Official Glossary" -oppaan vaikutuksesta. Kyseinen opas on Minecraft Wikin mukaan pelin kehittäjän Mojangin tekemä ohjenuora kääntäjille, ja se määrittelee säännöt pelin eri elementtien kääntämiselle muille kielille. Oppaan julkaisemisen jälkeen monet nimet, kuten "Creeper", "Enderman" tai "Nether", on täytynyt säilyttää englanninkielisinä kaikissa pelin käännöksissä. Tämä on tehty yleismaailmallisen kokemuksen takaamiseksi ja fanien vuorovaikutuksen helpottamiseksi verkossa.

Avainsanat: Minecraft, irreaalia, videopelikääntäminen, joukkoistaminen

Tämän julkaisun alkuperäisyys on tarkastettu Turnitin Originality Check -ohjelmalla.

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1. Introduction

As a long-time player of the video game Minecraft, I have noticed an interesting development in the Finnish translation of the game. I first played Minecraft in 2012 and have played it in Finnish ever since. Over the years, I have seen how the Finnish localisation of Minecraft has gradually adopted more and more English-language words, which have replaced elements previously translated into Finnish. In this thesis, I will analyse these changes in the game's translation and speculate about the reasons behind them. As a basis for categorisation in my analysis, I will refer to Ritva Leppihalme's translation strategies of realia since I will be dealing with irrealia, which means fictional realia (Leppihalme 2011). I will do comparative research on retranslation as I analyse how the Finnish translations of four different versions of Minecraft differ. Retranslation refers to translating a text that has already been translated into the same language before (Gürçağlar 2009, 233). I will comment on how the translations have changed and whether there have been changes regarding the translation strategies. My focus will be on the game's fantasy elements, meaning creatures, objects, and other entities that do not exist in the real world but solely in the in-game universe since these elements typically require the most creativity from translators. Since Minecraft: Java Edition is translated through crowdsourcing, I will also discuss the effects of non-professional, volunteer-based translation work as this has also had effect on the game's translation.

Minecraft has been a subject of academic studies before, but not from the viewpoint of language or translation studies. I have not come across any studies on the game's translation or language. Most of the studies related to Minecraft have to do with either programming or utilising the game as a learning tool for children. There are many earlier studies done on video game translation (e.g., Bernal-Merino 2014), and Leppihalme's strategies for translating realia are also quite commonly referred to when discussing the translation of fiction (e.g., Pettini 2021). Still, this sort of comparative research regarding retranslation is quite uncommon on the topic of video games, being more common in literature studies.

In what follows, I will first introduce key background concepts, including video game translation, crowdsourcing, and realia and irrealia, then present Minecraft and the four game versions that I have chosen for analysis. After that, I will go through my analysis of the changes in the translations of the game's fantasy elements, and finally, discuss my findings.

2. Video games

2.1 Definition of a video game

A simple but vague definition of the term ‘video game’ would be “multimedia interactive entertainment software” (Bernal-Merino 2014). The Encyclopaedia Britannica defines video game as “any interactive game operated by computer circuitry” (2022). These definitions show that it is challenging to give a simple exhaustive definition of a video game since there are so many types of games available nowadays. We can establish the fact that a video game is a unit of entertainment that is played on an electronic device, but that does not really say much. After all, video games have grown to become a full-fledged form of entertainment with countless different game genres, styles, and ways to play. I will talk about what type of a video game Minecraft is when I present my data.

2.2 Translation of video games

Since video games have developed to become more and more diverse and complex, it only makes sense that they need to be appropriately translated for international audiences to be able to enjoy them properly. As video games have developed with technology over time, from simple arcade games to a vast world of different genres, their translation needs have also become more diverse (Bernal-Merino 2014, 2). For example, high fantasy role-playing games with plenty of dialogue, world-building, and in-game lore have substantially different needs for translation than sports or simulator games (Fernandez Costales 2012).

Bernal-Merino (2007) argues that from the point of view of translation, there are two types of video games. Those that require more research than creativity, and those that require more creativity than research. Games that require more research tend to be based on other media or already established franchises. Since Minecraft is an original work that is not based on any previously existing titles, its translation has more creative freedom than a game based on Batman, for example.

