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Translation of Wordplay and Allusions
The Finnish Subtitling of *Blackadder*

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ABSTRACT

Ulkomaisten, tekstitettyjen komediasarjojen osuus Suomen televisiotarjonnassa kasvaa alati, ja markkinoilla on myös enemmän kuin koskaan DVD-käännöksiä. Tekstitys on eri käännösmuodoista yksi haastavimpia, sillä kääntäjällä on hyvin rajoitetut tila- ja aikavaatimukset. Eräs tekstittämisen erityispiirteistä on myös puhutun dialogin muuntaminen ja kääntäminen kirjoitettuun muotoon, ja nämä kaksi verbaalisen ja visuaalisen kommunikoinnin muotoa ovat samanaikaisesti näkyvillä ja kuultavissa.

Tämän pro gradu -tutkielman aiheena oli tutkia verbaalisen huumorin, erityisesti sanaleikkien ja humorististen alluusioiden, kääntämistä englannista suomeen. Sanaleikit luokiteltiin homonymisiin/polysemisiin, homografisiin, homofonisiin ja paronymisiin sanaleikkeihin. Alluusiot luokiteltiin erisnimet sisältäviksi alluusioiksi ja avainsana-alluusioiksi. Näitä kahta verbaalisen huumorin ilmiötä tutkittiin James S. Holmesin säilyttävän (retentive) ja uutta luovan (re-creative) käännösstrategian mukaan. Säilyttävässä strategiassa pyritään säilyttämään lähdetekstin piirteet ja huumorikategoria, kun taas uutta luovassa strategiassa pyritään luomaan kohdetekstin piirteitä sekä vaihtamaan huumorikategoria. Hypoteesina oli, että alluusioiden kääntämisessä käytettäisiin säilyttävää strategiaa, kun taas sanaleikkien kääntämisessä käytettäisiin uutta luovaa strategiaa. Hypoteesi perustui Holmesin ja Ritva Leppihalmeen aikaisempiin tutkimuksiin sanaleikkien ja alluusioiden kääntämisestä.

Tutkielman kohteena oli brittiläinen komediasarja *Musta Kyy* (*Blackadder*), joka on tunnettu tyypillisesti brittiläisestä verbaalisesta huumoristaan. Materiaalina käytettiin sarjan DVD-versiota, sillä DVD-kääntäminen on jokseenkin uusi ja televisiokääntämistä vähemmän tutkittu ilmiö.

Hypoteesin vastaisesti uutta luovaa käännöstrategiaa ei juurikaan käytetty sanaleikkien kääntämisessä, mutta säilyttävä käännöstrategia oli kuitenkin hallitseva alluusioissa. Hallitsevin strategia sanaleikkien kääntämisessä oli huumorin kääntämättä jättäminen, jolloin suurin osa huumorista katosi. Syinä tähän ovat huumorikääntämisen haasteellisuus sekä kääntäjän tekemät yksittäiset ratkaisut ja työoloihin liittyvät seikat.

KEYWORDS: verbal humour, subtitling, retention and re-creation, wordplay, allusions

1 INTRODUCTION

The translation of humour via the medium of subtitling is an increasingly important field of study due to the widespread circulation of foreign subtitled television programmes in Finland. In 2011, foreign television programmes amounted to 54% of the supply of programmes on the 12 television channels included in the licence fee in Finland (*Suomen televisiotarjonta 2011* 2011). The percentage of subtitled programmes would rise even higher if one were to take into account the number of programmes made in the second national language of Finland, namely Swedish. Foreign comedy programmes are increasingly popular in Finland and almost all of the programmes directed at adults are subtitled, and this phenomenon has caught the attention of several researchers studying the translation of humour. The percentage of entertainment programmes on the same 12 television channels in 2011 was the second largest at 23% (ibid. 2011). Therefore, the translation of these foreign comedy programmes can be seen as a topical subject.

A great number of small Western European countries, Finland among them, use subtitling as their main medium in audiovisual translation (Koolstra, Cees M., Allerd L. Peeters & Herman Spinhof 2002: 326). In Finland, dubbing is reserved only for shows directed at children, and other forms of audiovisual translation (such as voice-over, commentary or free narration) are far less common. In many cases, subtitles are the main form of translations that people encounter during the day because, on average, the Finnish people watch television three hours and three minutes every day (*Television katsominen kasvussa* 2013). Therefore, the significance and quality of subtitling cannot be overlooked.

Subtitling is a challenging form of audiovisual translation due to the various constraints that it imposes. When subtitling for television, the translated text is condensed into a very limited space on the lower part of the screen for a short duration of time; the two lines of subtitles consist of some 35-37 characters which are visible for approximately six seconds (Diaz Cintas & Remael 2007: 23). The material for this thesis is in DVD form, and DVD subtitling differs from television subtitling in the sense that the length

of the characters on screen is slightly longer, approximately 40-41 characters. Diaz Cintas and Remael (2007: 24) state that the reason for this is the possibility to rewind the film if necessary, for example if the viewer did not have enough time to read the subtitles. Longer subtitles also allow room for a longer translation, thus enabling the translator to retain more of the original dialogue. However, it is impossible to fit every single aspect of the original source text into the subtitles, and loss of information is often unavoidable. An audiovisual translator is faced with a difficult decision on what to include and what to exclude from the subtitles, and he or she is also often forced to carefully condense the original source text so that it does not omit any information that is important for the plot or the audience (Koolstra et al. 2002: 328).

The translator can also encounter challenges regarding the type, content and style of the source text. One particularly demanding challenge is the translation of verbal humour, which can manifest itself in many forms. The source text can, for example, contain humorous culture-specific features and allusions that are not familiar or recognisable to the target audience. Also, the source text can contain language-specific wordplay that is essential to the character of the source text. Combined, these two culture- and language-specific features can render the translation of the source text highly problematic, especially if the translator wishes to preserve the features of the original source language material (**source-oriented focus**). Another option is to distance the translation from the source text and bring it closer to the target audience (**target-oriented focus**). In cases involving the translation of humour, the function of the humorous content as well as its target audience and their knowledge about the source culture cannot be overlooked when deciding which approach to utilise (Schröter 2005: 106). These types of translation problems have attracted scholars to study the translation of humour and, in this context, especially the translation of verbal humour such as wordplay and allusions.

Verbal humour and especially wordplay is a complex field of study that has been approached differently by various scholars. Naturally, opinions and studies regarding wordplay differ, but most scholars agree that wordplay can traditionally be defined as "[…] a deliberate communicative strategy […] used with a special semantic or

pragmatic effect in mind"" (Delabastita 1997: 1). In most cases, the intention of wordplay is to signify or highlight some relevant occurrence in the text, id est to lend extra emphasis on it and its overall effect. Dirk Delabastita is considered to have had the greatest influence on the discipline of wordplay and how it is studied today. He differentiated verbal humour into wordplay, soundplay and alliteration (ibid. 5). These categorisations, as Delabastita notes (1997: 5), are nevertheless not written in stone because there can be many instances in which verbal humour overlaps. He is also credited for creating a categorisation system for wordplay that many scholars have now adopted. Delabastita (1996: 128) categorised wordplay into four different types: **homonymic, homophonic, homographic,** and **paronymic wordplay**. He has also offered nine different translation strategies for wordplay, which will be discussed more thoroughly in Chapter 4.

Delabastita (1997) states that wordplay can be seen as

> [...] a kind of signature, epitomizing each language's unique individuality [...] but at the same time calling for the authenticating gesture of translation as a counter-signature in another language (13).

The difficulty of generating this authenticating gesture for highly language-specific wordplay is seen in the tendency of some forms of wordplay to resist translation. It is widely recognised that certain types of wordplay can be very resistant towards translation, whereas other types are less resistant and do not cause the translator as many difficulties (ibid. 10). Delabastita does not sign the claim of some scholars that wordplay is untranslatable, although he acknowledges that wordplay is indeed a difficult phenomenon to translate. The general assumption concerning the untranslatability of wordplay is, as Schröter (2005) states, that the target language cannot achieve in a faithful manner the "[…] type of specific building material that would be required to create an exact equivalent of the original pun [wordplay]" (98). However, it is important to remember that in many translation mediums it is impossible to find exact equivalents between two very different languages.

The earlier discussion regarding source- and target-oriented translation has been widely studied by James S. Holmes, who was a prominent translation theorist and scholar in the field of poetry translation. Holmes (1988) suggested an approach where translation could either be **retentive** or **re-creative**. A **retentive translation is source-oriented** and aims to preserve as much of the source-culture features as possible, whereas a **re-creative translation is target-oriented** and aims to adapt the translation into the target culture norms and features. Schröter (2005: 110) has argued that the function of the text decides whether it should be retentive or re-creative, and the pre-existing knowledge of the target audience should also be taken into consideration. According to Holmes's (1988: 48) theories, a retentive translation exoticises and historicises the text, whereas a re-creative translation naturalises and modernises the text. However, he (ibid. 48) argues that translations can never be purely retentive or re-creative, and that the categories can and do overlap to some extent, as was previously mentioned.

Holmes (1988: 49) studied extensively the translation of poems and he observed that the translation of cultural features in poems was most often retentive, whereas the translation of linguistic features was most often re-creative. In other words, he discovered that the culture-specific features were historicised and exoticised, whereas the language-specific features were naturalised and modernised. Of course, the translation of poetry and the translation of verbal humour are two distinct fields of study, but both of these disciplines share complex linguistic features that have an intentional significance in the text. Thus, it can be presumed that Holmes's theories would also be applicable to the study of the translation of verbal humour.

Another type of verbal humour that also has great importance in the text is **allusions**. They are often divided into two main categories: **proper-name** and **key-phrase allusions.** Allusions are best described as culture-bound references to for example history, literature or popular culture (Spanakaki 2007). It would seem that references to popular culture are more easily understood (by both the source audience and the target audience) because of their global nature, whereas references to high culture may remain undetected (ibid. 2007). Allusions have been widely studied by Ritva Leppihalme (1992: 187), who has examined translation strategies for allusions and discovered that

allusions are most often translated in Finland by employing *minimum change* in the translation because there is a wide-spread belief that it is not the translator's task to explain the allusions to the target audience. This strategy can, however, easily render some unfamiliar and culture-specific allusions unintelligible to the target audience. Leppihalme (1992) argues that translators should remember their responsibility as "cultural mediators" (185), and thus sees it as their obligation to discover the best translation strategies for individual cases of allusions. One way of rendering allusions more familiar is by providing simple guidance by for example explaining the names of events, such as writing *King X* instead of only *King* (ibid. 188). According to Leppihalme (1992), another reason why Finnish translators tend to favour literal translation is because the translators

> [...] either do not see allusions as a specific cross-cultural problem deserving translatorial attention, or that they consider allusions untranslatable and therefore leave the responsibility for incomprehensible references with the author (190).

Leppihalme (1997: 135) conducted a controlled experiment with a Finnish target group on their ability to recognise allusions. Her aim was to find out how readers understood allusions in translations. She compared the knowledge of the Finnish target group to the knowledge of experienced native-language readers such as translators and other linguistic professionals. The experiment concentrated on the "understanding of certain (allusive) phrases and passages" (ibid. 136). In her study, Leppihalme (ibid. 142) discovered that the inexperienced target group had great difficulty in understanding literal translations of allusions from, for example, Alice in Wonderland and the Bible. Other translation strategies for allusions, such as replacement, were understood better by the target group. The experienced native-like readers, on the other hand, did not encounter as many difficulties with understanding the allusions. Based on the findings, Leppihalme concluded that literal translations of allusions posed difficulties and were only understood by half of the target group, whereas the other translation strategies helped the target group to better understand the allusions.

This thesis aims to discover how language- and culture-specific wordplay and allusions can be translated and transferred from one culture and language to another in subtitling, which is in itself a constraining and limiting medium for the translation. Can highly language- and culture-specific verbal humour be successfully and faithfully transferred from one culture to another, or will the loss of humorous content and style be inevitable? The subtitling of culture-specific items has not yet been widely studied (Pedersen 2011: 1), which allows this thesis to provide useful information on that specific subject. The translation of wordplay and allusions will be studied by applying Holmes's theories of retention and re-creation to the translation of humour. This thesis will also attempt to complement Leppihalme's studies of the translation of allusions by studying allusions via a new translation medium, namely subtitling. This thesis also differs from the studies of both aforementioned theorists in that it seeks to discover how verbal humour in a spoken form (the dialogue) can be transferred to verbal humour in a written form (the subtitles). The material that will be studied in this thesis is the British television comedy series *Blackadder*, and the English spoken source language will be compared with the Finnish written subtitles to discover how wordplay and allusions have been transferred and translated.

The hypothesis in this thesis is that the translator of *Blackadder* has attempted to preserve as much of the verbal humour of the show as possible because the wordplay and allusions of the series are one of its trademarks. As a result, it is vital that these features are somehow maintained in the Finnish subtitles. However, due to the differences in linguistic structures and cultures between Great Britain and Finland, it is likely that difficulties have arisen during the translation process and that some loss of content has transpired. Loss of content also transpires through reductions and condensations, which can be characterised as typical features in the medium of subtilting (see, for instance, Kovačič 1994). Considering the results from Holmes's studies of the translation of poetry, I hypothesise that the translator has chosen the **retentive strategy for culture-specific allusions** and opted to use the **re-creative strategy for language-specific wordplay**. Taking into account the results from Leppihalme's studies concerning the translation of allusions, I further hypothesise that

the Finnish translator has chosen literal translation over other simplifying or guiding translation strategies.

The following subsections will be devoted to the presentation of the material and the method. The following chapter (Chapter 2) will discuss verbal humour and present different definitions for it. Chapter 3 will focus on subtitling and especially on its constraints and limitations and how they affect the translation. The following chapter (Chapter 4) will comprehensively discuss the (un)translatability of humour, the (in)visibility of the translator, and the translation strategies chosen for the analysis of the material. Chapter 5 will contain the actual analysis of the material. The final chapter (Chapter 6) will contain the discussion and conclusions drawn from the analysis.

1.1 Material

The material that was studied in this thesis was taken from the DVD version of the BBC series *Blackadder*. The material consisted of the last three seasons of *Blackadder*, each of which had six episodes. The English source text material in this thesis consisted of the original soundtrack in the DVD version and the series' official transcripts from the 26th Anniversary Commemorative Edition *Blackadder: The Whole Damn Dynasty 1485-1917*. The Finnish target text material consisted of the Finnish subtitles taken from the aforementioned DVD version. The instances of wordplay and allusions were collected by meticulously perusing through the episodes and transcripts. Wordplay was identified by using the categorisation system created by Delabastita, whereas allusions were identified by using the theories formed by Leppihalme.

