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**THE CASE OF THE SINGULAR *THEY***  
Queer representation in the translation of pronouns in  
*And Just Like That...*

# ABSTRACT

Sanni Kylväjä: "The Case of the Singular *They*": Queer representation in the translation of pronouns in *And Just Like That...*

BA thesis

Tampere University

Bachelor's programme in Languages, English Language

April 2024

The purpose of this thesis is to study the translation strategies used in translation of the singular *they* in Finnish. The singular *they* is a personal pronoun especially relevant today in its usage by people in the queer community who identify as non-binary. As data, I am employing the subtitles from the HBO Max series, *And Just Like that* where I examine the translation of the singular *they*. In the analysis of the translations Démont's three modes on translating queer literary texts are used.

The translation of the singular *they* is a rather complex task due to the differences between languages regarding marking gender in pronouns and as well the fact that the queer community is a multilingual network that creates their own vocabulary to form their identity.

In this thesis, I examine how the translations of the singular *they* maintain the queer content in the target language. The theoretical framework used in this thesis discusses the gender marking in pronouns, usage of the singular *they*, gender self-determination in the queer community, community informed translation and as well the possible issues in translating the singular *they* as *hän*.

I examined the translations of the singular *they* from the series *And Just Like That*. The series has characters that identify outside the gender dichotomy, and they utilize the singular *they* as their chosen pronouns. There are in total 27 instances of the singular *they* or its other forms in the first season of the series which was chosen as the material. I transcribed both the English and Finnish subtitles and analyzed them, using Demont's modes to determine how well the translations maintain the queer content.

The results exhibit that a majority of the instances of *they* were translated according to Demont's misrecognizing mode since the queer content was concealed and *hän* was chosen as the translation. Demont's two other modes: minoritizing and queering were equally frequent in the analysis. The translations in the former mainly translated the denotative equivalence while simultaneously reducing the queer content and the ones in the latter exhibited successful presentation of the queer content. There were, as well, a notable number of translations where the pronoun was completely omitted, reflecting the difficulty of this translation.

Since this thesis only examined the translations from the first season of the series, and only one series in altogether, the results of this study are not highly generalizable. Though, the results, even from this small amount of data, exhibited a varied usage of translation strategies meaning that the translation of the singular *they* to Finnish would benefit from more research to determine translation strategies which represent the Finnish non-normative gender identities.

Keywords: gender marking in pronouns, the singular *they*, non-binary, gender self-determination, community informed translation, queer representation

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# TIIVISTELMÄ

Sanni Kylväjä: "The Case of the Singular *They*": Queer representation in the translation of pronouns in *And Just Like That...*

Kanditaatintutkielma  
Tampereen yliopisto  
Kielten kandidaattiohjelma, englannin kieli  
Huhtikuu 2024

Tämän tutkielman tarkoituksena on tarkastella yksikön *they*-pronominin kääntämisessä suomen kielelle käytettäviä käännösstrategioita. Yksikön *they* on persoonapronomini ja on erityisen relevantti nykypäivänä sen käytön vuoksi queer-yhteisöissä ei-binäärisiksi identifioituvilla ihmisillä. Materiaalina käytän HBO Max- sarjan *And Just Like that* tekstityksiä, joista tutkin yksikön *they*-pronominin käännöksiä. Käännösten analyysissä hyödynnän Démontin teoriaa kolmesta eri tavasta kääntää queer-kirjallisuutta.

Yksikön *they*-pronominin kääntäminen on melko monimutkainen tehtävä, sillä kielten välillä on merkittäviä eroja sukupuolen merkitsemisessä pronomineissa. Lisäksi queer-yhteisö on monikielinen verkosto, joka kehittää omaa sanastoaan identiteettien muodostamisessaan.

Tässä tutkielmassa analysoin, kuinka yksikön *they*-pronominin käännökset säilyttävät queer-sisällön kohdekielessä. Tutkielman teoreettinen kehys käsittelee sukupuolen merkitsemistä pronomineissa, yksikön *they*-pronominin käyttöä, sukupuolen itsemäärittämistä queer-yhteisössä, yhteisötietoista kääntämistä sekä *hän*-pronominin ongelmallisuutta yksikön *they*-pronominin käännösvastikkeena.