Minecraft is the second best-selling video game of all time, with over 238 million copies sold as of April 2021 (Sirani 2022), only eclipsed by Tetris. If only PC games are taken into account, Minecraft takes the number one spot. With such fame, it only makes sense that the game should be accessible in as many languages as possible. Next, I will discuss how the game is translated.

2.3 How Minecraft is translated

Minecraft is not a very text-heavy game. It does not rely on language as much as it does on its gameplay, easy-to-understand visuals, and player creativity. There is no dialogue or text-based world-building, making the game accessible to all ages. Minecraft's language elements mainly consist of menu screens, achievements, names of blocks, creatures, and other entities visible in the player's heads-up display, toolbar, and chat window. Therefore, there is not that much language content to translate.

Minecraft: Java Edition is translated into over a hundred different languages with the help of a community-based cloud translation platform called Crowdin, which is based on the volunteer work of fans who work as translators and proofreaders. Anyone can become a volunteer translator and leave suggestions, and the proofreaders are trusted community members with long-term engagement and experience. Crowdin also utilises a voting system to filter out poor-quality translations (Minecraft Wiki, "Crowdin", 2022). This type of crowd-dependent translation work done online is referred to as crowdsourcing (Jiménez-Crespo 2017).

Crowdsourcing is quite a common way of translation on the Internet nowadays, and many companies or institutions make use of crowdsourcing to translate their websites or other projects to as many languages as possible. Facebook, for example, has been translated through crowdsourcing (O'Hagan 2009, 112). Crowdsourcing can be either voluntary or paid work, depending on the assignment (Jiménez-Crespo 2017, 128). Minecraft's translation uses voluntary crowdsourcing.

What is interesting about crowdsourcing is that the translators are simultaneously the target audience of their own translation (Cronin 2013, 100). As Minecraft is translated through Crowdin volunteer work, the translators are most likely fans of the game and active players themselves. This level of commitment allows for a deeper understanding of the game world and the meaning of the in-game elements since the people who translate the game also have experience playing it.

The clear benefit of fan translation is that since the fan translators are also the target audience, they know what should be translated and how since they are essentially designing the product for themselves as part of the player base. However, because this sort of volunteer translation does not require any training or prior translation experience, the resulting translations can be of poor quality (Jiménez-Crespo 2017, 128). This is combated in Crowdin with the use of a voting system and proofreaders, so the resulting translations tend to be good in quality despite not being translated by

a professional. As Cronin mentions, in crowdsourcing, “peer pressure can be a powerful incentive to improve quality through collaborative correction” (2013, 101).

One of the most apparent differences between fan translation and professional translation is the lack of anticipation of financial gain. Fans typically engage in translation because they have a deep interest and commitment to the product, be it a TV show, comic, or video game (Vazquez-Calvo et al. 2019).

In January 2016, Mojang Studios, the developer of Minecraft, defined certain terms, such as “ Creeper”, “Enderman”, and “Nether”, to be such that they must remain the same in all localisations. According to Minecraft Wiki’s article on Crowdin, Mojang published a guideline in January 2016 titled “Minecraft Official Glossary” (MOG) in the form of an Excel sheet as a guideline for translators. The glossary included a list of terms that should be left untouched or should only be partially translated (2022). This explains most of the changes in the game’s translation direction in recent years. The list of terms has also been expanded with new terminology as the game has been updated, which entails that the glossary is being regularly updated.

Mojang’s request can be explained by the fact that Minecraft has become such a commercial success. Therefore, it is understandable for them to want to brand and protect their intellectual property. In the glossary, it is explained that it is important for players to have “a shared vocabulary for some of the unique elements of Minecraft” and that “having words in common gives players experiences in common, and that is something we want to protect” (MOG). This is understandable, as it is easier for fans from different cultures to interact with each other if key vocabulary is shared. For example, every Minecraft player knows what a Creeper is and what it does.

3. Theoretical framework

Since I will be using realia translation strategies by Ritva Leppihalme as a basis for categorisation in my analysis, I must first explain what the concepts of realia and irrealia mean. After that, I will present the seven different realia translation strategies.

3.1 Realia and irrealia

The term ‘realia’ refers to culture-bound terms and concepts that exist in a particular source culture but not the target culture into which it is being translated. Leppihalme (2011) explains that references to realia can include material items such as food or cultural clothing, and more abstract concepts and phenomena.