Blackadder is a historical situation comedy show written by Richard Curtis, Ben Elton, Rowan Atkinson and John Lloyd. It consists of four seasons that are each set in a different historical context, and the show presents a humorous and absurd portrayal of British history. Consequently, the show is full of culture-specific allusions to British history and historical figures, as well as of language-specific instances of humorous wordplay. The show recounts the story of the Blackadder family line through one

recurring character, Edmund Blackadder[1], who is a shrewd, cunning and malicious anti-hero prepared to do anything to promote his situation in life. He is always accompanied by his moronic servant Baldrick. The show features a strict hierarchical system where Blackadder is all the time stuck in the middle between an incompetent leader and an incompetent servant. The four different seasons are listed below:

1) *The Black Adder*
   - Historical setting: The Middle Ages during the reign of Richard III and later Richard IV.
2) *Blackadder II*
   - Historical setting: 16th century England during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I.
3) *Blackadder the Third*
   - Historical setting: Early 19th century during the rule of the Prince Regent.
4) *Blackadder Goes Forth*
   - Historical setting: The trenches of the First World War.

The genre of *Blackadder* is historical comedy and – although it is quite a popular genre in Great Britain – it is relatively uncommon in Finland. However, the show was well-received in Finland and there have been several re-runs of it on television throughout the years. According to Pelsmaekers and Van Besien (2002), the *Blackadder* series is "[…] generally considered to be a typical representative of the *English sense of humour*" (248). Thus, it is a prime candidate for the study of the transference of verbal humour from the English culture to the Finnish culture.

Verbal humour in *Blackadder* manifests itself in the form of for example wordplay and allusions. As stated before, Delabastita (1996: 128) divides wordplay into four different categories: homonymy, homophony, homography, and paronymy. This categorisation is sometimes complemented with the addition of polysemy (identical pronunciation and spelling, clear etymological relationship), although Delabastita ignores it due to its close nature to homonymy. For the same reason, the study of polysemy will be omitted from this thesis. The wordplay in *Blackadder* contained instances of homonymic/polysemic,

[1] *Blackadder* italicised refers to the show, whereas Blackadder in normal style refers to the character Edmund Blackadder.

homophonic, and paronymic wordplay. The first example below demonstrates an instance of homonymic wordplay:

(1) Wellington: Now then, no doubt you are anxious to catch up with the latest news of the war. I have here the most recent briefs from my generals in the field.
Blackadder: Yes, well, if you could just pop them in the laundry basket on the way out.

(S03E06SC07).[2]

In this particular scene, the Duke of Wellington informs Blackadder (who is for devious reasons disguised as Prince George) about the proceedings of the war against the French. This example of homonymic wordplay is a play on the two meanings of the word *brief(s)*. Wellington uses the word *brief* to denote an *overview* or *report* made by his generals, whereas Blackadder mistakes the word for *underwear*. Thus, it is a form of wordplay concentrating on a word that has two (or more) meanings, although the word has identical spelling and pronunciation. The humour is also derived from an incongruous misunderstanding between the two characters. The second example demonstrates an instance of homophonic wordplay:

(2) Baldrick: […] my father was a nun.
Blackadder: No, he wasn't.
Baldrick: He was so, I know because whenever he was in court and the judge used to say 'Occupation', he'd say 'Nun'.

(S04E01SC03).

In this particular scene, Baldrick is dressed as a nun for one of Blackadder's conniving schemes, and they discuss Baldrick's unconventional family. This example of homophonic wordplay is a play on the words *nun* and *none*, both of which are pronounced identically but spelled differently. As stated before, Baldrick is an absurd and silly character who has a rather unorthodox way of thinking. Thus, it may not come as a surprise that he mistakes *none* (relating to an occupational status) for *nun* (indeed an occupation, although a most unlikely one for a man). The humour in this example is

[2] S03E06SC07 refers to season (S) three, episode (E) six and scene (SC) seven of *Blackadder*.

rather similar to the first example because it revolves around a misunderstanding. The third example demonstrates an instance of paronymic wordplay:

(3) Blackadder: What happened to your revolutionary principles, Baldrick? I thought you hated the aristocracy.
Baldrick: I'm working to bring down the system from within, sir. I'm a sort of a frozen horse.
Blackadder: Trojan horse, Baldrick.

(S04E03SC09).

In this example, Baldrick is aspiring to improve his position in life and become a member of the British aristocracy by disguising himself as a woman and marrying a General. This example of paronymic wordplay is a play on the rather similar (although distinct) pronunciation of the words *frozen* and *Trojan*. As in the previous example, the humour is derived from Baldrick's stupidity when he confuses the words. Thus, Baldrick also effectively acts as the butt of the joke.

The allusions in *Blackadder* consist of **proper-name allusions** and **key-phrase allusions**. Because *Blackadder* is a comedy show situated in four different historical contexts and eras, it is more than likely that there are at least some allusions to significant or well-known historical persons, events or literary works. The historical accuracy of these allusions, however, is a different matter entirely because much of the humour in *Blackadder* is derived from the absurd portrayal of history. An example of several proper-name allusions is demonstrated below:

(4) Blackadder: I've a horrid suspicion that Baldrick's plan will be the stupidest thing we've heard since Lord Nelson's famous signal at the Battle of the Nile: "England knows Lady Hamilton's a virgin, poke my eye out and cut off my arm if I'm wrong."

(S03E02SC10).

In this particular scene, Baldrick is about to suggest a plan to get Blackadder out of a trouble of his own making but – as is apparent from Blackadder's lengthy and

exaggerated remark – Baldrick's plans have not usually been very helpful or smart. This example contains three proper-name allusions to two historical persons and one historical event: *Lord Nelson, the Battle of the Nile* (in which Lord Nelson's British forces defeated the French), and *Lady Hamilton* (Lord Nelson's mistress). The fourth and less obvious allusion is to *the physical appearance* of Lord Nelson because he lost an arm and the sight in one eye in battle. Blackadder's humorous remark, however, links these misfortunate accidents to Lord Nelson's dishonest and completely fictional statement of Lady Hamilton's virtue. An example of a key-phrase allusion is demonstrated below:

(5) Ludwig: Then choose your next witticism carefully, Herr Blackadder. It may be your last!

(S02E06SC10).

In this particular scene, Blackadder is held hostage by a German revolutionary called Ludwig. Blackadder, however, is largely only annoyed by the situation and he cleverly and heedlessly proceeds to insult his captor. Ludwig's response is almost identical to a famous quote from the James Bond film *Goldfinger*, where the titular villain says to Bond: "Choose your next witticism carefully, Mr Bond — it may be your last." Modifications of the phrase have also been used extensively in other instances of popular culture, and the phrase is quite recognisable.

The material that is studied in this thesis contains a great deal of both wordplay and allusions and, consequently, in some instances these two forms of verbal humour can overlap. An example of the overlap between paronymic wordplay and a proper-name allusion is demonstrated below:

(6) Blackadder: Virtually no one is [eligible to vote] - women, peasants, chimpanzees, lunatics, lords.
Baldrick: No, that's not true. Lord Nelson's got a vote.
Blackadder: He's got a *boat*, Baldrick.

(S03E01SC01).

In this example, Blackadder is explaining to Baldrick how the general election works and who are allowed (or, more accurately, who are not allowed) to vote. In this example, paronymic wordplay occurs between the two rather similar sounding words *vote* and *boat*, which Baldrick has mixed up. The proper-name allusion is a reference to *Lord Nelson* who, indeed, commanded several boats (or rather ships) when he served in the Royal Navy. These overlapping instances will not be accounted for as separate occurrences of verbal humour in this thesis.

The source material that was studied in this thesis encompassed all in all **138 instances of allusions**; 122 proper-name allusions and 16 key-phrase allusions. In the same source material, there were all in all **45 instances of wordplay**; 3 instances of homophonic wordplay, 9 instances of paronymic wordplay, and 33 instances of homonymic/polysemic wordplay. The findings are represented more clearly in Table 1 below:

Table 1. Number of wordplay and allusions in the source material

Wordplay and allusions			
Wordplay	**Number**	**Allusions**	**Number**
Homophony	3	Proper-name	122
Paronymy	9	Key-phrase	16
Homonymy	33		
TOTAL	**45**	**TOTAL**	**138**

The material that will be studied in this thesis provides a distinctive opportunity to discover how both culture- and language specific verbal humour – in the form of wordplay and allusions – can be translated and transferred from the English language and culture to the Finnish language and culture. *Blackadder* is an especially suitable candidate for this type of a study due to its reputation as a typical example of British humour (Pelsmaekers et al. 2002: 248). The following section will concentrate on the

method chosen for this thesis as well as on the specific translation strategies that will be used to examine the material.

1.2 Method

The purpose of this study was to discover which translation strategies were used for the translation of culture- and language-specific wordplay and allusions from English into Finnish. As stated before, the material that was studied in this thesis was collected from the DVD version of *Blackadder* as well as from the official transcripts of the show. The material was collected by meticulously perusing through the DVD version of the show and writing down all the instances of wordplay and humorous allusions. The discovery of these humorous instances was aided by the presence of *canned laughter*, which always signalled an occasion of humour. The source text was then compared to the target text (i.e. the Finnish subtitles) in order to find the Finnish equivalents. The material was consequently analysed according to Holmes's translation strategies of retention and re-creation. Also, any possible cases of omission or addition of verbal humour were noted.

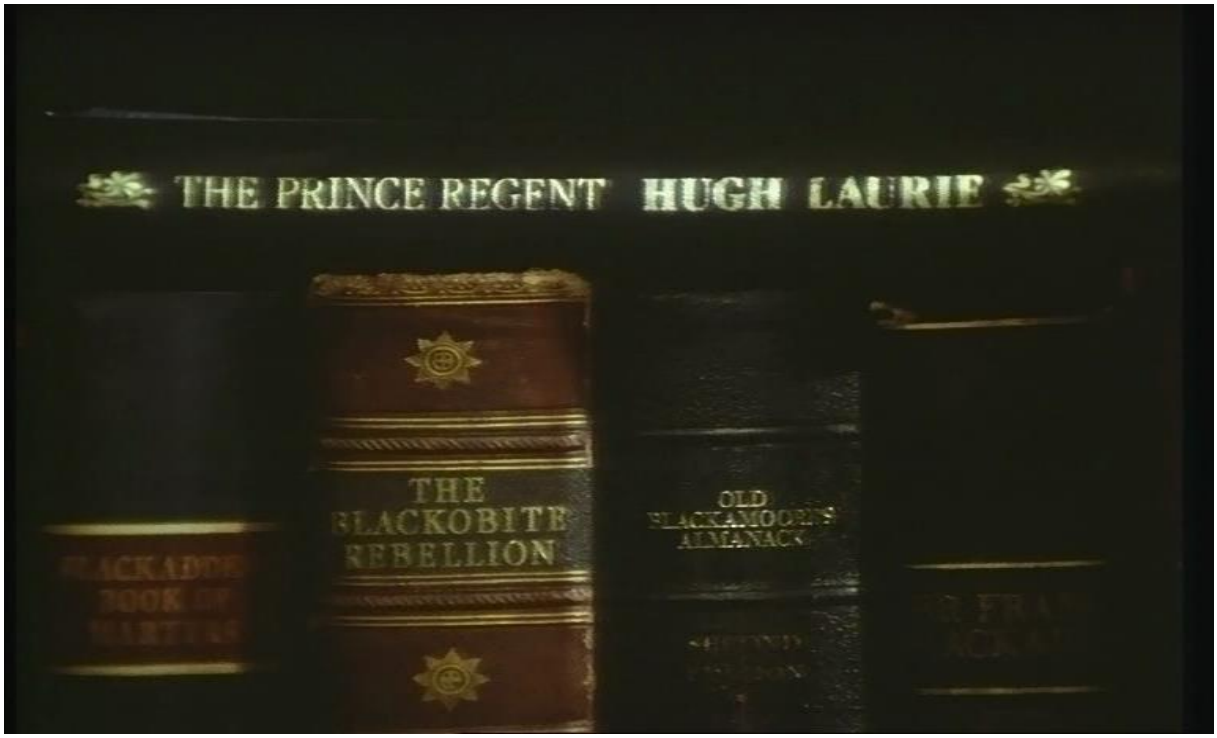
In order to analyse the changes and differences between the source text and the target text, this study utilised **Lawrence Venuti's theories of visibility and invisibility as well as James Holmes's theories of retention and re-creation**. Venuti (1995: 1) has stated that the sign of an acceptable translation is its *fluency*. That is to say, the translation must appear as fluent as the original text and give the "[…] appearance that it reflects the foreign writer's personality or intention or the essential meaning of the foreign text […]" (ibid. 1). According to him (ibid. 20–21), a translator can choose either a **foreignising** or **domesticating method** for the translation. The foreignising method, which allows for the visibility of the translator, aims to retain the peculiar source language and culture features and, consequently, signal the difference between the source culture and the target culture. It does so by "[…] disrupting the cultural codes that prevail in the target language" (ibid. 20) and by forcing the reader to notice the foreign features. The domestication method, on the other hand, renders the translator

invisible by forcing the translation to adapt to the target culture and language norms. This is accomplished by diminishing the foreign features of the source text and culture and replacing them with more familiar ones.

Holmes's theories of **retention** and **re-creation** likewise emphasise that the translator can either reduce the foreign features, thus bringing the translation closer to the target culture norms or, alternatively, that the translator can choose to preserve the foreign features and thus bring the target audience closer to the source culture norms. The retentive strategy highlights the latter by **exoticising** or **historicising** the translation, whereas the re-creative strategy emphasises the former by **naturalising** or **modernising** the translation (Holmes 1998: 47–48). It can be noted that the retentive strategy shares many similarities with Venuti's foreignising strategy and, correspondingly, the re-creative strategy shares many similarities with the domesticating strategy.

The purpose of this thesis was to find out which translation strategies were used for the translation of wordplay and allusions. Holmes's theories were used to determine the translation strategies that the translator of *Blackadder* favoured and, consequently, to discover whether the translator favoured retentive or re-creative translation strategies. Other translation strategies not present in Holmes's figure included the omission or addition of verbal humour. That is, some forms of verbal humour may have undergone partial or complete omission during the translation processes due to for example the highly constricting medium of subtitling. The addition of verbal humour may have occurred if the translator has for example added an instance of humorous wordplay to a scene where there was no wordplay before.

The passages below shortly illustrate how the translation strategies of retention, re-creation, omission and addition could have been employed in the translation of *Blackadder*.



Picture 1. A scene from the opening credits of *Blackadder the Third* (S03E01SC01)

The above snapshot of the opening credits of the third season (*Blackadder the Third)* contains allusions to real literary works as well as historical persons and events written in the spines of the books. The allusions include *Foxe's Book of Martyrs, The Jacobite Rebellion, Old Moore's Almanack* and *Sir Francis Drake*. In the opening credits, they have respectively been altered into *Blackadder's Book of Martyrs, The Blackobite Rebellion, Old Blackamoore's Almanack* and *Sir Francis Blackadder*. The allusion to the Blackobite rebellion is written in the clearest and biggest font, thus immediately catching the attention of the viewer. The following passages will present how this specific allusion could be translated using the translation strategies of retention, re-creation, omission and addition.