Tutkin yksikön *they*-pronominin käännöksiä sarjassa *And Just Like That*. Sarjassa on henkilöahmoja, jotka identifioituvat sukupuolen kaksijakoisuuden ulkopuolelle ja käyttävät yksikön *they*-pronominia. Sarjan ensimmäisessä kaudessa, joka oli tämän tutkielman materiaalina, oli yhteensä 27 tapausta yksikön *they*-pronominin sekä sen eri muotojen käytöstä. Keräsin tapaukset englanniksi sekä suomeksi ja analysoin niitä käyttäen Démontin teoriaa päätelläkseni, kuinka onnistuneesti käännökset säilyttävät queer-sisällön.

Tulokset osoittivat, että suurin osa käännöksistä edusti Démontin väärin tunnistavaa kategoriaa (misrecognizing), peittäen queer-identiteetit ja valitsivat *hän*-pronominin käännöksessä. Démontin kaksi muuta kategoriaa: vähemmistöön latistava (minoritizing) ja queering olivat yhtä edustettuina analyysissä. Edellisen käännökset suurimmaksi osaksi käänsivät asiasisällön ja vähensivät samalla queer-sisällön näkyvyyttä ja jälkimmäisen käännökset säilyttivät queer-sisällön onnistuneesti. Tuloksissa oli mukana myös merkittävästi käännöstapauksia, joissa pronomini oli kokonaan jätetty pois, mikä heijasti tämän käännöksen monimutkaista luonnetta.

Johtuen siitä, että tutkielman materiaalina käytettiin ainoastaan sarjan ensimmäistä kautta ja ainoastaan yhtä sarjaa ylipäätään, eivät tulokset ole erityisen yleistettäviä. Kuitenkin tästä pienestäkin materiaaalimäärästä tulokset osoittivat monipuolista käännösstrategioiden hyödyntämistä. Yksikön *they*-pronominin kääntäminen suomeksi on selkeästi aihe, joka edellyttäisi enemmän tutkimusta, jotta voitaisiin selvittää käännösstrategioita, jotka edustavat suomalaisia epänormatiivisia sukupuoli-identiteettejä.

Avainsanat: sukupuolen merkitseminen pronomineissa, yksikön *they*-pronomini, ei-binäärisuus, sukupuolen itsemäärittely, yhteisötietoinen kääntäminen, queer-representaatio

Tämän julkaisun alkuperäisyys on tarkastettu Turnitin Originality Check -ohjelmalla.

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# 1 Introduction

The use of personal pronouns varies from one language to another. For example, there are languages which mark gender in them and languages that have gender-neutral pronouns. The use of personal pronouns, especially in the English language, has become a notable topic of discussion since pronouns have become one of the many ways in which people in the queer community form their gender identity and expression. The idea of assuming a person's pronouns, or gender for that matter, has become less accepted, at least in the western societies due to the plurality of gender identity and expression gaining more understanding, even in the medical field. People identifying themselves somewhere outside of the gender dichotomy utilize personal pronouns which are in line with their gender identity and not necessarily with their assigned sex.

In this thesis, I analyse the translation of the singular *they* from English to Finnish. For the material, I have chosen the subtitles of the TV series *And Just Like That*, a comedy-drama, streaming on HBO Max. The translators behind the material used will not be named as this information was not available on the streaming service. The series has gained recognition for its portrayal of queer and non-binary characters and topics. There are characters in the series that use specific pronouns to exhibit their non-normative gender identities.

I utilize Démont's (2017) three modes on translating queer literary texts in the analysis of the translations. The three modes present different manners in which queer content is managed in the translation process. The pronoun usage in the series is a significant part of its queer content, thus Démont's modes enable their analysis regarding queer representation. Essentially the purpose of all translation is to convey the same message to the target language and if the queer content is diminished in the process, the same message will not be conveyed. To support my analysis, some essential theory regarding the use of personal pronouns and queer self-determination will be examined.