Video games are also rich in realia. Due to their audiovisual medium, video games often contain many references to culture-related elements, fictional or not (Pettini 2021, 5). For example, visual elements in game design often take inspiration from the real world and real-life cultures in one way or another, since video games tend to reflect real-world culture elements.

Translating realia can prove tricky as translators have to be creative in thinking about how they will translate the term since there are no simple and direct translations available, and some terms might be hard to explain. Leppihalme states that there are two ways to approach the translation of realia; either diluting the cultural elements within the term or somehow explaining them to the target audience.

However, the lack of a direct translation does not mean that realia terms are always unfamiliar in other cultures as well. This makes the categorisation of what counts as realia a bit difficult in practice. For instance, Leppihalme points out that the terms ‘tsunami’ and ‘hijab’ are examples of realia, but their meanings are still understood in other cultures as well. They have lost the unfamiliarity factor yet are still representative of their source cultures (2011, p. 126).

Irrealia is a neologism proposed by Mika Lojonen in 2009, used to describe elements that are real in a fictional world but non-existent in ours. Therefore, irrealia can be thought of as the fictional counterparts of realia. Lojonen states that irrealia “can be called the signs through which a fictional world establishes its fictionality” (2009, 166). So, not only are irrealia terms that do not exist in any culture, but they do also not exist anywhere outside the fictional world in which they are situated, which means that they are bound to the specific context of the piece of fiction at hand.

3.2 Translation strategies for realia and irrealia

In her 2011 article, Leppihalme defines seven distinct strategies for translating realia, which can also be applied to irrealia due to the similarity of their concepts. I will use these strategies as a basis for categorisation in my analysis. Leppihalme’s seven realia translation strategies are:

1. direct transfer: the source text word is kept mostly the same, with possible minor changes to the spelling of the word.
2. calque: a word-for-word translation that results in a neologism in the target language.
3. cultural adaptation: a source-language cultural item is swapped for a target-language version that corresponds better to its culture.

4. superordinate term: a target-language umbrella term is used to translate something specific in the source language.
5. explicitation: implicit elements are made explicit in the text by adding words that describe the term.
6. addition of a text-external explanation: adding a footnote or a glossary in the text.
7. omission: removal of the realia item from the text altogether.

Based on this framework, I will treat the fantasy elements of Minecraft as irrealia and see how well Leppihalme's strategies correlate with their translations. I assume that calque, or direct translation, will likely be the most commonly used translation strategy since the community volunteers most likely are not professional translators and, therefore, might make solutions that are the most obvious. I would also like to note at this point that not all of Leppihalme's strategies will be found in the data. The addition of a text-external explanation does not really work in the genre of video games, or at least in the context of Minecraft, so it can be ruled out.

4. Data and method

In this chapter, I will introduce Minecraft, describe it as a video game, then move on to explain the different game versions that I have selected for analysis, and discuss how I have done the analysis.

4.1 Minecraft

Minecraft is a three-dimensional open-world sandbox survival and crafting video game developed by Mojang Studios, originally released on May 17, 2009 (Sirani, 2022). The first version, or the Alpha version of Minecraft, was made public in 2009, but the game was still unfinished at that point. The game saw its full release on November 18, 2011 (Minecraft Wiki, "Minecraft", 2022), and it has seen regular content updates ever since. Over time, new game mechanics, creatures, blocks, other entities, and biomes have been added to enrich the game world.

Minecraft can be played either alone or online with others. In Minecraft, the player explores a procedurally generated world made up of blocks. Minecraft is a sandbox game. This means that the game emphasises player creativity, and it is very open-ended with no storyline or obligatory objectives and can thus be played in countless ways. However, a sense of progression can be felt through completing in-game achievements that guide the player to do certain things, such as chopping down a tree or crafting gear out of iron. Even though it is not mandatory, there is also an

ending to the game, which involves the player defeating a boss creature, the Ender Dragon, in a dimension called the End (Minecraft Wiki, “Minecraft”, 2022).

The gameplay of Minecraft essentially boils down to two main elements: survival and creation. There are essentially two main game modes, Survival and Creative. Minecraft currently has five game modes, but the other three are more or less variations of either of these modes. In Survival mode, the player must gather resources from the world in order to survive, craft, and build, while also maintaining nutrition and fending off hostile creatures. In Creative mode, the player has every resource available at hand, they cannot take damage from the world, and they can also fly freely around the world, allowing them to focus solely on creative endeavours. One might describe Minecraft’s Creative mode as a virtual LEGO set, as basically only imagination is the limit to what can be created.