If the translator chose to translate the Jacobite/Blackobite rebellion according to the **retentive strategy**, he or she would have to employ the same category of humour in the translation. The translator would also have to favour historicising and exoticising in the translation, thus rendering it foreign to the target audience and preserving the source text features. However, the problem in this case is that the historical Jacobite rebellion

(in Finnish *jakobiittikapina*) is not a very well-known historical event in Finland, and it certainly is not a subject that is taught at elementary schools. Thus, it is very likely that the original allusion would lose its meaning with the target audience if it were translated literally. One possible translation according to the retentive strategy for the Jacobite/Blackobite rebellion is to translate it very nearly literally as *mustabiittikapina* (in English *blackbite rebellion*). In this way, the translation would remain faithful to the original and to the retentive strategy, although it must be noted that the humour would very likely be lost.

If the translator chose to translate the rebellion according to the **re-creative strategy**, he or she would have the power to for example alter the category of humour in the translation. Thus, the translator would not strictly have to adhere to the source text norms and culture. This is an especially helpful strategy if the source text humour is perceived as untranslatable or problematic. One possible translation according to the re-creative strategy would be to replace the rather unknown Jacobite rebellion with a more familiar rebellion or uprising. One such example would be the Russian *February Revolution* (in Finnish *helmikuun vallankumous*), which could be translated as *helmikyyn vallankumous* (in English *pearl adder's revolution*). In this way, the target audience would most likely recognise the allusion to the February Revolution as it also inhabits a central part in the formation of an independent Finland. As a result, the audience would be likely to recognise the wordplay as well as the allusion.

The translator also has the possibility to exercise the complete or partial **omission** of the humorous instance from the translation. This actually is the case in the opening credits of *Blackadder* because none of the allusions that appear in the opening credits are translated in the subtitles. One reason for this might be that the translator has not had access to the video file – that is to say, the translator has had to translate the source text only with the help of the transcripts, thus lacking the visual cues and clues. Another reason might be that the aforementioned humorous instances are not deemed important because they only appear very briefly in the opening credits. Regardless of the reason, the humour is clearly lost.

The translator also has the possibility of **adding** information to the translation for example in the form of another humour category or with the help of explanations. However, it is unlikely that extensive explanations can be used in subtitling due to time and space constraints. One such example of addition would be to exemplify the Jacobite Rebellion by simply adding *black* to the stem word in the Finnish translation, thus connecting it to the show *Blackadder*. Such an addition could be *jakobiittien musta kapina* (in English the *black rebellion of the jacobites*). However, this example would not necessarily carry the humorous effect of the original source text because of the unfamiliarity of the Jacobite Rebellion.

The following section (section 1.3) will concentrate on the show *Blackadder* and the various forms of humour in it. The subsequent section (section 1.4) will provide general information about audiovisual translators and subtitling. The current and complicated situation of audiovisual translators in Finland will also be discussed.

1.3 *Blackadder – The Whole Damn Dynasty*

Blackadder is a historical BBC situation comedy (sit-com) series written by Richard Curtis, Ben Elton, Rowan Atkinson and John Lloyd. It consists of four seasons that are each set in a different historical context, and the seasons present a humorous and absurd portrayal of British history. *Blackadder* ran on British television between 1983 and 1989. The show recounts the story of the Blackadder family line always through Edmund Blackadder and his servant Baldrick, who most often serves as the butt of the joke. Throughout different eras, Blackadder seems to be always stuck between an incompetent superior and an incompetent servant, and most of the storylines focus on the different callous and conniving ways in which Blackadder attempts to increase his wealth and promote his social standing in society. This is also an essential feature of British humour because it is "[…] based on the nation's fixation with class and is conventionally not averse to punning" (Chiaro 1992: 137), and it applies to *Blackadder* to a great extent. Blackadder is a very clever, cynical and sarcastic character and thus the overwhelming majority of the verbal humour is intentionally created by him. In

many cases, his sarcastic and insulting remarks are not even registered by the other, less intelligent characters, and the humorous instances of wordplay and allusions are often only shared and appreciated by the audience and Edmund Blackadder.

The different seasons of *Blackadder* as well as Edmund Blackadder's role in them is explained in more detail in this paragraph. Season one, *The Black Adder*, takes place in the Middle Ages during the reign of Richard III and later Richard IV. Here Blackadder is shown as an unpopular and awkward second son of the Duke of Edinburgh, and he often ends up in serious trouble due to his ungainliness and lack of social grace. In the first season, Edmund differs greatly from the subsequent, nastier versions of him because the character had not yet been developed into the manipulating anti-hero that he is in the later seasons. Season two, *Blackadder II*, is set in 16th century England during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I. In this season, Blackadder is a middle class nobleman who desperately tries to increase his dwindling wealth while simultaneously attempting to balance his popularity with the Queen. The Queen, it should be noted, is depicted as a childish and impatient character who is also an eager decapitator of her followers. In season three, *Blackadder the Third,* the main character Edmund Blackadder continues to serve in the British court, only this time under the Prince Regent. The Prince Regent is depicted as an absolute imbecile, and Blackadder finds it quite easy to manipulate him in order to gain money and power for himself. The fourth and final season, *Blackadder Goes Forth*, differs greatly from the other historical settings as it takes place in the trenches of the First World War. In this last season, Blackadder is serving as a Captain in the British forces, although he repeatedly questions the pointlessness of the war and the stupidity of his commanding officers.

In a tone of self-deprecating and black humour, all of Blackadder's efforts to promote his situation in life turn out to be futile because he dies at the end of all seasons except the third one. In the third season, Blackadder takes the place of the Prince Regent after the Prince is killed in a duel. The first season will not be studied in this thesis because it differs greatly from the tone and style of the later seasons.

Blackadder has won several awards and it was even voted the second best British sit-com of all time in 2004 by British voters (BBC 2004). It has also been voted as the "20th Best TV Show of All Time" by the Empire magazine in 2008 (Empire 2008). Thus, it is an ideal candidate for the study of how intrinsically British verbal humour can be translated and transferred into another culture and language.

1.3.1 Situation Comedies

Blackadder is categorised as a sit-com (situation comedy), which can be defined as a dialogue-driven comedy show with a small set of characters. Sit-coms are usually located in confined and limited environments such as apartments or work spaces (Berger 1992: 71). The episodes are commonly quite short, only about 25-40 minutes long. *Blackadder* is a model example of sit-coms and the director John Weiland of *Blackadder: Back and Forth* states that "[t]he strength of *Blackadder* [has] always been just dialogue in one room, and very witty dialogue" (YouTube 2013). All four seasons of *Blackadder* are situated in a confined environment, for example the Prince Regent's royal house in *Blackadder the Third*, or the World War I trenches in *Blackadder Goes Forth* and contain a fixed set of characters, although some episodes may introduce short-lasting visits from actual historical persons such as Dr Samuel Johnson and the poets Byron, Shelley and Keats.

Two characterising features of sit-coms include their use of repetition and stereotypes. According to Neale and Krutnik (1990: 233–234), repetition is one of the most common stylistic devices in sit-coms, and sit-com episodes usually follow a standardised storyline where an event or a person disrupts the status quo only for that status quo to be restored at the end of the episode, thus leading to a full circle. *Blackadder* also belongs to the type of sit-coms that are centred around the main character, Rowan Atkinson, who is most famous for his comedic roles (ibid. 246–247). Chiaro (1992: 7) states that sit-coms frequently use stereotypes as a means of creating humour. However, the stereotypes that the British audience considers humorous are not necessarily received in the same way by the target audience. Chiaro (2005) moreover states that humour

> […] on screen tends to be more successful within the borders of its country of origin and less successful abroad when the types of wordplay it contains is of the punning variety simply because of translational difficulty (138).

In other words, it is not only stereotypes that may cause difficulties because different types of wordplay may also prove difficult to translate. Stereotypes about other nationalities are especially frequent in *Blackadder*, and particularly the French get their fair share of ridicule, as can be seen in the example below:

> (7) Blackadder: I don't believe it! A German prison cell! For two and a half years the Western Front's been as likely to move as a Frenchman who lives next door to a brothel. Then, last night the Germans advance a mile and we land on the wrong side!
>
> (S04E04SC06).

In this particular scene, Blackadder and his co-pilot Baldrick have crash-landed behind enemy lines during the First World War, and Blackadder is obviously quite exasperated about their situation. In *Blackadder*, the stereotypes about the French mostly concentrate on their reputation as eager lovers (as can be seen in the example above) or on their cuisine (namely, frog's legs and an abundance of garlic in many dishes). This is a rather popular and widely spread stereotype of the French, and it is likely that the stereotype is recognised in several Western countries. Other nations that are ridiculed in *Blackadder* include the Scots and the Welsh, as well as for example the Germans. The reason for the success of these national stereotypes is the shared upbringing and cultural ideas of the source audience. That is to say, the source audience will be highly familiar with these stereotypes and, accordingly, they will instantly recognise their humorous function.

1.3.2 British Humour in *Blackadder*

As stated before, the ridicule of national stereotypes forms a significant part of the humour in *Blackadder*, and the mockery of stereotypes is also a central part of British

humour. These stereotypes can often be quite belittling and in addition to creating humour in the show, they are used to distinguish and separate the "normal characters" (namely the only intelligent character, Edmund Blackadder) from the other invariably silly characters. It appears that this type of "aggressively sarcastic or denigrating humour" (The Independent 2013) is indeed a central characteristic of British humour. A Trans-Atlantic survey conducted on British and North American twins claimed that the aforementioned types of humour, which are commonly seen as characteristically typical British humour, can actually be linked to the genes that were only found in the British participants and not in the North American participants (ibid. 2013). Thus, it can be argued that sarcastic humour is scientifically proven to be an integral part of British humour, although it must be mainly the effect of upbringing and shared cultural ideas. These types of humour are very common in *Blackadder*, and Edmund Blackadder is known as a particularly sardonic and offensive character. An example of one of Blackadder's many cynical remarks can be seen below:

(8) Blackadder: We've been sitting here [in WWI trenches] since Christmas 1914, during which time millions of men have died, and we've moved no further than an asthmatic ant with heavy shopping.

(S06E06SC01).

In this particular scene, Captain Blackadder and his troop have heard rumours of orders to advance and attack the German forces. Blackadder, however, does not put much faith in his generals or in the way that they have conducted their wartime strategies. This quote can indeed be perceived as rather sarcastic, although it would not be categorised as aggressively sarcastic even though Blackadder is clearly frustrated and furious.

Sarcasm is closely related to irony, and irony can also been seen as a typical characteristic of British humour. As Fiona China (2013) states, a typical characteristic of British humour is "[…] the frequent and expert use of irony and understatement". Edmund Blackadder uses irony in many occasions and in many forms, but his ironic remarks often fall far from their intended effect because the other characters take his

meanings literally. Thus, the humorous irony is shared only between the audience and Blackadder. One such example of an ironic remark can be seen below:

(9) Queen: I *do* know why I wanted to see you, and I just pretended I didn't and I fooled you and it worked *brilliantly*, didn't it?
Blackadder: It was terrific, madam. Thank God I wore my corset, because I think my sides have split.

(S02E04SC04).

In this scene, Queen Elisabeth has played a joke on Blackadder by summoning him to her palace for no apparent reason. Blackadder is understandably not too pleased for this waste of time because he actually has a rather serious and time-consuming problem to solve. Therefore, the comment is purely ironic seeing as Blackadder expresses no symptoms of mirth. It is also important to note that the Queen is absurdly characterised as a highly childish and self-centred person and, consequently, she does not perceive Blackadder's remark as ironic.

Another very typical form of British humour in *Blackadder* is humour based on the superiority theory introduced by Salvatore Attardo (1994), in which the comedic effect is created by ridiculing and mocking the so-called butt of the joke – thus producing feelings of superiority in the audience. In *Blackadder*, the butt of the joke is almost always Baldrick, and his stupidity and naivety are ridiculed throughout the series by the cleverer Edmund Blackadder. These specific instances of humour are often coupled with either gross understatement or exaggeration (i.e. hyperbole), which are also popular in British humour and excessively popular in *Blackadder*. An example of superiority theory as well as exaggeration used for a comedic effect can be seen in the example below:

(10) Blackadder: God made man in his own image, and it would be a sad look out for Christians throughout the globe if God looked anything like you Baldrick.

(S02E01SC13).

In this example, Baldrick is once again the butt of the joke in one of Blackadder's lengthy and exaggerated insults. Baldrick is a very unhygienic, untidy and moronic character, and Blackadder often considers him to be little more than an animal. It is also of interest to note that Blackadder's remarks are so frequent, witty and popular that they have even been granted their own section in the Commemorative Edition *Blackadder: The Whole Damn Dynasty 1485-1917*.

As one of the directors of *Blackadder* earlier remarked, the strength of the show was always its witty dialogue in a confined space. Thus, the lexical features of *Blackadder* deserve some attention. Also, British humour is generally perceived to be quite narrative-based. These features that are used for comedic effect include fabricated words, the mixing of registers (e.g. formal language mixed with informal language, and 18th century language mixed with modern colloquial language), bizarre metaphors and similes, and the introduction of modern concepts into a classical era. An example of cleverly **fabricated words** can be seen below:

(11) Blackadder: I am anaspeptic, phrasmotic, even compunctious to have caused you such periconbobulations.
Dr Johnson: What? What? WHAT?

(S03E02SC03).

In this particular scene, Blackadder is having a conversation with Dr Samuel Johnson, a famous writer who compiled the first dictionary of the English language. Blackadder has a personal reason to resent Dr Johnson and, therefore, he attempts to confuse and aggravate the doctor by fabricating words. Blackadder's aim is to cause the doctor to suspect that he has not discovered or written down all the words in the English language. The humour is derived from the fact that Blackadder employs recognisable linguistic structures in his fabricated words, thus convincing Dr Johnson that the words are real. The **mixing of registers**, especially formal and informal language, can be seen in the example below:

(12) Prince: Lucky you warned me. I was about to embrace this unholy arse to the royal bosom.
Blackadder: I am delighted to have been instrumental in keeping your bosom free of arses.

(S03E02SC01).

In this example, Blackadder has convinced Prince George not to act as a patron to Dr Johnson whom, as mentioned before, Blackadder resents. In this example, formal and informal language are effortlessly mixed together to induce a humorous and incongruous effect. To receive someone into one's bosom is to offer that person a close, heartfelt and affectionate welcome. However, a bosom can also mean the chest of a person. Thus, Blackadder insinuates that he was happy to keep the Prince's bosom (chest) free of arses (behinds). Incongruity here arises from the misled expectations of the audience because the audience does not expect formal and informal language to be mixed in such a way. The language in *Blackadder* is also well-known for inventive, clever and **bizarre metaphors** and **similes**. One such example of a clever metaphor can be seen below:

(13) Prince: Perhaps you'd like me to lend a hand, Blackadder. I'm not as stupid as I look.
Baldrick: I *am* as stupid as I look, sir, but if I can help, I will.
Blackadder: Well, it's very kind of you both, but I fear your services might be as useful as a barber shop on the steps of the guillotine.

(S03E02SC05).