The representation of queer characters in the media has significantly increased in the last few years and especially the plurality of gender expression is being explored more. Since a notable amount of the media introducing characters with non-normative gender identity is produced in English, it is not necessarily straightforward when the media in question is translated to other languages such as Finnish. Especially regarding the difference in gender marking with personal

pronouns, it raises the questions of this research: How is the singular *they* translated to Finnish? How well do the Finnish translations manage to maintain the queer content?

The translation of the singular *they* to Finnish has not been widely studied, though there is some other relevant research, for example, Attic's (2023) study on community informed translation that will be discussed in the theory section. Moreover, since the Finnish language is different with its gender neutrality regarding personal pronouns, it makes the translation process challenging and interesting from the point of view of language development. This topic would gain from further research, and it would be beneficial to include Finnish people with non-normative gender identities to the research process.

This thesis has the following structure: Section 2 discusses the differences in marking gender regarding personal pronouns between languages. Section 3 explores the usage of the singular *they*. Section 4 considers gender self-determination. Section 5 examines community informed translation. Section 6 addresses the connotations of the Finnish *hän*. Section 7 describes the material and method of this thesis. Section 8 presents the analysis with the aid of examples categorized according to the method used.

## **2 Gender Marking in Personal Pronouns**

One of the challenges in translation concerns the difference in marking gender between languages. The most spoken languages in the world such as Spanish, Arabic, French and English all mark gender in some manner. The degree to which the language is gendered varies as well. There are languages that, for example, express gender in nouns and verbs, but for the scope of this research pronouns, specifically personal pronouns will be discussed.

Regarding independent personal pronouns, most gender contrasts are sex based (Dryer et al. 2005, 182). Independent personal pronouns refer to, for example, the English *he*, *she* and *they*. Dryer et al. introduce how independent personal pronouns mark gender differently in different languages (2005, 182). Languages are divided into six groups according to the following: 1. Gender distinctions in third person plus first and/or second person, 2. Gender distinctions in third person only, but in both singular and nonsingular, 3. Gender distinctions in third person singular only, 4. Gender distinctions in first or second person but not third, 5. Gender distinctions in third person nonsingular only and 6. No gender distinctions (Dryer et al. 2005, 182). English naturally represents group number 3 since its only gender distinction between

pronouns are with *she* and *he* and their different forms. Finnish represents group 6. as it does not mark gender in its independent personal pronouns in any way. Even the third person singular (where the gender is typically found) does not have any distinction (Dryer et al. 2005, 182). Thus, the Finnish third singular pronoun *hän* can be used to refer to any gender.

### **3 Usage of the Singular *They***

In addition to the gendered personal pronouns *he* and *she*, the English language does employ a third option, the singular *they*. The singular *they* has become widely used in today's language to express identification outside of the gender dichotomy and it is especially adopted by the people identifying as nonbinary. According to Merriam-Webster being nonbinary means that a person "identifies with or expresses a gender identity that is neither entirely male nor entirely female" (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). However, the singular *they* is not a new phenomenon, and its usage dates back to, for example, the works of Shakespeare and Austen (Adami 2009, 282).

The singular *they* was also much discussed as a replacement for the generic masculine *he* during the final decades of the last century due to the rise of the feminist movement starting a debate regarding the sexism in the English language (Adami 2009, 283). In a sense, the pronoun's usage has gone through a shift towards being used to create more gender inclusivity in language whereas originally the pronoun was used mostly when the gender of the person being referred to was not important or was not known. In contrast, its usage today has a key role in gender expression and inclusivity.

It could be argued that the pronouns rise as "the nonbinary pronoun" has as well brought more attention to the representation of gender as nowadays it has become more common to inquire about a person's pronouns instead of assuming either *she* or *he*, on a basis of outside appearance. As Merriam-Webster summarizes "Though singular 'they' is old, 'they' as a nonbinary pronoun is new—and useful" (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).