There are three different dimensions that the player can explore in the world of Minecraft: the Overworld, the Nether, and the End. For context, I will provide a brief explanation for each of the dimensions.

The Overworld is the main world where the player starts their adventure, and the two other dimensions can be accessed through portals that can be found or built in the Overworld. The Overworld is based largely on the planet Earth, with various biomes ranging from mountainous valleys and lush tropical forests to barren deserts and everything in between. The world is inhabited by various creatures, commonly referred to as Mobs, most of which are based on real-life animals, and some are fantasy beings unique to the game. Even though they are called Mobs by the game community, I will continue to call them ‘creatures’ in this thesis for clarity reasons.

The Nether is a red, hellish dimension with lava lakes, dark fortresses, and caverns. Its inhabitants are mostly hostile toward the player, making this dimension dangerous to explore. All the creatures that can be encountered in the Nether are fantasy creatures. They include, for example, wailing ghosts, twisted pig-like creatures, and fire spirits.

The End is an eerie dimension with floating islands, surrounded by an endless space-like dark void. The End serves as a final challenge to the player as the “final boss” of the game, the Ender Dragon, can be fought there. In update 1.9 in 2016, End Cities were added to make the dimension more interesting to explore (Minecraft Wiki, “The End”, 2022).

Nowadays, Minecraft has multiple editions, and it can be played on several platforms, including computers, game consoles, and mobile devices (Mojang 2022). In this thesis, my focus is solely on Minecraft: Java Edition, which is the original edition of the game, only available on the PC.

Interestingly, the Java Edition is the only one that is fan-translated, whereas the other editions of Minecraft are translated by professional translators (Minecraft Wiki, “Crowdin”, 2022). This might offer an opportunity for future comparative research on the translation of Minecraft’s different editions. I have no personal experience with the other editions, so I cannot say whether their translation differs drastically from the Java Edition.

4.2 The different game versions

For my data, I have gathered information from four different versions of Minecraft: Java Edition, to which I have access on my Windows PC. Every single historical game version can be downloaded and played directly from the official Minecraft game launcher, which makes access to the data convenient. All it requires is a copy of the game. After selecting the game versions, I retrieved the necessary data by both playing the game and accessing text files that included translation information. After that, I collected the names of the fantasy elements and other essential information into a separate Excel sheet, where I was able to group my findings based on the translation strategy used. Overall, my analysis included 21 names: seven creatures, five types of material (or blocks), and eight items. There are obviously more fantasy elements than this in the game, but I decided to pick those that had interesting translations and that were present in as many of the four included game versions as possible.

The four versions I have selected for analysis and why:

1. Minecraft 1.1 (released January 12, 2012)

This game version was the first one to include multiple language options (Minecraft Wiki, “Language”, 2022). The first Finnish translations were very raw, but at the same time, they also showed high creativity with the least correspondence to the source language out of these four versions. For example, the creature Enderman, which is associated with the dimension called The End, has been translated to Finnish as *Kalmakumma*. It is possible that the translator(s) at the time associated the End as “the end of life” instead of “the ends of the universe” as it is commonly understood nowadays.

2. Minecraft 1.3.1 (released August 1, 2012)

I chose to include this version as well, despite the short duration of time from the first one, because, in only half a year's time, the translation had undergone several changes. For example, the *Kalma* theme had been changed into *Ääri*, and the Enderman is now called *Ääreläinen*. This corresponds better to the “far end of the universe” theme, rather than the end of life.

3. Minecraft 1.9 (released February 29, 2016)

This version serves as a convenient middle point between the first translation of 2012 and the present-day version. It shows a good balance of words that retain translated Finnish-language elements but simultaneously has gone back to English in many parts. This version was released about a month after Mojang's request not to translate the names of certain elements, so some names had been reverted to their source language versions, but not all of them. For example, the Enderman is still called *Ääreläinen* in this version. In this update, the End was reworked and expanded to include more floating islands and structures known as End Cities for the player to explore after defeating the Ender Dragon. Many new End-related items were added to the game, and they were only partially translated as per the Minecraft Official Glossary.