In this particular scene, Baldrick has accidentally burned Dr Johnson's dictionary that took him ten years to complete. Therefore, Blackadder has to think of a way to save them from Dr Johnson's revenge. Baldrick and Prince George kindly offer their assistance, but Blackadder – quite flatly and with the help of a sarcastic and exaggerated simile – refuses their help. These kinds of witty similes and metaphors form a core element in the humour of *Blackadder*.

Humour is also derived in many cases from the **mixing of modern concepts with a classical era,** in this case the 18th century. Apart from using modern colloquial slang words such as *thicko* and *brainbox*, modern concepts such as *sequels* are thrown into the dialogue when the audience least expects it. One such example is shown below:

(14) Dr Johnson: You have […] lost the chance to act as patron to the only book in the world that is even better!
Blackadder: Oh, and what is that, sir? "Dictionary 2: The Return of the Killer Dictionary?"

(S03E02SC03).

In this particular example, Blackadder's dislike towards Dr Johnson is quite evident, and he even mocks his literary achievements. The humour here is derived from the incongruous mix of a modern concept (in this case, a low-rated sequel) with the 18th century period. Moreover, the quote "Dictionary 2: The Return of the Killer Dictionary" refers to common and low-rated B-level budget films.

As stated before, the British class system is an endless source of humour for the British audience, and oftentimes the clash between the classes or the absurd characterisation of the various social classes produces humorous instances. In *Blackadder*, the main character Edmund Blackadder always represents the middle class, whereas his servant Baldrick belongs throughout the series to the lowest of the lower classes. As a result, Baldrick is portrayed as uneducated and stupid to the extreme. He is also badly mistreated by Blackadder, but he nevertheless remains utterly loyal to him and seems quite content. The hierarchical class system separating the middle classes from the lower classes according to Blackadder can be seen in the quote below:

(15) Blackadder: It is the way of the world, Baldrick, the abused always kick downwards: I'm annoyed, and so I kick the cat, the cat *(mouse squeaks)* pounces on the mouse, and finally the mouse…
Baldrick: Ahhhh!
Blackadder: …bites you on the behind.

(S03E03SC02).

In this example, Blackadder considers the social standing of Baldrick to be inferior even to animals. This view is also echoed by the royalty and upper classes in the show. Interestingly enough, it is not only the lower classes that receive their share of ridicule. The upper classes (e.g. Queen Elisabeth I, the Prince Regent, and wartime Generals) are frequently portrayed as invariably silly and absurd. Indeed, Edmund Blackadder – the member of the "normal" and stable middle classes – is portrayed as the only intelligent character.

Due to the nature of *Blackadder* as a historical comedy series, it is no surprise that historical persons and events are often ridiculed throughout the show. Many of the comedic historical allusions refer to British history, especially to the battles between the English and the French, but there are also references to historical persons from other cultures, as can be seen in the example below:

(16) Blackadder: If you [Baldrick] were to serve up one of your meals in Staff HQ, you would be arrested for the greatest mass poisoning since Lucretia Borgia invited 500 of her close friends round for a wine and anthrax party.

(S04E01SC01).

This particular humorous allusion is a reference to Lucretia Borgia, daughter of Pope Alexander VI in Renaissance Italy. The Borgia family, not excepting Lucretia, was more than a few times connected to various poisonings and murders, and Lucretia has in later times been depicted as a *femme fatale*. This insulting remark is used to highlight Baldrick's disastrous culinary skills.

1.4 Subtitling in Finland

As stated before, subtitling is the main mode of audiovisual translation in Finland. The subtitling process itself – including the theories, the benefits and challenges, as well as the constraints and limitations – is described and analysed in Chapter 3. The following sections concentrate mainly on the traditions of subtitling in Finland, the status and

(in)visibility of the translators, and the controversial and ongoing conflict in Finland between audiovisual translators and the translation agency BTI International.

Subtitling has been a part of the Finnish translation tradition since the 1960s when foreign language television programmes first appeared on the Finnish television, and currently there are approximately a couple of hundred audiovisual translators in Finland (Mäkelä 2013). These audiovisual translators provide the subtitling for foreign language shows (both on television and on DVDs), video games, cinemas, and operas. According to Mäkelä (2013), Finnish audiovisual translators have from the beginning strived to create easily readable, fluent, and compact subtitles for the audience.

The views concerning subtitling have shifted greatly during the decades. At first, subtitles were an integral part of foreign language shows but, due to globalisation and the overpowering effect and distribution of the English language, subtitles are nowadays often discarded as unnecessary because many are of the opinion that most people understand English. Indeed, it seems that subtitles are only missed and appreciated when they are not present or if they are faulty (Vitikainen 2013). It could, however, be taken as praise to consider that the translations are so fluent and effortless that the readers do not even notice them. Similarly, translators are often invisible to the general audience. This will be discussed in more detail in the following section.

1.4.1 (In)visibility of Translators

The invisibility of audiovisual translators – as well as of other translators of for example literary works – is most clearly seen in the discussions regarding television programmes and literature. As stated before, foreign subtitled television programmes constituted 54% of the total amount of programmes on the 12 public television channels in Finland in 2011 (*Suomen televisiotarjonta 2011* 2011), and the number of foreign translated literature on the Finnish market during the same year was also fairly large at 20.5% (*Julkaistu kotimainen kirjallisuus ja käännöskirjallisuus 1980–2012* 2013). Taking these numbers into consideration, it is peculiar that the translators (or translated literature in general) have not received more attention in the media.

The name of the audiovisual translator or translation agency has often appeared either in the beginning or in the end of a subtitled programme. In the DVD version of *Blackadder*, the name Måndag Oy is visible for a moment during the latter part of the end credits. However, it has become increasingly common to completely omit the name of the translator from the programme, although according to the law the name cannot be omitted without permission from the translator (Vitikainen 2013). While trying to pursue more information about the translation agency Måndag Oy, it became clear on closer inspection that the agency actually offers video copying services and DVD production services, although they are credited also for the translation. In other words, the name of the translator has been omitted from the DVD version, and this practice has actually been common in DVD translations for some time (ibid. 2013). According to Diaz Cintas and Remael (2007), this type of invisibility has a "[…] negative impact on the social recognition of subtitlers, which is most patent in the lack of copyright for their work" (40). Vitikainen (2013) states that the main reason for the invisibility of the translators is the ongoing turmoil in the audiovisual translation industry in Finland.

The undervaluation of subtitling reflects negatively on the audiovisual translators. The profession has for many years had poor contracts of employment[3], although the situation deteriorated when MTV Media outsourced its translation operations to BTI International in 2012. Immediately after that, BTI International announced that they would cut the fees paid to the translators by two thirds and set expectations and demands for faster deadlines. This resulted in a tremendous outcry from the professional translators as well as from several academics, cultural figures and unions.

1.4.2 BTI International and Audiovisual Translators

The decision of MTV Media to outsource its translation operations to BTI International was received with indignation and anger amongst professional translators. At the time, MTV Media employed 114 audiovisual translators in Finland and 101 of them resigned

[3] Poor employment contracts refer to the private sector, whereas the public sector enjoys good contracts and working conditions thanks to the Yhtyneet contract created in the 1980s (Av-kääntäjät 2013).

within a month as a protest (Vitikainen 2013); the translators united together against BTI International. A website (www.av-kääntäjät.fi) was created as early as 2009 to promote awareness of audiovisual translations and translators, as well as of their unacceptable contracts.

The main motivations leading to the uprising against BTI International were the low payments and tighter deadlines that BTI International wished to enforce. The professional audiovisual translators have repeatedly stated that it is impossible to comply with the stricter conditions if they are to maintain the same level of quality as before in their translations. The translators were given smaller compensations and less time to complete their translations, which meant that in order to maintain the wage level that they were used to, the translators had to work faster and produce more translations. Due to this, the translators believe that decrease in the quality of the subtitles is unavoidable, and this is one strong reason why some audiovisual translators prefer to have their name omitted from the translation. Thus, the translators themselves choose to be invisible – at least during the continuance of the conflict. While many translators have refused to work in these deteriorated situations, the industry still attracts for example students who wish to earn some money and simultaneously increase their working experience (Vitikainen 2013).

The demands set by BTI International signal the agency's neglectful and indifferent attitude towards the professional audiovisual translations and, more importantly, towards the quality of the translations. Based on the conflict, it is possible to draw the conclusion that the quality of audiovisual translations is not considered to be of great importance by the employer, MTV3.

1.4.3 Audiovisual Translators United

For the first time, audiovisual translators have systematically united in the struggle for better contracts. They are supported in this endeavour by several trade unions as well as by the Union of Journalists in Finland. The recent events and especially the future outcome of the conflict should also be viewed from a larger and more significant

societal viewpoint. Mäkelä (2013) asks if it is advisable to continue the high-quality education of translators if their knowledge and skills are discarded and denigrated "in the real world".

Although the conflict is an industrial dispute between the audiovisual translators and the translation agency, it also affects the general audience. According to Mäkelä (2013), the audiovisual translators see it as their duty and responsibility to cherish and nurture the Finnish language. Thus, they have a responsibility to the viewers to produce high-quality subtitles that improve the language skills of the audience. The translators fear that professional translators will no longer be able to work for the subtitling industry and, therefore, the quality of the subtitles will decline drastically (Vitikainen 2013). The average Finnish person watches television over three hours a day (*Television katsominen kasvussa* 2013) and, as a result, it is a reasonable fear that the low-quality subtitles may affect the language skills of the viewers. The benefits of subtitling for language-learning are discussed in detail in section 3.2.1.

2 VERBAL HUMOUR

The study of humour is a multifaceted discipline that seems to resist definition and specification. Scholars such as Attardo and Raskin (1994) have suggested ways to study humour via the medium of linguistic theories, but due to the complex nature of humour these theories can only be applied to a certain aspect of it. Indeed, an all-encompassing theory of humour is yet to be introduced and, most likely, it is simply impossible due to vast cultural and linguistic differences.

Verbal humour can almost always be characterised as the manipulation of language – that is to say, the manipulation of linguistic and grammatical rules – in order to achieve a certain goal or to produce a desired response (Chiaro 1992: 15). Most often, the response to humour is laughter, amusement, or mirth (Vandaele 2010: 147). However, laughter is not a specific sign of humour and, more importantly, humour does not always cause laughter. Therefore, the two phenomena cannot be inextricably tied together. Vandaele (2010) recognises that the connection and relation between humour and laughter is somewhat vague and not always concise; laughter as a consequence of humour is something that has been "captured as a useful response to uncertainty, surprises, and insights constructed by our symbolic mind" (148). Humour does not necessarily create the same response in different individuals – what is humorous to one person may not be humorous to another even within the same society or culture. This problem is furthermore accentuated when one tries to transfer humour from one language and culture to another, especially if the humour in question is rather culture- or language-specific.

It has been stated before in this thesis that different cultures do not always enjoy the same types of humour, and some forms of humour may even be considered taboo in other countries. However, it would seem that humour, in some form or another, is a universal human trait (Raskin 1985: 2). Particularly verbal humour often employs some manner of wordplay, but it is not a restricting characteristic of it (Schröter 2005: 72). Many researchers agree that humour functions best within its originating country, where the audience has a shared pre-existing knowledge base. The knowledge base can consist

of for example "some piece of factual knowledge shared by the humourist and audience" (Nash 1985: 4). This knowledge may, among other things, be historical, geographical, sociocultural or linguistic. According to Nash (1985), we "share our humour with those who have shared our history and who understand our way of interpreting experience" (9), although this does not mean that humour cannot travel and fare well in other countries. Technological advancements (such as the television and the Internet) have brought us closer to other countries and, consequently, allowed us to learn a great deal about other cultures, traditions and customs. Therefore, different audiences also have a better premise to understand the humour of other countries.

This thesis will study the transference and translation of verbal humour from English into Finnish in subtitling. This particular medium of audiovisual translation differs greatly from other forms of translation due to the constraints and limitations it imposes on the translator. Subtitling also has advantages when compared to other forms of translation because its visual elements support the message that is transferred in the subtitles. In the following sections, I will first introduce important theories and definitions of humour. After that I will focus on the specific types of verbal humour which will be studied in this thesis, namely wordplay and allusions.

2.1 Humour Theories

Scholars have proposed several theories for various types of humour research, but relevant theories for this thesis are those that aim to define and study humour with a focus on language. These include for instance social theories of humour, more often referred to as **superiority/hostility, incongruity** and **release theories** (Attardo 1994: 47). According to Vandaele (2010: 148), social theories of humour rely heavily on the philosophies of Thomas Hobbes and Henri Bergson. These social theories of humour generally define humour through superiority, where humour is created by ridiculing and mocking the so-called butt of the joke, thus producing feelings of superiority in the target audience (ibid. 148). This is an especially frequent form of humour in the series *Blackadder*, where Edmund Blackadder is depicted as the only intelligent and witty

character. Therefore, he often openly insults and mocks the other, less intelligent characters (especially Baldrick, who is by far the most moronic character in the show). Attardo's (1994: 47) straightforward categorisation of humour into incongruity, hostility, and release theories allows us to effectively determine which theories are relevant for the study of humour and language.

Out of the three classifications, the **incongruity theory** is the closest to linguistic theories due to its focus on linguistic structures (Schröter 2005: 59). Indeed, incongruity theory largely ignores any social or cultural features and instead concentrates on the cognitive aspects of humour (Vandaele 2010: 148). It is essentially based on the incongruity of two opposing ideas. In other words, the recipient of the joke is presented with information which he or she begins to process. This process, however, takes an unexpected turn with the additional contradicting information that the recipient receives. This results in a conflict of two ideas which requires

> […] instantaneous cognitive work […] to overcome the contradiction and another interpretation that has so far remained hidden can be found. The renewal of understanding is attended by the emotion of surprise and satisfaction, causing the reaction of laughter (Krikmann 2006: 29).

An example of incongruity in *Blackadder* is presented below in the dialogue between Edmund Blackadder and a gaoler called Ploppy. Blackadder has been commissioned to take charge of the execution of some prisoners, and in this example he meets some of the staff members who perform the executions. One of the members, a gaoler, is a badly misshapen and repulsive-looking man. The conversation between the gaoler and Blackadder can be seen in the example below:

(17) Blackadder: You are to be congratulated, my friend. We live in an age where illness and deformity are commonplace, and yet, Ploppy, you are, without a doubt, the most repulsive individual I have ever met. I would shake your hand, but I fear it would come off.
Ploppy: There's no' many bosses would be that considerate, sir.

(S02E02SC04)

This particularly rude and insulting remark made by Blackadder is actually received with heart-warm delight and affection by the gaoler, although he would have every reason to be highly outraged and mortified. Instead, he takes great pride in his hideous appearance. An incongruous instance is thus created by thwarting the expectations of the audience, and the unexpectedness of it plays a central role in the construction of humour. Bistra Alexieva (1997) argues that humour based on incongruity is successful due to the fact that the audience must be "taken by surprise and plunged into something entirely different from what s/he has been prepared for" (138) and this certainly is evident in the example above.