### **4 Gender Self-determination**

The idea of gender representation is closely connected to language use since from the aspect of sociolinguistics, identities are constructed with the employment of language. Zimman emphasizes the role of gender self-determination which entails the idea that each person is

ultimately in authority of their own gender identity (2019, 147-148). The practice of gender self-determination is “a form of resistance to normative structures of genital-based gender assignment (Zimman, 2019, 148). Since these normative structures of gender have been constructed and upheld by the employment of language, the people identifying outside of them create their own language in effort to achieve linguistic self-expression.

A significant part of this resistance manifests in the employment of pronouns. A person identifying outside of the normative idea of gender is likely to use pronouns which differ from the ones they were assigned with at birth. This usage of pronouns expresses and signals their identity to the outside world. As Zimman explains, the change of pronouns and being “pronounced” correctly by other people is a significant milestone in the person’s transition since it is, as well, the moment when the gender identity is realised outside the mind of the trans person (2019, 159). The term trans is employed here to include all gender identities that differ from the one assigned at birth or even before (2019, 150). Thus, it can be used to refer to people identifying as nonbinary as they do not identify with their assigned gender.

Another point on the importance of pronouns has to do with the instantaneity of their assessment since they are assumed based on clear markers of sex (Zimman 2019, 160). The idea of there being only two genders is the ruling construct and assuming someone is simply either male or female is ingrained in most people’s thought processes. Meaning that using the correct pronouns with someone who does not identify with their assigned gender likely requires the dismantling of these deep-rooted thought processes. Although pronouns have an essential status in the language of gender expression, it is important to note that person’s gender identity does not have automatically assigned pronouns.

## **5 Community Informed Translation**

The issue of translating personal pronouns to ensure correct gender representation has been studied before from the viewpoint of gender self-determination discussed previously. According to Attic translators have struggled to translate queer identities from one language to another, due to the queer community’s development of new vocabulary in its multilingual networks, since this vocabulary is oftentimes unknown to the people outside of the community (2023, 72). Evidently, it is a marginal part of the translator community that belongs to the queer community and has adopted these certain vocabularies. Simultaneously, the representation of



queer identities in the media is increasing and translators attempt to ensure that the representation does not get “lost in translation.”

In Attic’s study regarding Netflix’s subtitling and dubbing of nonbinary pronouns in different languages in the show *One Day at a Time*, it was discovered that translators have difficulties translating the singular *they*, due to the lack of knowledge of its usage in the queer community (2023, 78). The translations exhibited that the pronoun was merely understood for its usage with plural subjects which resulted in what Attic called calque translations that were not authentic (Attic, 2023, 78). Furthermore, the calque translations imply that the character in question identifies as plural instead of nonbinary (Attic, 2023, 79). These types of translation create significant misunderstandings and have a negative impact on the intended queer representation as well.

In contrast, Attic’s study as well included community informed translation examples from the same show which exhibited awareness “of the way that pronouns are used to talk about nonbinary individuals in the third person both in the source and target cultures” (2023, 82). Thus, community informed translation aims for a better understanding of the queer identities and attempts to amplify their often-marginalized voices. It regards queer people as the experts of their communities which then leads to an improved representation. Attic argues that “translators of Queer-oriented texts and identities should be embedded within Queer communities, and at very least, should be allies who actively defer to the expertise that such communities have about their own experiences” (2023, 86). This argument could be generalised as one of the most important skills of a translator: Understanding the source that is being translated.

## **6 The Connotations of the Finnish *Hän***

The last thing to consider is the suitability of the Finnish gender-neutral pronoun *hän* when translating nonbinary pronouns such as the singular *they*, and the connotations and implications that the pronoun, perceived as neutral, entails. Without closer inspection, due to its gender neutrality *hän* seems like an ideal pronoun to present gender that does not conform to the binary construct. Merikallio has studied how the usage of the pronoun in translating gender non-normative identities diminishes the representation of the intended gender non-normativity (2022, 69). According to Merikallio, it is likely that the reader will interpret the gender

normatively if the text does not explicitly point to its non-normativity (2022, 61). Since *hän* is neutral and does not explicitly refer to nonbinary gender identity, it can be assumed that significant number of Finnish people interprets it as either male or female. Even though the plurality of gender identity and expression has gained more recognition in the Finnish society, the ruling gender construct remains as the binary one.