4. Minecraft 1.19.2 (the current version, released August 8, 2022)

Of course, I must showcase the current state of Minecraft's translation, which is the reason I chose to work on this topic in the first place. Nowadays, the Finnish version of Minecraft is compliant with Mojang's definitions of set terminology. However, the addition of new creatures and other elements in recent updates has shown more creativity in the Finnish translation. For example, a new fantasy creature added in the latest update, the Allay, has been translated into Finnish as *Apuri* (Eng. Helper). Only time will tell whether it will also need to change to English in the future.

While these four versions might not offer a comprehensive picture of the history of Minecraft's translation, they do give an overview of some of the broader changes that have happened over the years. Going through every single game version would be time-consuming and beyond the scope of this thesis.

5. Analysis

I have grouped the terms I have chosen for this analysis based on the (ir)realia translation strategy used and will go through them by category. I have picked the most interesting ones from the data set as examples, and I will showcase them in tables.

Regarding the translation of the End dimension and terminology relating to it, it is apparent that the first version of the Finnish translation perceived the End as death, the end of life, as we can see from examples such as *Kalmakumma* and *Kalmakivi*. *Kalma* is a Finnish high-style word for death. However, it did not take long for the translation of End to change to *Ääri*. This better corresponds to “the far end of the universe”, which the dimension is commonly understood as since it is a space-like strange dimension that also functions as a final challenge for the player, so the word ‘End’ carries multiple connotations.

5.1 Calque

Table 1. Examples of calque.

Type	Original English name	1.1 (Jan 2012)	1.3.1 (Aug 2012)	1.9 (2016)	1.19.2 (2022)
Creature	Creeper	Lurkki	Hiipijä	Creeper	Creeper
Creature	Blaze	Roihu	Roihu	Roihu	Roihu
Material	Nether Brick	Hornatiili	Hornatiili	Netherintiili	Nether-tiili
Material	Soul Sand	Sieluhiekka	Sieluhiekka	Sieluhiekkaa	Sieluhiekka
Material	Redstone	Punakivi	Punakivi	Punakivi	Redstone
Item	Ender Pearl	Kalmahelmi	Äärenhelmi	Äärenhelmi	Ender-helmi

Most of the translations in the data set are either calques, which mean direct translations of an (ir)realia item that result in a neologism in the target language, or direct translations, which I have also categorised under calque. The reason for this decision is that even though the word “Roihu”, for example, does already exist in the Finnish language, in the context of the game, it refers to a

specific creature that exists only in the game world, and the connection to the word cannot be made without the appropriate context.

Every term in the category of ‘material’ is a calque, and nearly every item as well. The reason why the names of blocks and building materials are calques or direct translations is likely that their translation is usually straightforward enough. For example, for the term “Soul Sand”, there is really only one obvious translation.

The iconic creature Creeper has been called *Lurkki* and *Hiipijä* in the earlier Finnish versions of the game. Even though its name has changed, the translation strategy has remained the same, as these two words are basically synonyms of each other, and can both be directly translated to ‘Creeper’ in English. *Hiipijä* was probably favoured over *Lurkki* because the word is in more common usage in Finnish.

A prime example of a calque that also shows compliance with Mojang’s terminology requirements is the translation for Nether Brick, a material that the fortresses in the Nether are made of. At first, it was simply translated as *Hornatili*, which is a direct translation from the time when the term ‘Nether’ was not yet specified to not be translated. Even after this change, it followed the simple route of a direct translation with only a little change made to the spelling of the word.

The reason why the material Redstone has been recently turned back to English is most likely due to its prominence in the Minecraft community as a creative tool. Redstone ore can be mined from caves, and the redstone dust it yields can be used to transmit a “redstone signal”, which outputs a simple on or off signal, and functions similarly to electric wires. This allows for the creation of automated elements, ranging from simple door-opening mechanisms to intricate, automatically sorting inventory systems and beyond. Its prominence and importance as a creative tool have most likely resulted in making the term universal, so that people can communicate about Redstone creations over the Internet more easily.

5.2 Explication

Table 2. Examples of explication.

Type	Original English name	1.1 (Jan 2012)	1.3.1 (Aug 2012)	1.9 (2016)	1.19.2 (2022)
Creature	Ghast	Hornahenki	Hornanhenki	Hornanhenki	Ghast
Creature	Mooshroom	Sienilehmä	Sienilehmä	Sienilehmä	Mooshroom
Creature	Enderman	Kalmakumma	Ääreläinen	Ääreläinen	Enderman

Explication involves the addition of additional information to a translation. A good example of explication is the translation of the Ghast, which was translated into *Hornanhenki* for a long time. The Ghast can only be found in the Nether dimension, and the Finnish translation adds the information that the creature is native to *Horna*, the Finnish name for the Nether, therefore making this a prime example of explication.