The **hostility theory** explained by Attardo (1994: 49) is closely connected with the aggressive side of humour, thus sharing common ground with the **superiority theory**. In hostility theory, the humour is created from "a sense of superiority of the laughter towards some object" (ibid. 49). The object of laughter – human or not – is seen as the butt of the joke. This type of humour is often directed at for instance political, ethnic or gender groups (Krikmann 2006: 27). National stereotypes are also ridiculed to some extent. The character Baldrick is most often the butt of the joke due to his unkempt appearance and poor understanding. The following example from *Blackadder* illustrates an example of hostility theory:

(18) Blackadder: Your brain would make a grain of sand look large and ungainly and the part of you that can't be mentioned I am reliably informed by women around the court wouldn't be worth mentioning if it could be.

(S01E06SC01).

Blackadder's remarkably straightforward, lengthy and insulting remark towards one of his friends is a prime example of humour defined by the hostility theory. This insult can be perceived as a highly hostile attack against the intelligence and manliness of the recipient. As always, the intellectually inferior friend does not perceive the crude insult and, consequently, the humour of the statement is shared only by Blackadder and the audience. Thus, the audience experiences a feeling of superiority towards the butt of the joke.

The **release theory**, on the other hand, is especially important in terms of linguistics because it "[…] account[s] for the liberation from the rules by language, typical of puns and other word-play" (Attardo 1994: 50). Especially important to the release theory is the claim that humour can be used to release tensions and inhibitions, and it can also be used to ridicule conventions and laws (ibid. 50). For instance, these tensions may be sexual, and sexually loaded jokes may allow the speaker and the receiver to release suppressed sexual tensions. It is important to note that humour defined by this theory may not always be straightforwardly sexual. Instead, the humorous instance may contain a subtle nuance of sexuality for the audience to perceive. Such an instance of implication is shown in the example below:

(19) Cheapside: You'll never get away with this, you scoundrel. You'll be caught and damn well hung!
Sally: I think he looks…

(S03E05SC01).

In this particular scene, Blackadder is committing a highway robbery to settle some financial debts. He has stopped the carriage of Mr Cheapside and his daughter Sally, and Mr Cheapside proclaims that Blackadder will inevitably be caught and "damn well hung". Immediately after, his daughter implies that Blackadder already looks "damn well hung". Here it is important to note the double meaning and homonymic wordplay of the word *hung*. Mr Cheapside indicates his wish to see Blackadder *executed* (*hung*), whereas his daughter Sally implies that Blackadder is seemingly *well-endowed* (*hung*).

In this thesis, the humorous material is collected from the historical comedy series *Blackadder*, which is characterised by its witty verbal humour that manifests itself in the form of, for instance, wordplay and allusions. These two categories of humour are especially important in this study because the translation of wordplay allows the study of the translation strategies for language-specific features, whereas the translation of allusions allows us to concentrate on the transference of cultural-specific elements. Both forms of humour are highly language- and culture-specific, thus presenting the translator with great challenges. The characters in *Blackadder* use wordplay

(specifically, homonymic/ polysemic, homophonic and paronymic wordplay) in many comedic instances. Thus, a large part of the humour in the series is created by the manipulation and bending of linguistic rules. Humour is also present in *Blackadder* in the form of historical allusions, and the series often ridicules historical persons or presents absurd portrayals of real historical events. These two categories of verbal humour will be presented and analysed in the next sections. Examples from the material will accompany the discussions.

2.2 Wordplay

Wordplay is an integral and universal part of language-use because language has often been used to create a humorous effect. It does not, however, mean that different languages employ the same methods to create wordplay, or that the same types of wordplay are the most common or popular in different languages. Wordplay can be detected by the exceptional feature of its linguistic blocks drawing "attention to themselves and their form, in addition to functioning as transmitters of content" (Schröter 2005: 78–79). It can also be seen as the intentional manipulation, breaking, and bending of linguistic rules in order to achieve a humorous effect (Chiaro 1992: 13).

All forms of wordplay can be said to involve the play on language whether the focus is on the delivery, the intonation, the accent, or non-verbal gestures (ibid. 15). Therefore, the recipient of wordplay needs to possess some degree of linguistic knowledge in order to detect it. Furthermore, some degree of sociocultural knowledge is also required to fully appreciate the humour because wordplay most often involves knowledge that is shared between the sender and the recipient – and most often within the same culture (ibid. 11). Delabastita (1996) similarly recognises that the manipulation of language is an essential feature of wordplay, and he has defined wordplay as following:

> […] wordplay is the general name for the various textual phenomena in which *structural features of the language(s) are exploited* in order to bring about a communicatively significant *confrontation of the two (or*

> *more) linguistic structures* with more or less similar forms and more or less different meanings (128).

Delabastita considers thus wordplay synonymous with punning, which he divides further into four different categories: **homonymy** (identical pronunciation and spelling, no etymological relationship), **homophony** (identical pronunciation and different spelling), **homography** (identical spelling and different pronunciation), and **paronymy** (quite similar pronunciation and spelling). Some other researchers, such as Chiaro (1992: 37), extend this categorization with the addition of **polysemy** (identical pronunciation and spelling, clear etymological relationship). One reason for the omission of polysemy in Delabastita's categorization is its close nature to homonymy. Chiaro (1992: 37) herself notes that the distinction between homonymy and polysemy is extremely subtle and Delabastita (1997: 5) likewise remarks that the connection is merely a dynamic one. The relationship between homonymic and polysemic wordplay is explained in the following quote:

> […] both types [of wordplay] are characterized by a clash of orthographically and phonetically identical structures with divergent meanings, yet in the former case, these structures are etymologically unrelated, whereas in the latter case, there is a connection (Schröter 2005: 181).

This difference and distinction in the etymological relationship between homonymy and polysemy is not, however, a crucial aspect in the comprehension and appreciation of humour. While some instances of humour may rely on the recognition of the etymological relationship, it is not an integral part in the series *Blackadder*.

In this thesis, I will employ Delabastita's categorization and definition of wordplay, and the category of polysemy will not be studied separately due to its irrelevance in the material examined. Wordplay can be characterised as a universal trait of language because it is common in different cultures to, for example, have words with more than one meaning (homonymy/ polysemy) (Alexieva 1997: 138–139). According to Attardo (1994: 108), wordplay is also the field of humour research that has been given the most attention by researchers and theorists, although several areas of it are yet to be studied.

Different forms of it have mostly been studied from a literary point of view where the focus has been on the relevance of wordplay given their author or specific time period (ibid. 111). That is to say, the study has been largely connected with the authors and not the content. This thesis, however, focuses specifically on the **language of wordplay** and aims to discover how highly language-specific wordplay can be translated from English into Finnish. The following table by Schröter (2005: 168) illustrates the differences and similarities between the five different forms of wordplay.

Table 2: Different forms of wordplay (Schröter 2005: 168)

Category	Description
Homonymy	Pronunciation and spelling identical, etymological relationship non-existent or opaque
Polysemy	Pronunciation and spelling identical, etymological relationship transparent
Homophony	Pronunciation identical, spelling different
Homography	Pronunciation different, spelling identical
Paronymy	Pronunciation and spelling similar, but not identical

Of the five classes of wordplay, only homonymy/polysemy, homophony and paronymy appear in *Blackadder*. Thus, homography will not be a part of this study. An example of homonymy is shown below in the dialogue between Queen Elisabeth I, her old wet-nurse and companion Nursie, and Edmund Blackadder concerning the Queen's infatuation of the explorer Sir Walter Raleigh:

(20) Queen: If he's really gorgeous, I'm thinking of marrying him.
Blackadder: My lady, is that not a little rash?
Queen: I don't think so.
Nursie: It wouldn't be your first little rash if it was.

(S02E03SC02).

This example of homonymic wordplay is a play on the two meanings of the word *rash*. The word *rash* can either be used as an adjective to signify a *hasty and quick act* or as a noun to denote an *itchy skin condition*. Blackadder uses the word as an adjective, whereas Nursie mistakes the word for a noun and uses it accordingly. Thus, a humour is created through a misinterpretation of meanings and incongruity. There are no sociocultural, historical, geographical or other culture-specific elements to the wordplay, and it revolves merely around a language-specific feature.

Paronymy differs distinctly from homonymy/polysemy because the humour in paronymic wordplay is usually created from a misapprehension of two similar, but not identical, words. An example of paronymy is shown below in the dialogue between Blackadder and Baldrick concerning the Czar of Russia:

(21) Baldrick: And they've overthrown Nicholas the Second who used to be bizarre.
Blackadder: Who used to be the *Czar*, Baldrick.

(S04E03SC01).

This example of paronymy contains wordplay in the form of the words *czar* and *bizarre*. These two words are pronounced in a rather similar manner even though their spelling differs significantly. The verbal humour in this example is linked to the previously introduced superiority/hostility theory because the humour is largely derived from laughing at the butt of the joke, namely Baldrick and his stupidity.

Homophonic and homographic wordplay are both subclasses of homonymy, and they are the exact opposites of each other (Attardo 1994: 111). In homophonic wordplay, the pronunciation of two words is identical and their spelling is different, whereas in homographic wordplay the pronunciation of two words is different and their spelling identical. An example of homophonic wordplay in *Blackadder* is seen below:

(22) Baldrick: How about some rat au vin [for dinner] to help you think?
Blackadder: Rat au vin?
Baldrick: Yeah, it's rat that's been…

Together: Run over by a van.

(S04E01SC08).

This example of homophonic wordplay is a play on the similar pronunciation [va:n] of the words *vin* (French for wine) and *van* (truck). Baldrick is again the butt of the joke because he mistakes the culinary practice of serving something *with wine* (*au vin*) to being run over with a van. Homophony is a popular form of humour and it can be enjoyed both visually and audibly. Homography, on the other hand, relies largely on visuality due to the identical spelling in homographic wordplay. Homographic wordplay is absent in the show, so an example of homography is seen below in a quote by the author Douglas Adams:

(23) You can tune a guitar, but you can't tuna a fish. Unless, of course, you play bass.

(My English Pages 2013).

This example of wordplay contains first homophony in the words *tune a* and *tuna*, which are pronounced identically. The homographic wordplay, on the other hand, plays on the different pronunciations and meanings of the word *bass.* The word *bass* means both a *type of fish* and a *musical instrument*. The first meaning is pronounced as [bæs], whereas the second meaning is pronounced as [beɪs]. This difference in pronunciation, however, strongly requires the receiving audience to **see and read** the joke to understand all its connotations. Naturally, this is impossible in the show because the audience is only presented with the English spoken dialogue and the Finnish subtitled text. As a result, the audience is unable to see how the English words are spelled.

The three examples of homonymic/polysemic, homophonic and paronymic wordplay accurately reflect the style and manner of humour found in *Blackadder*. They are also a faithful representation of British humour, as was discussed earlier. To summarize, wordplay can be seen as the intentional contradiction or misinterpretation of words and meanings to achieve a humorous effect. Wordplay can also be combined with incongruity, superiority/hostility, and release theories to create different types of

humour. Verbal humour can also be achieved by other methods, and one example of this is the use of allusions, which will be discussed in the next section.

2.3 Allusions

Allusions are a form of verbal humour that revolve mainly around the audience's *acquired knowledge* of several different fields, whereas wordplay concentrates on language use and does not usually demand any degree of cultural, historical or literary knowledge to be understood. Allusions are defined as (direct or indirect) references to popular culture or high culture, history, persons, customs, or events (Leppihalme 1997: 6). They may be references to specific literary works, pieces of art, or famous historical events. Wordplay requires some degree of linguistic knowledge to be fully appreciated and understood, and allusions require a high degree of cultural knowledge to achieve the same. It is important to note that not all allusions are meant to be humorous, although humour is one of the main functions of allusions (ibid. 5–6). Furthermore, the functions of allusions can differ depending on the context. Leppihalme (1992) has widely studied allusions and the translation of allusions from English to Finnish, and she states that some allusions can be used as "[…] lexical elements or with only short-range meaning in the context, while others convey important information on characters and themes" (184).

Leppihalme (1997) divides allusions into two categories:

1) *key-phrase allusions* (allusions not containing a proper name), and
2) *proper-name allusions* (allusions containing a proper name) (3).

Key-phrase allusions can be for example references to famous citations from Shakespeare's plays or other literary works, whereas **proper-name allusions** can be for example references to real persons or fictional characters. It has been stated before in this thesis that wordplay is often easily recognizable because the structuring of its linguistic blocks draws attention to the instance of wordplay (Schröter 2005: 78–79).

Allusions, on the other hand, do not necessarily draw attention to themselves. Instead, they often require a high degree of *biculturalisation* to be successfully appreciated and understood outside their originating country (Leppihalme 1997: 4). As a result, the amount of cultural knowledge about the source culture history and practices decides to a great extent if allusions can successfully transfer from one culture to another. Leppihalme (1997: 80) has defined and illustrated the familiarity and transference of allusive names from one Western culture to another – more precisely from the English culture to the Finnish culture – in the following figure:

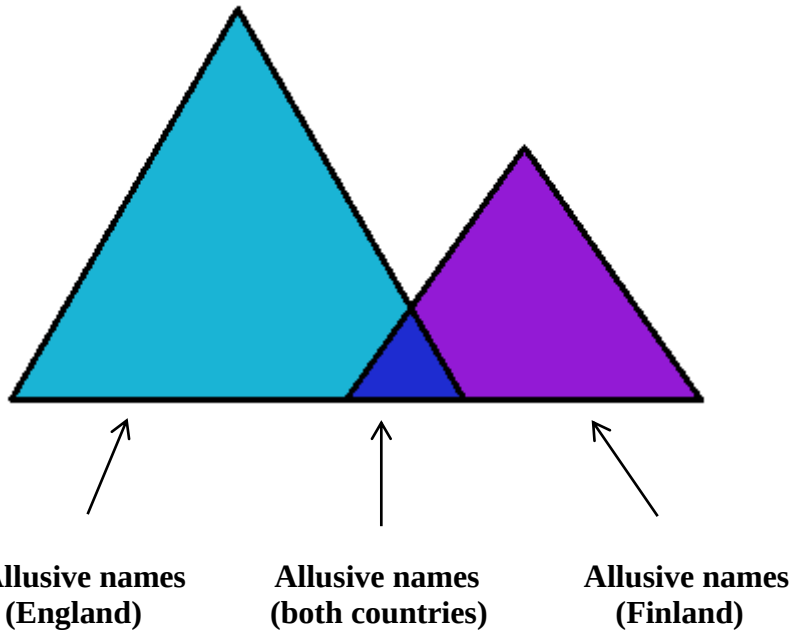


Figure 2. The familiarity of allusive names (Leppihalme 1997: 80)

The largest triangle represents allusions that are specific to the English culture and language (e.g. references to Robert Burns or the Queen of Hearts). These are considered *unfamiliar names* to the Finnish target audience. The second largest triangle represents allusions that are specific to the Finnish culture and language (e.g. references to Zacharias Topelius or Täällä Pohjantähden alla). These are considered *familiar names* to the Finnish target audience. The smallest triangle in the middle represents allusions that are familiar to both the English and Finnish audiences (e.g. references to Cain and Abel

or Shakespeare). These are considered *transcultural names* that are well-known in Western cultures, although they may undergo minor translations in order to conform to the target culture and language norms. (Leppihalme 1997: 80.)