Another approach to examining the neutrality of the pronoun *hän* concerns its hidden masculinity. Engelberg presents multiple studies that exhibit the pronoun being commonly interpreted as referring to the male gender (2018, 27–31). Essentially, if there is no gender referring language, the pronoun is interpreted as masculine. Engelberg states that this perceived hidden masculinity is one of the features of sexism in the Finnish language (2018, 31). Thus, in addition to *hän* being interpreted according to the binary gender construction, its interpretation as well reflects the gender inequality in the society.

## 7 Data and Method

The material I have chosen for this thesis are the Finnish translations of the singular *they* in the TV-series *And Just Like That*. It is a reboot of the highly successful *Sex and The City* that aired from 1998-2004. The reboot premiered on HBO Max in December 2021, and it includes most of the original main characters: Carrie, Charlotte and Miranda. As the original show, *AJLT* is as well situated in New York and the show explores sexuality and gender while depicting the lives of these women. *AJLT* introduces a few gender non-normative characters who employ the singular *they/them* pronouns which makes it useful material for analysing how the pronouns are translated to the Finnish audience.

The other reason why the series is suitable for this type of analysis is the fact that it is regarded as open minded when it comes to gender and sexuality. It could be argued that the creation of gender non-normative characters in this reboot was not accidental, but a choice made to create more queer representation. Similarly, the show *One Day at a Time*, in Attic's study mentioned previously, is regarded as a show that has an activist stance (2023, 74). This considered, translating the singular *they* becomes a sensitive task since the queer representation is deemed essential to the show.

I gathered all the material used in this thesis by watching the first season of *AJLT* from HBO Max. I transcribed all the lines that employed singular *they*. I as well transcribed the Finnish equivalent from the subtitles.

Applying Démont’s theory on three modes of translating queer literary texts I analysed the examples I had gathered from the data and divided them according to the modes. The three modes in question are: misrecognizing, minoritising and queering (157-160). Misrecognizing translation simply dismisses the queer aspect of the translated content and creates a gender normative interpretation instead, the minoritizing one focuses mostly on denotative equivalence of the queer content even if it reduces the multilayered connotative power of the queer aspect and finally the queering one acknowledges the disruptive force of the queer aspect and makes sure that it translates to the target language as well (Démont, 157-158). In addition, the examples included instances where the singular *they* was not translated in any way and these ones were compiled into their own category.

## 8 Analysis and Discussion

In this section the results of the analysis will be examined with the aid of examples and the table presented below. Each category found in the table will be discussed with the examples appointed to them. With each example I will provide some context to help to follow the argumentation of my analysis.

**Table 1. Translation Examples**

Category	Number of examples
Misrecognizing	11
Minoritizing	3
Queering	3
Omitted	10
Total	27

## 8.1 Misrecognizing translations

The category of misrecognizing translation has the most examples out of all the categories mentioned here with 12 examples. As explained above this mode of translation does not manage to portray the queer aspect of the translated content. In Example 1 the character Charlotte is talking about organising the Jewish coming-of-age ritual of her child and since her child, Rock, identifies outside the gender dichotomy, Charlotte does not call it bat mitzvah as it has a feminine connotation because bat means daughter in Hebrew. Instead, she calls it “*they* mitzvah.”

(1) EN: Who better to lead a “they” mitzvah than a Trans rabbi?

FI: Kuka sopisi paremmin johtamaan hän mitsvaa kuin trans rabbi?

(Season 1, episode 10, 06:21)

As explained in the theory section, the Finnish *hän* does not entail any reference to gender non-normativity. Charlotte, by inventing the term *they* mitzvah attempts to create representation for her child, however this intent is not present in the Finnish translation.

In Example 2 Miranda’s estranged husband Steve is talking to Carrie about Miranda’s new partner, Che, who identifies as non-binary and uses *they/them* pronouns. Steve accidentally uses the pronoun *she*, but then corrects himself by saying *they*.