Another interesting explication example is the Finnish name for the rare mushroom-clad cow creature, Mooshroom, which is *Sienilehmä*. The Finnish name translates simply as “Mushroom cow”. It essentially deletes the wordplay of the original name, Mooshroom, which combines the onomatopoeic ‘moo’ sound that a cow makes with the word ‘mushroom’. Since the creature is a cow that has mushrooms growing on it, the Finnish name simply describes it through its visual outlook.

The Enderman is an interesting case, and I pondered for quite a long time about which category I would place it in. In the first Finnish version of January 2012, the Enderman was called *Kalmakumma*. This is by far the most deviating translation from the original in the data set. *Kalma* is a Finnish high-style expression for death, and *kumma* means ‘odd’ or ‘strange’. At this point, since the End was a relatively new dimension, it was probably still unclear what it would be like. The Endermen were strange new creatures that roamed the Overworld, so perhaps this translation stems from its mysterious dark appearance and strange behaviour. In this case, the translation is not direct, but a completely new one based on the creature’s description. This would put “Kalmakumma” in the category of explication, because in explication, words are added to make the translated term more explicit. For a long time, the Enderman was translated into Finnish as

Ääreläinen, roughly meaning ‘from the End’ or ‘of the End’, similar to the Finnish word *helsinkiläinen*, which means ‘a person from Helsinki’. *Ääreläinen* is closer to the English name, but still, I would not call it a calque. It is a difficult name to translate directly since the word “Ender” has really no meaning or direct translation. I believe that *Ääreläinen* still counts as an example of explicitation since it adds the extra bit of information that the creature originates from the End dimension.

5.3 Direct transfer

Albeit rarer, I found two examples of direct transfer in the Finnish translation of Minecraft. For example, the material known as ‘Prismarine’, which was added to the game in 2016, has been translated to *Prismariini*. The other one is ‘Netherite’, added in 2019, which is translated to Finnish as *Netheriitti*. Since both items are quite new additions to the game, they have no other translations. This is also mentioned in the Minecraft Official Glossary, which states that some terms can be translated if only minimal change is required, and it fits the target language. This would entail that their translation will not need to change anytime soon.

5.4 Terms whose translation strategy changed over time

Table 3. The cases where more than one strategy has been used.

Type	Original English name	1.1 (Jan 2012)	1.3.1 (Aug 2012)	1.9 (2016)	1.19.2 (2022)	Strategies used
Creature	Ender Dragon	Kalmakärmes	Äärilisko	Äärilisko	Ender-lohikäärme	Superordinate term, calque
Creature	Zombie Pigman (2020–: Zombified Piglin)	Sikazombi	Zombie-sika	Zombisikamies	Zombipiglin	Omission, calque

In the data set, there were two terms whose translation strategy changed over time. It might have to do with changes in community translation guidelines or the rework of a creature (as with the Zombified Piglin).

At first, the final boss creature, the Ender Dragon, was called *Kalmakärmes*, which can be translated into English as ‘Death snake’. The first Finnish translation of the Ender Dragon was very high-style, something that could be seen in the translation of fantasy literature, for example. After that, the creature was called *Äärilisko*, in English, ‘End Lizard’. The first two Finnish translations curiously did not use the Finnish word for dragon, *lohikäärme*, but opted for sorts of hyponyms instead, even though *lohikäärme* would have been the obvious choice. Both of the terms *kärmes* and *lisko* can be also associated with dragons. This would technically put the first two translations of Ender Dragon into the category of the superordinate term. It was only after 2016 that the boss creature became known as *Ender-lohikäärme*, which is a direct translation of the English original name, the Ender Dragon, resulting in a neologism in Finnish, making this name a textbook example of a calque.