Allusions can be used in several different ways depending on their intended function. They can for example be used in a parodic or ironic way to assist the characterisation of certain characters in shows (Leppihalme 1997: 44). As stated before, allusions require a high degree of cultural and historical knowledge and, therefore, characters who are shown to use allusions are often portrayed as "[…] well educated, literate and quick-witted, and their allusions reflect their interests […]" (ibid. 44). Stupid characters, on the other hand, are not usually able to understand these allusions. In this way, the use of allusions quickly distinguishes the intelligent characters from the foolish ones. Both proper-name and key-phrase allusions appear several times in the show *Blackadder*. Examples of literary and historical proper-name and key-phrase allusions will be presented below, starting with a literary key-phrase allusion:

(24) Melchett: As private parts to the gods are we, they play with us for their sport.

(A02E06SC05).

In this particular scene, Blackadder and Melchett have been kidnapped for ransom, and Melchett is lamenting their miserable fate. This key-phrase allusion refers to William Shakespeare's play *King Lear*, where the character Gloucester exclaims "As flies to wanton boys are we to th' gods. They kill us for their sport" (Act IV Scene I). The allusion is slightly modified, but in essence and construction it remains identifiable to Shakespeare's work. This example can also be tied to the release theory defined in section 2.1 because it exhibits sexually loaded content and humour. The following example represents a historical key-phrase allusion:

(25) Queen: I may have the body of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a concrete elephant.

(S02E05SC14).

In this particular scene, Blackadder and the men are planning a drinking party, and the Queen expresses her wish to join. The men, however, think that the Queen should not participate, which prompts her to exclaim that she is far stronger than she seems. This key-phrase allusion refers to Queen Elizabeth's speech at Tilbury to her troops in 1588. She reportedly said: "I know I have the body of a weak, feeble woman; but I have the heart and stomach of a king". This allusion, too, is slightly modified for humorous intentions, but it remains identifiable nonetheless. Identification of the allusion is also aided by the fact that the allusion closely resembles an actual quote by the Queen, although it is proclaimed by a humorous characterization of her. The two following examples will demonstrate instances of proper-name allusions, starting with a literary proper-name allusion below:

(26) Prince: Dressing up – I love it! It's just like that story – 'The Prince and the Porpoise'.
Blackadder: And the Pauper.
Prince: Oh, yes – 'The Prince and the Porpoise and the Pauper'. Jolly good stuff.

(S03E06SC06).

In this example, Blackadder and Prince George change clothes in order to conceal the Prince's identity. The proper-name allusion refers to the popular children's story "The Prince and the Pauper", although Prince George comically confuses the name and adds one more character (the porpoise) to the title. The following example represents a historical proper-name allusion:

(27) Blackadder: Oh, for God's sake, MacAdder, you're not Rob Roy.

(S03E06SC10).

In this particular scene, Blackadder is talking to his Scottish cousin MacAdder. MacAdder tries to impress Blackadder with his boasting and sword-fighting skills, but Blackadder is clearly not impressed. The proper-name allusion refers to the Scottish

folk hero Robert Roy MacGregor who lived in the early 18th century. He is a well-known figure also outside the borders of Scotland.

These four examples of key-phrase and proper-name allusions accurately reflect the style and manner of humorous allusions found in *Blackadder*. The show offers four different historical contexts (although only three will be studied in this thesis) and these historical settings provide the possibility to introduce famous persons and events, as well as references to literary works or other artistic pieces. Similar to wordplay, the allusions accurately represent British humour and especially the appreciation of the historical comedy genre.

3 SUBTITLING

The field of translation studies encompasses various different modes of translation, and it is an ever-evolving area of research. In recent times, there has been an influx of many new areas that require translation, such as television programmes and games. Technological advances have greatly shaped our lives and brought cultures closer to each other than ever before, and although the English language is today widely considered as the *lingua franca*, it has not driven other languages into hiding. Now more than ever, translation is needed to alleviate the communication between cultures in the vastly globalising world. One technological advance that has introduced foreign languages and cultures has been the invention of the television and, consequently, the wide-spread practice of audiovisual translation.

Audiovisual translation encompasses subtitling, dubbing, narration, free commentary and voice-over. This thesis focuses only on the study of subtitling, although other forms of audiovisual translation will be briefly illustrated. Diaz Cintas and Remael (2007) 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 (letters, inserts, graffiti, inscriptions, placards, and the like), and the information that is contained on the soundtrack […] (8).

It is a unique form of translation because the audience is simultaneously able to listen to the original soundtrack in one language (i.e. the dialogue) and observe the written text (i.e. subtitles) in another language. The co-existence of these two languages necessarily demands a great deal of attention from the translator, and one favoured translation strategy is to transfer as many phonetic and morphological similarities as possible from the source language to the target language in order to preserve some features of the source language (ibid. 56).

In Finland and in many smaller countries, subtitling is the most common mode of audiovisual translation, whereas dubbing is mostly reserved for shows targeted for small children (Gottlieb 1997: 209). Dubbing is the practice of replacing the spoken source language dialogue with the spoken target language dialogue. In contrast to the visual alternative that subtitling offers, dubbing offers an oral mode. Thus, it presents the audience only with one language version, whereas subtitling allows two language versions to co-exist. Dubbing is significantly more expensive than subtitling, and countries with bigger populations (such as Germany and Spain) tend to favour dubbing. Narration, free commentary and voice-over are most commonly used in special genres, for example in news reports or documentaries (Schröter 2005: 30). In these three last translations modes, the original spoken language remains audible in the background while the narrator provides target language dialogue.

Section 3.1 will provide general information on the nature of subtitling as well as on DVD subtitling in particular. The following section (section 3.2) will concentrate on how the limitations and constraints affect subtitling as well as on discussing the benefits of subtitling. The last section (section 3.3) will discuss the pictorial links in subtitling and present examples from the material.

3.1 General Information

The research area of subtitling is not merely the study of the written texts that appear on the lower part of the screen; the research has to encompass and combine the study of the spoken dialogue, the visual elements and images, as well as the subtitles (Diaz Cintas et al. 2007: 9). These features interact to form a coherent entity and the audiovisual translator has to take them all into account while producing the translation. All in all, European audiovisual translators are often well-educated professionals and the subtitles are usually of high quality – provided that the translators are allowed to complete translations under adequate terms and working conditions (Schröter 2005: 45).

Subtitling is traditionally divided into three categories based on its linguistic properties. The three categories are

1) *intralingual subtitling* (subtitling for e.g. language learning, and the deaf and the hard-of-hearing),
2) *interlingual subtitling* (subtitling for e.g. foreign language programmes and the deaf and the hard-of-hearing), and
3) *bilingual subtitling* (subtitling where two different languages are shown at the same time) (Diaz Cintas et al. 2007: 13–14).

Intralingual subtitling is sometimes omitted from this group because it does not involve any translation. Instead, the spoken language is merely transferred into the written form to facilitate for example language learning. **Interlingual subtitling** is the translation of the spoken language into the written form, and both of these features are visible and audible simultaneously on screen (at least in an ideal situation). **Bilingual subtitling** involves the synchronised presentation of subtitles in two different languages. Bilingual subtitling is a common feature in cinemas in Finland, where subtitles in both national languages (Finnish and Swedish) are often shown at the same time on the bottom of the screen (ibid. 18). This thesis focuses on the study of interlingual subtitling.

Henrik Gottlieb has studied audiovisual translation extensively and he has defined four semiotic communication channels that have to be taken into account in audiovisual translation. The channels are presented below:

1) *the verbal auditory channel* (e.g. dialogue),
2) *the non-verbal auditory channel* (e.g. sound effects),
3) *the verbal-visual channel* (e.g. writing on the screen), and
4) *the non-verbal visual channel* (camera positions and editing) (Gottlieb 1998: 245).

In subtitling, the information conveyed via the **verbal auditory channel** (the spoken source language dialogue) is transferred and translated into the **verbal-visual channel** (the written subtitles). This transference from the verbal auditory channel to the verbal-visual channel results in condensation and some inevitable loss of content because not

all features of the spoken language can be preserved in the limited space of subtitling (Diaz Cintas et al. 2007: 61). According to Diaz Cintas and Remael (2007), the oral features are relative because "[…] orality is co-determined by film's other semiotic systems and the function(s) the dialogue must fulfil […]" (61) and, consequently, not all oral features are deemed important to preserve.

The visual and verbal channels are also relevant when studying the pictorial links between verbal humour and the visual c(l)ues. In other words, the aim is to discover whether verbal humour functions as a separate entity or if it is tied to the visual clues – that is to say, if there is a pictorial link between these two channels. The pictorial link can be strong, weak, or absent. These links – and the co-existence and overlap of the verbal and visual channels – will be discussed in more detail in section 3.3.

3.1.1 DVD Translation

At first glance, the practice of translating subtitles for DVDs does not seem to merit its own discussion due to its close connection to subtitling television programmes. However, DVD translation does indeed differ from television subtitling in some respects. Diaz Cintas and Remael (2007: 139) even go as far to state that the arrival of the DVD has changed the whole professional practice and subtitling. Furthermore, the extensive popularity of DVDs has resulted in the rapid growth and demand of the subtitling industry.

One clear difference between DVD subtitling and television subtitling is the extra space afforded to subtitles in DVDs. Traditionally, television subtitling only allows 35-37 characters on screen for the two lines, whereas DVD subtitling allows 40-41 characters on screen for each line (Diaz Cintas et al. 2007: 24). The remarkable difference of up to six characters per line allows the translators to convey more information in the DVD subtitles. The audience has also the possibility to repeatedly rewind the DVD if they do not have time to read the subtitles at some point. DVDs usually include the original and dubbed soundtracks as well as several different language subtitles to choose from. As a

result, the audience is free to choose whichever language combination they want, and subtitles are known to be used in this way to improve language skills (ibid. 24).

Translators translating television subtitles are often only presented with unreliable pre-production transcripts of the programmes, and the translators have the arduous task of dividing the transcript into segments and time-coding these segments so that they appear on screen at the right time (Pedersen 2011: 14). Obviously, these are time-consuming tasks and they are not directly related to the translation process itself. The DVD translator, on the other hand, usually receives an intralingual subtitle file of the source language, which has already been divided into segments and time-coded (ibid. 16). Thus, the DVD translator can purely concentrate on the translation process without wasting too much time on other concerns.

3.2 Limitations and Constraints

Out of all the different modes of translation, subtitling requires perhaps the most modification and condensation. According to Diaz Cintas and Remael (2007: 145), the spoken dialogue is almost always reduced in the written subtitles, and the translated subtitles can never portray a perfect rendering of the original. This is certainly an opinion that many researchers share on the nature of translation in general. Subtitling is also an unusual form of translation because it transfers spoken dialogue into a written form. In some cases, the translator also has to take into account the interplay between the dialogue and the visual elements of the programme because in some instances they can be closely linked to produce a humorous effect. In other words, the success of the humour is vitally connected to the interplay between the visual and verbal channels.

The main reasons for the challenging nature of subtitling are the limited space and time constraints that it dictates. As stated before, subtitles usually appear on the lower half of the screen in two lines, and each line consists of approximately 35-37 characters (40-41 in DVD subtitling). The ideal amount of time allowed for the subtitles on screen is six seconds and, accordingly, it is stated that the average viewer reads fluently

approximately 70-74 characters in six seconds. (Diaz Cintas et al. 2007: 23.) This ideal time span of six seconds has been meticulously appraised because a shorter time span could render the subtitles unintelligible, whereas a longer time span could compel the viewer to read the subtitles repeatedly, as has been shown in studies (ibid. 88–89). Thus, the unintended and repeated perusal of the subtitles may lead to some irritation. The audiovisual translator is also denied some of the liberties that for example a literary translator enjoys. A literary translator is not bound to such strict time and space limitations as an audiovisual translator and, consequently, difficult translation matters can be given longer or more detailed explanations. As an example, the practice of footnotes or translator's notes can be utilised in literary translation but not in audiovisual translation.

Subtitles have to present the most important aspects of the dialogue in a compact, concise and correct form. Therefore, it is usually impossible to include all aspects of the spoken dialogue in the subtitles. This does not cause a problem to a certain degree because some characteristics of the spoken dialogue are not common in subtitling and can therefore often be left out. These characteristics include taboo words, swearwords, interjections, and the practice of addressing each other by names (Diaz Cintas et al. 2007: 195). It is also unnecessary to transfer person names to the subtitles because it is usually clear from the context and the visual elements (the scene in the programme itself) who is addressing who. This interplay between the dialogue and the visual elements allows the audiovisual translator to omit such obvious instances from the subtitles, thus creating room for other and more important elements that carry and forward the meaning and content of the programme. Also, there is a tendency to tone down or omit taboo words and swearwords in subtitles because their presence in large letters on the screen stands out more than it does in the dialogue, and this may bother some members of the audience (ibid. 196).

When an audiovisual translator is faced with an extensive amount of dialogue, he or she must make a difficult decision on what to include in the subtitles and what to exclude. It is essential that the subtitles always carry the most important elements of the show: the plot and the development of the characters. Other and less important instances of

dialogue must make way for the preservation of these. The translator must follow a "principle of relevance" when deciding what to include and exclude (Diaz Cintas et al. 2007: 148). Diaz Cintas and Remael (2007) identify two different types of reduction in subtitling:

1) *partial reduction*, and
2) *total reduction* (146).

Partial reduction involves the condensation of the source text, whereas total reduction involves the omission of certain lexical items (ibid. 146). Another factor that determines what is to be included and excluded in the subtitling process is the co-existence of the visual and verbal channels. The original spoken dialogue is always audible and, consequently, it must affect the "[…] order in which information is presented, how questions are rendered, or how culture-bound elements are dealt with" (Schröter 2005: 28). This is an especially important aspect to consider in societies where the target audience is expected to have a relatively good knowledge of the source language and culture. If the target audience has a good grasp of the source language, they may become irritated in instances where a positive utterance in the spoken dialogue is translated as a negative utterance in the subtitles.

The translator is faced with a demanding task in the translation of heavily narrative-driven programmes where the main focus is on witty and free-flowing dialogue. *Blackadder* is such a narrative-based comedy show full of exaggerated and lengthy insults as well as witty remarks. These are some of the characterising trademarks of the show and, consequently, it is important that the translator preserves these features in the Finnish translation. As a result, the translator is repeatedly faced with the problem of condensation and omission. He or she has to meticulously omit all irrelevant and unnecessary information in the source text and, after that, reformulate the text in a concise and compact manner (Diaz Cintas et al. 2007: 146). An example of condensation and omission in a lengthy and exaggerated remark made by Blackadder is shown below:

(24) Blackadder: For 'magnificent men' read 'biggest show-offs since Lady Godiva entered the Royal Enclosure at Ascot claiming she had literally nothing to wear. I don't care how many times they go up-diddly-up-up, they're still gits!