(2) EN: You know, she... I guess, is they... work at your podcast, right?

FI: Hän on kai... mukana podcastissasi.

(Season 1, episode 9, 22:20)

There is a clear effort from Steve to use more inclusive language and respect Che’s pronoun choice even though he might not be accustomed to it. In comparison, the Finnish translation only uses *hän* and the correction of using the wrong pronoun is not shown in the translation. The Finnish translation merely seems as if Steve is taking a small pause mid-sentence. As with Example 1, the gender non-normativity of the character is not expressed.

Example 3 is a discussion between Miranda and her friend and professor, Nya, where Miranda is expressing her frustration against the uncertainty of her new relationship with Che. In the show, Miranda has been exhibiting effort to recognise Che's identity as non-binary and has been evolving in her understanding of sexuality and gender.

(3) EN: I can't stop checking my phone every five minute to see if they still like me.

FI: Katson puhelinta viiden minuutin välein – nähdäkseni, pitääkö hän minusta yhä.

(Season 1, episode 9, 21:08)

Similarly to the previous examples in this category, *hän* is used in the translation of the singular *they*. The Finnish translation does not employ, for instance, other words to represent the non-binarity of the character. The gender non-conformity intended to be conveyed by the singular *they* is again concealed by the translation strategy as the Finnish audience is likely to perceive *hän* as referring to either male or female.

## 8.2 Minoritizing translations

In this section examples that fit into the minoritizing translations will be discussed. These examples exhibit a significant interest in denotative equivalence when translating the singular *they* or *them*. They are thus similar to the calque translations in Attic's study due to their inauthenticity regarding the queer community and pluralising the person. In Example 4, Miranda is talking to Carrie and Charlotte about her new romantic interest, Che. Miranda is again employing Che's chosen pronoun that is in line with their identity as non-binary.

(4) EN: Everything about them made me feel alive.

FI: Kaikki heistä sai tuntemaan eläväksi.

(Season 1, episode 6, 27:35)

The pronoun *them* is translated to the plural *heistä* here, implying that Che's gender identity is somehow plural. It seems that the translation was aiming to be literal and not focusing on the representation of Che's identity as non-binary. Although, when this translation is analysed along with the next example, there is another explanation for this translation strategy.

The following Example 5 is Charlotte's response to Miranda's line in the previous example. Charlotte's character is more conservative than the other women and she is not necessarily as knowledgeable regarding gender plurality. Due to this she misunderstands Che's pronoun as plural and questions if Miranda has more partners than one.

(5) EN: Them?! There, there are others?

FI: Heistä? Onko muitakin?

(Season 1, episode 6, 27:37)

Che's pronoun, *them*, is translated to the plural *heistä* again. This time the denotative translation could be explained by Charlotte's misunderstanding. It as well seems that by this interaction between Miranda and Charlotte, the show attempted to give importance to Che's gender representation, and they chose to do it in a light-hearted and comedic manner that fits the show. After Charlotte's misunderstanding, Carrie explains that Miranda is referring to Che's pronoun and not multiple people. If the translations had not been denotative as they were, the interaction between example 4 and 5 would have been difficult to convey. Overall, though these translations belong to the minoritizing category, it was executed rather strategically.

The last minoritizing translation example is complex since there is notable overlap between it and the misrecognizing and queering translations. Example 6 is from a scene where Che, in their comedy show, is talking about how some people find it difficult to understand pronouns in the queer community.

(6) EN: You know? It's like," He, she, they, them. Please tell me which box to check!"

FI: "Mies, nainen, he, se, hän? Sanokaa mihin ruutuun panen ruksin!"

(Season 1, episode 3, 35:09)

The English one has the normative male and female pronouns and as well the singular *they* and *them*. In the translation however, the latter is translated as three quite different options *he*, *se* and *hän*. The issue with translating the singular *they* as plural *he* is, as previously, its inauthenticity to the queer community since nonbinary people like Che do not identify as plural. Moreover, in this example there does not appear to be a similar strategic choice as in the examples 4 and 5, making the translation choice here with the plural *he* understandably minoritizing.