The Zombie Pigman, or Zombified Piglin as it is called nowadays, has seen substantial change in its translation as well as its design. In the 1.16 “Nether Update” released in 2020, the Nether was reworked with new additions that diversified the dimension. This also included the revamp of the creature, Zombie Pigman, to correlate with the newly added ‘Piglin’ creatures (Minecraft Wiki, “Nether Update”, 2022). The first Finnish translation of the Zombie Pigman, *Sikazombi*, means simply just ‘pig zombie’. This translation takes away the “man” part of the original name, omitting it altogether. This goes in the category of omission, since the original term ‘pigman’, which is a fantasy element, is reduced to the mundane ‘pig’ in the Finnish version. It makes the name simpler and takes away the reference to men. This perhaps dilutes the perceived ‘humanity’ of the creature that is in the original name. After that, the word order was swapped, and the creature was called *Zombie-sika*, or ‘zombie pig’ in English. This is still a case of partial omission. Curiously, the English word ‘zombie’ was used here even though the Finnish word *zombi* is already established and understood. The hyphen would not have been needed if the Finnish word was used instead. This might have just been a stylistic choice.

Interestingly, in the 2016 version, the creature has been renamed to “Zombisikamies” which is a direct translation of the original English name, and a clear example of a calque. This time it contains the word ‘man’ as well. This goes to show that Minecraft’s name translation policies and decisions have not been very consistent, because, for example, the Enderman, has never had the word ‘man’ as part of its Finnish translation. I think that this example showcases the nature of crowdsourcing. Since there are multiple people making different translational choices, the results of a crowdsourced translation project might be varying and inconsistent when looked at on a broader scale (Jimenez-Crespo, 2017, 122). After the creature’s rework in the Nether Update, it has been

called Zombified Piglin, and due to the translation guidelines in the MOG, the name ‘Piglin’ stays untranslated, and so, its Finnish name is ‘Zombipiglin’, giving us another example of a name that is only partially translated, which seems to be the current trend in Minecraft’s translation.

6 Conclusion and discussion

Leppihalme’s strategies might not have been the best theoretical framework to approach this type of data, and so I had to be a bit creative about how I perceive, for example, calques. In order for the analysis to work I had to also include direct translations that do not create a neologism in the target language, because otherwise many terms would not have fit in any of Leppihalme’s categories. Leppihalme’s translation strategies perhaps correlate better with elements regarding real-life cultural differences instead of video game fantasy elements.

Overall, I found 14 instances of calque, three of explicitation, two of direct transfer, and two of more than one strategy across all four versions analysed. As I initially suspected, calque or direct translation was by far the most used strategy in the translation of Minecraft’s fantasy elements. This might have to do with how Crowdin works since the translations that end up in the game are decided through a voting system, and it is common to favour solutions that are the most clear and direct. What also impacts the predominance of calques in the data set is the fact that I included non-neologisms as calques as well.

The main takeaway of my analysis is that Minecraft’s Finnish translation used to be more creative, but guidelines have steered its direction into favouring a universal experience over uniquely translated names of fantasy elements. As the examples illustrate, Minecraft’s fantasy translations have seen changes over time. Some elements have stayed the same for quite a long time, whereas some have seen rapid change. Most of the fantasy creatures especially have seen their names turned back to English as per Mojang’s request. In the latest version studied, the original English name has replaced many previously translated terms due to these instructions. Translations such as *Ääreläinen* or *Sienilehmä* have been discarded, and their names turned back to English for the sake of universality (MOG). Some elements have fully kept their Finnish names, such as *Roihu* or *Sieluhiekka*, and some have been partially translated, such as *Ender-lohikäärme* or *Nether-tiili*.

In the latest version of the game, most of the fantasy creatures and terminology related to the Nether and the End are either fully or partially in English, regardless of the localisation. These changes have most likely to do with branding and helping make playing Minecraft a universally shared experience as Mojang intended. It will be interesting to see how the new fantasy elements added to

the game will be treated in the future. For now, it seems that new additions, including new fantasy plants and creatures, such as the Allay (*Apuri*), Crimson Fungi (*Karmiinisieni*), or Warped Fungi (*Kummasieni*), get translated into Finnish. Perhaps if they gain enough prominence and attention within the game community, they might also need to be changed into one common language.

The clarity angle is perfectly understandable. Having specific terms that are universally in English makes online cross-cultural discourse about Minecraft easier among fans of the game. However, it does also take away the effort put into the game's translation. In any case, it is good to keep in mind that as a video game, Minecraft is a product for sale like any other, and the way it is translated is dictated by its creator and owner.

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