Blackadder: He ovat pahimmat ekshibitionistit lady Godivan nakuratsastuksen jälkeen. Lentäköötmiten lentävät, he ovat silti moukkia.
[They are the worst exhibitionists since Lady Godiva's nude ride. Fly how they will, they're still idiots.]

(S04E04SC03).

In this particular example, Lord Flashheart's Flying Aces (a warplane troop) have performed some excellent formation flying in order to boost the morale of the British soldiers in the trenches. Blackadder, however, is unimpressed by their antics and he expresses this in a very lengthy and sarcastic remark. The Finnish subtitles have experienced condensation and omission to some degree. Firstly, the proper-name allusion to *Ascot* (a famous and upper-class equestrian sports event) has been completely omitted from the translation. The translator may have considered the allusion to be unfamiliar to the target culture and, consequently, omitted it and left only the more familiar allusion to *Lady Godiva*. Secondly, the interjections "up-diddly-up-up" have been omitted due to the limited time and space restrictions. Furthermore, they are not essential for the relevance of the utterance. The statement is a very lengthy one and, understandably, not all the content can be transferred into the subtitles.

3.2.1 Benefits of Subtitling

One clear benefit of subtitling is that it preserves the original source language in the spoken dialogue. In this way, subtitling introduces a foreign language to the target audience and allows them to effectively learn for example the correct pronunciation of the source language words. Schröter (2005: 46) discovered that the target audience in smaller countries that favoured subtitling had usually a very good knowledge and understanding of English, and it has been suggested that subtitled programmes are indeed beneficial for the pronunciation of foreign languages (Koolstra et al. 2002: 341). This finding, however, cannot necessarily be attributed to the exclusive benefits of

subtitling, although repeated exposure to the English language through subtitled programmes certainly has a positive effect on language learning. Furthermore, the reading of subtitles can also be said to increase literacy skills. Koolstra et al. (2002) define two clear benefits connected to language-learning that arise from the use of subtitling:

1) *facilitation of reading development*, and
2) *foreign-language acquisition* (339–341).

It has been proven by a study made by Koolstra et al. (1997) that subtitles and subtitling **facilitate the reading development** of young children. The study found that children who frequently watched subtitled programmes possessed **increased reading comprehension skills** (understanding information) and **decoding skills** (accuracy and speed of word decoding) compared to children who watched subtitled programmes less frequently (Koolstra et al. 2002: 340). The benefits of **foreign-language acquisition** were most clearly seen in studies where the participants' tendency to acquire and learn foreign words through subtitling was studied. It was reported that the participants (young and adult viewers) successfully learned the meanings of foreign-language words by watching subtitled programmes (ibid. 341). This is due to the simultaneous presence and co-existence of the visual and verbal channels because the participants were able to hear the foreign-language words while they were reading the subtitles.

Subtitling also allows the target audience to enjoy the complete acting performance of the original actors (as opposed to for example dubbing, where the voices of the original actors are replaced with those of the target language voice actors). Subtitling is also considerably cheaper than its main counterpart dubbing because the whole subtitling process can be completed by just person (the translator), whereas the dubbing process requires the co-operation of several different persons from sound technicians to voice actors. The high expenses of dubbing explain why many smaller countries with a smaller television-viewing audience have resorted to subtitling.

3.3 Subtitling and Pictorial Links

The visual and verbal channels that were discussed earlier are also relevant when studying the pictorial links between verbal humour and the visual c(l)ues. In order to produce a humorous effect, the verbal auditory channel and the verbal-visual channel can – in some cases – be unavoidably linked. However, it is important to note that a humorous effect can be achieved regardless of the link between these two channels. A humorous instance that only involves the visual channel is for example a person slipping on a banana peel, whereas a humorous instance that only involves the verbal channel can be a form of wordplay that does not need visual cues or clues to deliver its effect and meaning. The link between these two channels is called the **pictorial link**. In this thesis, pictorial links will be studied according to Schröter's (2005: 153) categorisation in which he divides pictorial links into **strong, weak** and **non-existent links**.

In many sit-coms, the timing of the punch line is vital. Therefore, it is important that the visual and verbal channels are punctiliously synchronised. However, it has been noted that subtitled punch lines in narrative-based sit-coms often miss the mark. That is to say, they are shown too early and, as a result, the faster readers will be presented with the punch line before it has occurred in the original spoken dialogue (Schröter 2005: 42). This co-existence of the two different languages can at times prove difficult for the translator to synchronise. Diaz Cintas and Remael (2007:216) state that the combination of visually and verbally conveyed information on screen can occasionally assist in the omission of certain features in subtitling. In other words, the humorous instances may rely on the visual aspects, such as facial expressions and gestures (ibid. 216). However, it is important to note that visual images – as well as humour – do not always have equal success outside their originating countries. That is to say, a joke or a funny image may not be funny in another culture because images are "[…] culture-bound references in themselves and always subject to ideological framing" (ibid. 46).

A pictorial link is considered **strong** when the intended humorous instance needs both the verbal auditory channel and the verbal-visual channel to function and carry its

meaning. In other words, the instance would lose its humorous effect if one of these channels were lost. An example of a strong pictorial link in *Blackadder* is presented below in the form of the visual image and the accompanying dialogue:

Picture 2. Example of a strong pictorial link

(25) Blackadder: Baldrick, you look like a deer.
Baldrick: Thank you, my lord. You look like a bit of a duckie yourself.

(S02E03SC01).

In this particular scene, Baldrick and the rest of the town are preparing to welcome the famed seafarer and explorer Sir Walter Raleigh by dressing in nautical attires. Baldrick, however, stays true to his foolish nature and appears in a costume that has no resemblance to nautical themes. The example also contains homophonic wordplay in the similar pronunciation of the words *deer* (noun) and *dear* (adjective), as well as

ducky (noun) and *duckie* (adjective). Baldrick mistakes the word *deer* (*animal*) for the word *dear* (*darling, beloved*), and he responds in a similar way to Blackadder by calling him a *ducky* (*darling, sweetie*). In this context, however, it can be interpreted that they are also referring to each other as the animals: deer and duck. The pictorial link is defined as strong because the audience needs the visual clue (i.e. Baldrick resembling a deer) to understand the statement uttered by Blackadder. Without the visual clue, the scene would lose its humour.

A pictorial link is considered **weak** when the humorous instance is only slightly supported by the visual cues and clues. In other words, the success of the humour does not depend on the interaction between the verbal and visual channels. Instead, it is only slightly supported by the visual imagery. An example of a weak pictorial link in *Blackadder* is presented below in the form of the visual image and the accompanying dialogue:

Picture 3. Example of a weak pictorial link

(26) Blackadder: [You, Mrs Miggins, are not eligible to vote because] virtually no one is – women, peasants, chimpanzees, lunatics, lords.
Baldrick: No, that's not true. Lord Nelson's got a vote.
Blackadder: He's got a *boat*, Baldrick.

(S03E01SC01).

In this particular scene, Blackadder, Baldrick and Mrs Miggins (the keeper of a coffee shop) are discussing the general election. Mrs Miggins is dismayed over the fact that the common people are not allowed to vote, and Blackadder informs her that almost nobody is allowed to vote. When Blackadder refers to *chimpanzees*, he slightly gesticulates at Baldrick, as if insinuating that he is a chimpanzee. The example also contains paronymic wordplay in the rather similar sounding words *vote* and *boat*. The pictorial link is defined as weak because the audience would find Blackadder's statements humorous even without the slight visual clues. Thus, the visual channel only has a supporting role in this scene.

A pictorial link is considered **non-existent** when the humorous instance does not require the interplay between the verbal auditory channel and the verbal-visual channel to function and carry its meaning. In other words, the humorous instance is independent of the interaction between these two channels, and the humour can be some form of wordplay or allusion. The series *Blackadder* is quite heavily narrative-driven and, as such, it is plausible to assume that instances of witty banter that are unconnected to the visual channel are the most common type of humour in the show. The total number of the pictorial links in wordplay and allusions are shown separately in Table 2 and Table 3 below, respectively.

Table 2. Pictorial links in wordplay.

Pictorial links in wordplay				
Wordplay	Types of links			
	Strong	Weak	Non-existent	**TOTAL**
Homophony/Polysemy	9	5	19	**33**
Paronymy	0	1	8	**9**
Homophony	1	1	1	**3**
TOTAL	**10**	**7**	**28**	**45**

The data from Table 2 shows that the majority of the pictorial links in wordplay were non-existent. The amount of **non-existent links was 63%** (28 out of 45), **strong links 22%** (10 out of 45), and **weak links 15%** (7 out of 45). The largest number of strong links (90%) and non-existent links (68%) were found in homonymic/polysemic wordplay, which was also by far the largest category of wordplay in *Blackadder*. Based on the data in Table 2, it can be concluded that the visual channel and wordplay were not strongly linked in the narrative-driven sit-com and, consequently, the success of the humour was not dependent on the visual elements.

Table 3. Pictorial links in allusions.

Pictorial links in allusions				
Allusions	Types of links			
	Strong	Weak	Non-existent	**TOTAL**
Proper-name allusions	7	16	99	**122**
Key-phrase allusions	0	8	8	**16**
TOTAL	**7**	**24**	**107**	**138**

The data from Table 3 shows that the majority of the pictorial links in allusions were also clearly non-existent. The amount of **non-existent links was 77.5%** (107 out of 138), **strong links 5%** (7out of 138), and **weak links 17.5%** (24 out of 138). The largest number of weak links (67%) and non-existent links (92.5%) were both found in

proper-name allusions, which was also by far the largest category of wordplay in *Blackadder*. Based on the data in Table 3, it can be concluded that the visual channel and allusions were not strongly linked in the narrative-driven sit-com. These findings also resemble the conclusions that were drawn from the previous table (Table 2). The low number of strong and weak pictorial links in wordplay and allusions can be explained by the fact that the show is essentially narrative-driven and does not contain much physically constructed humour. In other words, witty and sarcastic banter inhabit a great role, whereas the physical action and imagery is limited.

4 TRANSLATION STRATEGIES FOR VERBAL HUMOUR

The study of verbal humour is such a complex and multi-layered field that researchers often disagree on many features. One of these features is the (un)translatability of verbal humour. The first obvious difficulties in the translation of any kind of source text are the differences that arise between languages and cultures. The translation of verbal humour from English to Finnish might prove problematic for the translator due to the vast differences and idiosyncrasies in the linguistic structures (English is a West Germanic language, whereas Finnish is a Finno-Ugric language). Thus, it is improbable that the linguistic structures in the source and target language would directly correspond and provide equivalent types of wordplay. Furthermore, the nature of wordplay encompasses the manipulation and exploitation of the language itself and, therefore, it is unlikely that direct and corresponding wordplay would be found even in more closely linked languages (Schröter 2005: 104). As a result, the translator will have to choose from several translation strategies the ones that are best suited to the target audience and the functions of the text.

Verbal humour also embodies the unique and distinctive characteristics of a language – as well as of a culture – and therefore it may prove to be problematic to transfer to another culture (Delabastita 1997: 13). Some culture-specific instances of humour can also be hard to recognise. Thus, the impact of the translator (and the visibility of the translator) becomes instantly noticeable if the humour is not recognised by the translator but it is recognised by the audience. Many television programmes – and sit-coms in general – use a feature called *canned laughter* to signal a humorous instance in the show, which also makes it easier for the translator to recognise humour (Diaz Cintas et al. 1997: 216). However, the motivation, cultural knowledge, experience, and working conditions of the translator greatly affect the translation process and, consequently, these individual features also influence the outcome. The ability to notice an instance of verbal humour does not necessarily mean that the translator is capable of producing such humour himself or herself. Also, in some cases the translator may not perceive the humorous instances as important.

The following sections will discuss these features in more detail. The first section (section 4.1) will concentrate on the (un)translatability of verbal humour and on the difficulties in recognising humour. The second section (section 4.2) will present in detail the translation strategies that are available to the translator of verbal humour. In other words, it will discuss in detail Holmes's retentive and re-creative translation strategies that will be used in this thesis.

4.1 Views on the (Un)translatability of Verbal Humour

The translation of verbal humour – similar to translation in general – is not merely the substitution of corresponding words from the source language to the target language. Instead, the translator has to for example take into account the ambiguous or obvious added meanings of the source language and culture (Chiaro 1992: 77). According to Schröter (2005: 97), there is a widely held view among researchers that verbal humour and especially wordplay are untranslatable. The main reason for this is the difference between the source language and the target language; the target text can never be a faithful or accurate rendering of the original text due to linguistic differences and idiosyncrasies.

Some researchers, such as Attardo (quoted in Schröter 2005), have suggested that a successful way to transfer humour is to subject it to functional rather than literal translation. In this way, verbal humour can be transferred from one language to another by for example changing the category of humour (e.g. homonymy is turned into paronymy, or vice versa). Gottlieb (1997: 209) likewise states that the function of wordplay and its communication must be taken into account. In other words, wordplay can be completely translatable if the translator does not aim for a literal and exact rendering of the source text. Also, it must be noted that the complete replacement of humour categories should be allowed to preserve instances of wordplay. In some cases, the replacement of a humour category might be a necessity rather than a possibility. Languages also differ greatly concerning their semantic structure. For instance, a polysemous word in the source language may not have a polysemous equivalent in the

target language or, in some cases, the target language word may be polysemous but in a different manner (Alexieva 1997: 141). The (un)translatability also greatly depends on the wordplay itself because some forms of wordplay are more easily translated than others, whereas some forms tend to resist translation more than others (Delabastita 1997: 10).

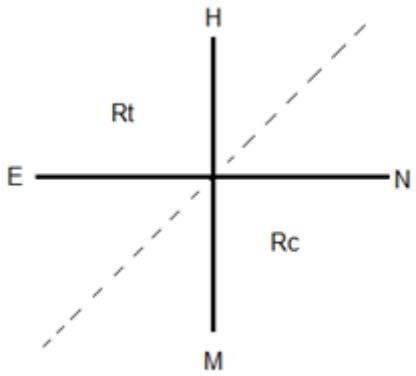
Some forms of verbal humour, especially wordplay, can be so subtle that they elude the majority of the audience (Delabastita 1997: 6). If the audience does not recognise instances of wordplay, it is possible that they elude the translator as well; and even if the translator recognises the wordplay, the translation of it might prove highly problematic. Some forms of translation are also more demanding than others, and the translation of humour can be considered a particularly challenging area due to its subtle nuances of wordplay and culture-specificity, and also due to the fact that the translation of wordplay "[…] confronts the translator with the unique semantic structure not just of a text but of a language as well" (ibid. 13). Even a highly qualified translator who possesses an excellent understanding of both the source and target language may not be able to convey certain forms of wordplay without adding lengthy explanations which, in turn, may reduce the humorous effect of wordplay (Chiaro 1992: 77). It is important to note, furthermore, that it is impossible to add lengthy explanations to the target text in the medium of subtitling. According to Vandaele (2010), the clear problem with humour translation is its "penchant for (socio)linguistic particularities […] and for metalinguistic communication" (150). Other researchers have also commented on the problems of transferring and translating culture- and language-specific verbal humour to the target audience.