It is however significant to mention that example 6 does overlap with the misrecognizing translation category due to its employment of *hän* in translating the singular *they*. Though, what is interesting is that *he* and *she* are translated as *mies* and *nainen* which implies that *hän* is somehow not male nor female. This implicature with *hän*, not present in the misrecognizing translations discussed previously, could be recognized as overlapping with the queering translations, which will be discussed in the following section, since it separates the normative male and female from *hän*.

Lastly the use of *se* in translating the singular *they* could be seen as problematic since the word it in English implies that the person talked about is not human. Though, it is notable that in Finnish spoken language *se* is used interchangeably with *hän* without any negative connotations. Although there is this overlapping with misrecognizing and queering translations, Example 6 is, all in all, a minoritizing translation since it prioritizes the plural *he* as the first translation choice for singular *they*.

### 8.3 Queering translations

The final examples to be examined in this section belong to the queering mode of translations according to Démont. These examples maintain the queerness of the source text in the translations. Even though the Finnish language does not have the equivalent of the singular *they* in the queer sense, the translations are creative in their manner marking the gender of the characters as non-normative. Overall, there are three examples in this category similarly to the minoritizing translations.

In Example 7 Charlotte is confiding in Carrie regarding her child, Rock, exploring their gender identity and gender non-normativity. Since Rock does not want to be called a girl and does not identify with the normatively feminine pronouns, Charlotte is learning to use the singular *they* when referring to them.

(7) EN: I told Harry I think... we should just listen—and follow her—their lead.

FI: Sanoin Harrylle, että mielestäni meidän pitäisi vain kuunnella. Ja antaa tytön... hänen johdattaa.

(Season 1, episode 5, 33:08)

At first Charlotte instinctively employs the feminine pronoun *her* and then quickly corrects herself with the singular *their*. In the Finnish translation the feminine pronoun is translated as

*tytön* meaning girl's and *their* is translated as *hänen*. The contrast created between *tytön* and *hänen* implies that the *hänen* in question is not feminine, allowing the pronoun to have a queer interpretation. This type of queering of *hän* was done similarly in Example 6.

Example 8 is taken from a conversation between Carrie and Miranda. Carrie is correcting Miranda because she had accidentally referred to Che as *she* even though they use *they/them* pronouns.

(8) EN: No, no more people. And it's not she, it's they. They are on their way up.

FI: Ei lisää ihmisiä. Eikä saa sanoa "tyttö". Hän tuo päivällistä.

(Season 1, episode 5, 13:08)

In this example, the Finnish translation again emphasizes the difference between *tyttö* and *hän* in order to employ *hän* as a gender non-normative pronoun. The difference is made notably more effectively here since in the Finnish translation saying girl is forbidden. It is evident from the translation that Che does not want to be referred to as a girl.

The final example in this category, Example 9, Charlotte is again using the term, *they* mitzvah, when she is talking to her child, Rock, about their party.

(9) EN: That's why you're having a "They Mitzvah."

FI: Siksi saat omannäköisesi mitsvan.

(Season 1, episode 9, 03:08)

Instead of translating it as *hän* mitsva, as in the example in misrecognizing translations, this Finnish translation uses the adjective *omannäköinen* meaning that Rock's party will be unique to them. It is certainly an interesting translation choice, and it does succeed in translating Rock's identity as something out of the normative. In the show, Rock had as well expressed that they do not necessarily want to identify as non-binary or some other category and instead they want to be themselves. This translation emphasizes the uniqueness of Rock's gender expression.

## 8.4 Omitted translations

Even though the examples in this category do not belong to the different translation modes by Démont, it is essential to examine the different ways in which Finnish translations omit the



personal pronouns altogether. The omission is very frequent and normal for the Finnish language in general, and it was especially recurring regarding the singular *they* in this study. This category where the singular *they* was left untranslated was the second highest in numbers.

In Example 10 Carrie is telling Miranda to go with her to Che's comedy concert. Carrie uses Che's chosen pronoun *their* since she knows that Che identifies as non-binary and uses *they/them* pronouns.

(10) EN: You're coming with me to their comedy concert Friday night.

FI: Tulet perjantaina komediaesitykseen.

(Season 1, episode 3, 02:16)

The Finnish translation omits the pronoun completely. This is possible due to the context since Carrie and Miranda were talking about Che before this line. It is thus clear who's comedy concert Carrie is referring to.

In Example 11 Miranda is telling Carrie and Charlotte that Che has invited her to meet their family for dinner. Miranda again refers to Che with the singular *they*, since she knows of their pronoun preferences, this time in possessive form.

(11) EN: So, Che asked me out to dinner with their family this Friday.

FI: Che kutsui minut perjantaina syömään perheensä kanssa.

(Season 1, episode 10, 05:54)

In this example the omission of the pronoun is done differently, by adding the possessive suffix to the word *perheen*. This type of omission of pronouns is very usual in the Finnish language. Since Miranda also mentions Che's name in the same sentence it is clear that she is talking about Che's family.

The final example in the category where pronouns left untranslated is from a scene where Miranda is asking Carrie whether Che ever asks about her since Che and Carrie work in the same podcast.

(12) EN: They never ask about me at the podcast, do they?

FI: Eikö Che kysy minusta podcastin nauhoituksissa?

(Season 1, episode 7, 10:49)

The singular *they* is used twice in the original, English version. The omission of both pronouns is done again in the Finnish translation though this time the pronouns are replaced by simply using Che's name. By using Che's name in the translation, the difficulty of translating the singular *they* to Finnish is avoided.

Overall, the translations omit the pronouns often in the case of singular *they* and this is achieved by different strategies. It could be argued that the high frequency of omission is connected to the issue of the translation of the singular *they* to Finnish, since there is no consensus yet on what would be the preferred translation.

## 9 Conclusions

This thesis studied the different strategies which were chosen in the translation of the singular *they* when it is specifically used to refer to a gender non-normative identity. The main aim of the analysis was to examine how the different translations chosen represent Démont's three modes of translating queer texts since it is deemed important that the queer representation does not diminish in the translation process. The translations in the queering section were the ones that displayed the gender non-normativity of the characters most clearly as was intended by the original, English version. The other two categories, minoritizing and misrecognizing were then less successful as the queer content was not present in the Finnish translation. With the aid of Démont's theory this study was able to discover some strategies that make the queer representation possible in the Finnish translations. It was as well significant to allow its own section for the analysis of the examples where there was no translation of the pronouns since it was the second most frequent category of examples in the whole material used.

As the results of this study showed, the translation of singular *they* to Finnish is anything but clear and consistent and translators rely on different strategies in their work process. The high prevalence of translating the singular *they* with *hän* was to be expected since it is used as a gender-neutral pronoun. These results were also in line with an MA-thesis by Moilanen where

the translation choices were studied from the point of view of Finnish translators, one being the translation of the singular *they* in Finnish (2023, 30). In the results, the most frequent translation chosen for the singular *they* was *hän* (Moilanen, 2023, 30). Though it is essential to note that the Finnish translators in the study did not find *hän* a suitable choice when the expression of gender carried importance (Moilanen, 2023, 32). It could be then argued that the role of gender with gender non-normative identities is as well significant since it is as well gender representation. In the results of this thesis, the examples in the queering translations showed different ways to maintain the queer content even with the examples that employed *hän*. The high frequency of examples where the singular *they* was left untranslated might reflect the reality that there is not any agreed upon translation in Finnish for the singular they, as there are in some other languages, for example, French which has *iel*. It is understandable that translators might omit the pronoun completely if it seems that there is not a suitable option in the target language. In the end, this area of research would benefit from further studies, especially ones including Finnish queer communities.

The importance of maintaining the queer identities as present as possible in the translation stems from the idea of queer representation. The role of successful queer representation in the media has been a subject of debate for decades already. The theory section of this thesis aims to highlight the role of the queer community in the process of translation as more than a mere minority. Afterall, language is one of the keyways in which queer communities form their identities.

## 9 References

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