It is, however, difficult to decide to what extent the translator can replace an instance of wordplay with another form of wordplay. Certain types of wordplay might be considered as characterising trademarks of some literary works or television programmes. Verbal humour in *Blackadder*, for example, relies heavily on witty remarks, hyperbole, allusions and various forms of wordplay. Therefore, it is important to consider if the translator is allowed to take liberties with the content. Schröter (2005: 106) suggests that the functions of the text, the genre, and the intended audience must

be taken into account in these translation problems. Many researchers similarly agree that it is desirable to strive for functional equivalence in the translation on both the textual and individual level (ibid. 118). In other words, there should always be the same amount of wordplay in both the source text and the target text, but the wordplay is allowed to differ in nature. There is certainly a great deal of verbal humour in the source language of *Blackadder* and, as a result, the target audience also expects to find a great deal of verbal humour in the subtitles as well.

4.2 Holmes's Retentive and Re-creative Translation Strategies

As discussed in the previous section, verbal humour can be preserved by replacing one type of wordplay with another type of wordplay. This is an especially helpful strategy when the wordplay in the source text is of an unfamiliar nature that does not often occur in the target language. This replacement can be seen as a target-oriented (re-creative) translation strategy, and it brings us back to Holmes's theories of retention and re-creation. Holmes's theories can best be explained and illustrated with the figure shown below:



Translation strategies

Rt = Retentive
Rc = Re-creative
E = Exoticising
N = Naturalising
H = Historicising
M = Modernising

Figure 1. The axis of retention and re-creation (Holmes 1988: 49)

Retention and re-creation are the two main opposites in Holmes's theory. **Retention is the choice to exoticise or historicise** the target text, and thus preserve the source language features and influence. **Re-creation is the choice to naturalise or modernise** the target text, and thus subdue the source language features and influence. However, it is clear from the figure that these two opposites cannot be kept completely separate. Instead, it is possible and likely that they intersect and overlap at some point. As a result, a single work of translation may encompass both retentive and re-creative strategies depending on the type of verbal humour and on the function of the translation – although it is common that one strategy will prevail over the other for the sake of consistency.

As has been stated before, Venuti's (1995) theories of domestication and foreignisation correspond largely to Holmes's theories of re-creation and retention. Venuti (1995) states that a good translation maintains an *illusion of transparency* and also guarantees "[…] easy readability by adhering to current usage, maintaining continuous syntax [and] fixing a precise meaning" (1). It is indeed an admirable goal to aspire to produce translations that are so fluent that they do not draw attention to themselves. However, it can be questioned whether this is, in fact, even possible. Venuti (1995) himself describes translation as "[…] the **forcible replacement** of the linguistic and cultural difference […]" (18, my emphasis). He (ibid. 18) also adds that the use of domestication (re-creation) can risk a complete domestication of the whole translation, thus drawing attention to the translation. Therefore, the excess use of re-creation can be seen as harmful because it can deprive the target audience of the essential features of the source text. Foreignisation (retention), on the other hand, forcibly disrupts the *cultural codes* of the target language and, consequently, draws attention to the translation (ibid. 20). Venuti (1995) plainly stated that in order "[…] to do right abroad, this translation method [foreignisation/retention] must do wrong at home […]" (20). As a consequence, it can be stated that the use of either of these translation strategies cannot result in a perfectly fluent translation. Overall, the existence of perfectly fluent translations is debatable.

The show *Blackadder* contains numerous instances of highly language- and culture-specific verbal humour in the form of wordplay and allusions. The show skilfully exploits the idiosyncrasies and peculiarities of the English language to form various types of wordplay that have to be translated into Finnish. It also introduces verbal humour in the form of historical, literary and cultural allusions, which are often essentially British. Therefore, the show is a prime candidate for the study of retentive and re-creative translation strategies.

4.3 Translation Techniques for Wordplay

There are several different translation strategies and procedures for the translation of verbal humour and especially wordplay. Delabastita (1993: 191-221) introduces nine translation techniques – that can also be used in combination – for the translation of wordplay. It is important to note that Delabastita uses the words *pun* and *wordplay* as synonyms. The translation strategies can be found in the table below:

Table 4. Translation techniques (Delabastita 1993: 116–117)

Original wordplay	Translated wordplay	Explanation
PUN	PUN	The pun exists in both the source and target text in the same place
PUN	NON-PUN	Translation does not take into account punning
PUN	PUNOID	Not a pun, but can refer to another category of wordplay
PUN	ZERO	Complete omission
PUN ST	PUN TT	Direct copying
PUN ST	PUN TT	Transference
ZERO	PUN	Addition
NON-PUN	PUN	An ordinary passage is rendered humorous
EDITORIAL TECHNIQUES	-	Explanation of the pun in e.g. footnotes

Delabastita presents with his nine translation strategies different and creative ways of dealing with wordplay, and the strategies also allow a certain amount of leeway for the translator. In an ideal situation where the source and target cultures and languages resemble each other closely, the translator can presumably quite easily find a **direct equivalent** for the source language wordplay in the target language (**pun to pun**). However, this is rarely the case with languages and cultures that differ greatly from each other – and this is especially the case with the English and Finnish languages, although both countries share some cultural features and they are both modern Western countries. In these situations, the translator can choose to **omit the wordplay partially** (**pun to non-pun**) or **completely** (**pun to zero**). He or she can also entirely change the category of the wordplay, thus **replacing** (**pun to punoid**) one type of humour with another type of humour. One translation technique is to **directly copy the wordplay** (**pun ST to pun TT**) without translating it, although this technique may result in the loss of the wordplay if the target audience fails to understand the source language of the wordplay. The wordplay can also be **transferred literally** (**pun ST to pun TT**), although this technique similarly risks the loss of humour with a literal translation.

The translator has the possibility to **introduce wordplay** (**zero to pun**) to the target language text even though there might not have been wordplay in that specific part of the original source language text. The translator may opt to do this to preserve the humorous nature of the text especially in situations where omission has been used before. Consequently, the translator can still retain some humorous aspects of the original in a way that better suits the target language and culture. The use of **editorial techniques** greatly depends on the medium of the translation. For instance, subtitling does not allow space for footnotes, whereas footnotes have room to be utilised quite freely in book translations.

5 TRANSLATION OF VERBAL HUMOUR IN *BLACKADDER*

The hypothesis that was proposed earlier in this thesis theorised that the translator of *Blackadder* would attempt to preserve as much of the verbal humour as possible. Thus, it was hypothesised that the translator would employ the **retentive translation strategy for (culture-specific) allusions** and the **re-creative translation strategy for (language-specific) wordplay**. This hypothesis was tested by studying three different categories of wordplay (homonymy/polysemy, paronymy and homophony) and two different categories of allusions (key-phrase allusions and proper-noun allusions). Holmes's (1988) translation strategies of retention and re-creation were chosen for this study, and they were complemented with the strategies of omission and addition. The study was conducted by identifying all instances of wordplay and allusions in the English source text, and afterwards this material was compared with the Finnish target text material. By comparing and analysing the source text and the target text it was possible to discover which of the aforementioned four translation strategies were used in the translation of *Blackadder*.

The **retentive strategy for allusions** was chosen due to the nature and style of the show. Because *Blackadder* is a historical sit-com, it was reasonable to assume that historical events and persons would inhabit a large part in the series. In addition, it was believed that they might be used as important plot devices. As a result, the hypothesis was that the translator would preserve these foreign elements in the translation or, at the most, simplify them. The **re-creative strategy for wordplay** was chosen due to the linguistic differences between the English and Finnish languages. Similar to allusions, wordplay plays a central role in the formation of humour in the series. However, due to the differences in the linguistic structures between English and Finnish, it was assumed that literal or equivalent translations would be difficult or impossible to find. Therefore, it was hypothesised that the translator would attempt to preserve the humorous nature of the show by for example replacing one type of foreign wordplay with another type of more familiar wordplay. The translation strategy of **omission** was considered in instances where wordplay or allusions were completely omitted or translated in a way that they lost their humorous content. The translation strategy of **addition** was

considered in instances where humorous material was added or where existing humorous material was accompanied by additions or short explanations.

This thesis aimed to discover how verbal humour was translated from English to Finnish in subtitling. The study of subtitling necessitates that some attention must be placed on the interplay between the verbal auditory channel and the verbal visual channel – in other words, on the pictorial link between the dialogue and the image. However, earlier findings from this study indicated that the pictorial links concerning verbal humour and imagery in *Blackadder* could be discarded and omitted from the analysis due to their general absence and insignificance. The earlier findings state that the number of **non-existent links in wordplay was 63%,** whereas the number of **non-existent links in allusions was even higher at 77.5%.** As a result, it can be stated that the pictorial links do not play a significant role in the formation of verbal humour in the show.

The following section (section 5.1) will present the overview of the most important findings of this study. After that, focus will be put on the analysis of the material. Section 5.2 will focus on the analysis of the retention of verbal humour, and section 5.3 will analyse the re-creation of humour. The last section (section 5.4) will present the omission and addition of verbal humour.

5.1 Findings

As stated previously, the source material contained several instances of multifaceted verbal humour. Out of the two categories of verbal humour that were studied, the number of allusions (138 instances) was clearly greater than the number of wordplay (45 instances). Allusions were divided into proper-name allusions (122 instances) and key-phrase allusions (16 instances). Wordplay was divided into homonymy/polysemy (33 instances), paronymy (9 instances), and homophony (3 instances). The aim of this thesis was to discover how these cases of varying verbal humour were translated and transferred into Finnish. To be precise, the objective was to discover whether verbal

humour had been retained, re-created, omitted or added in the Finnish subtitles. The source text material and the findings from the Finnish subtitles can be seen in the figures below:

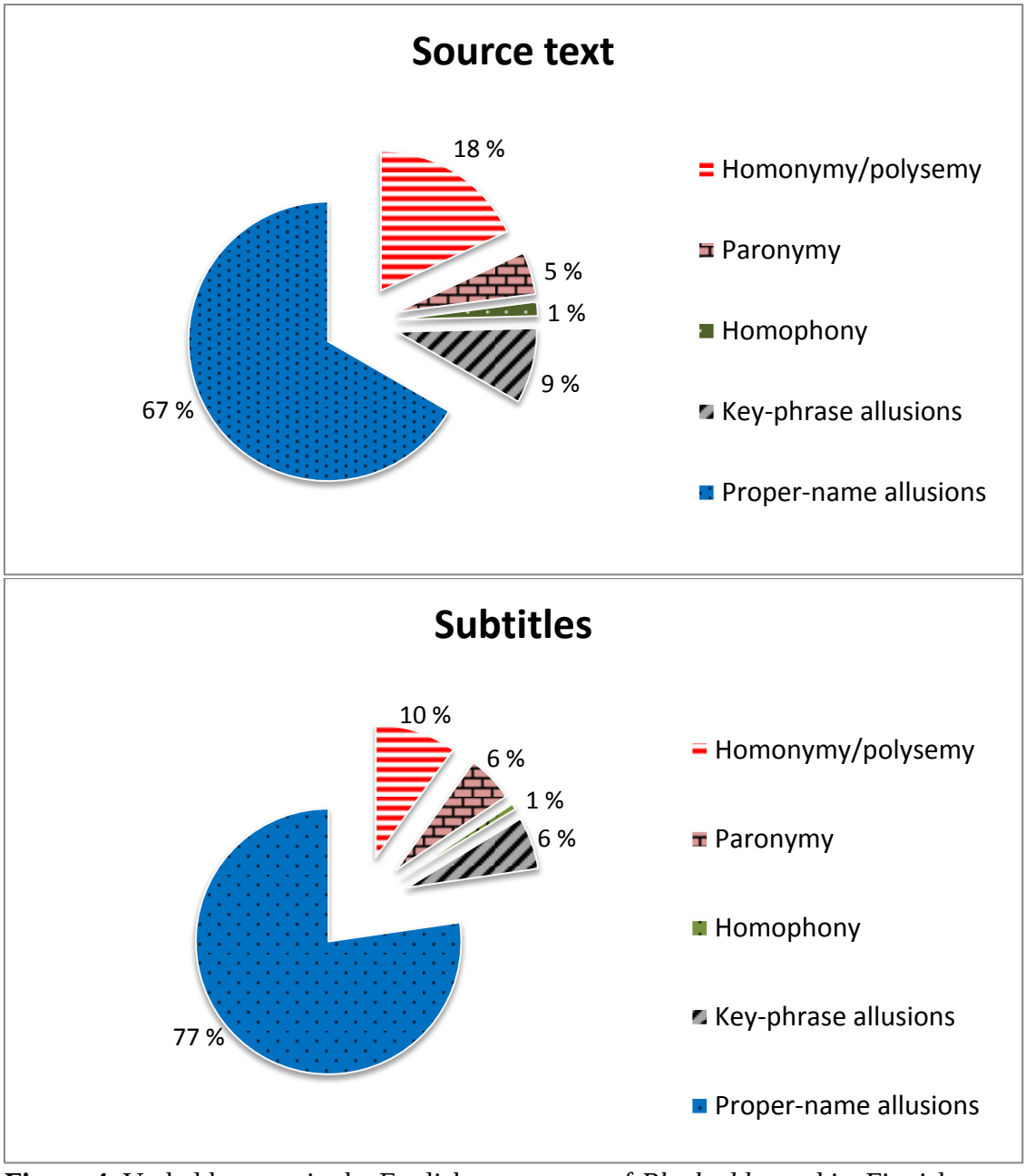


Figure 4. Verbal humour in the English source text of *Blackadder* and its Finnish subtitles

These main findings present clearly the distribution of verbal humour in the source text and subtitles of *Blackadder*. The charts account for all humour that was retained, re-created or added. Omitted humour was not accounted for in these figures. The figure shows how the different categories of wordplay and allusions underwent changes and reductions in the translation process, and it also shows the proportions of the humour categories in the source and target texts. The proportion of proper-name allusions remained largely the same, and it was the largest group of verbal humour in both the source text and the subtitles. The proportion of key-phrase allusions was reduced slightly from 9% to 6%. Regarding wordplay, the proportion of homonymy/polysemy was drastically reduced from 18% to 10%; the proportion of paronymy remained the same at 5%; and the smallest category of wordplay, homophony, remained also the same at 1%. It is important to note that although the proportions of the distribution of verbal humour have in some cases been somewhat reduced, a great deal of the verbal humour was successfully translated and transferred from the source text into the subtitles.

The source text data consisted of 183 instances of verbal humour, whereas the subtitling data consisted of 138 instances of verbal humour; 19 of wordplay and 119 of allusions. **Out of these 19 instances of wordplay in the subtitling data, 16 were retentive wordplay and 3 were re-creative wordplay. Out of the 119 instances of allusions, 108 were retentive allusions and 11 were re-creative allusions.** A certain amount of omission was unavoidable because subtitling requires the condensation of the source text into a limited time and space frame and, consequently, some content is always lost. This is notable because it has been claimed that in subtitling only one-third of the verbal content is retained in the subtitles (see Kovačič 1994). Some instances of verbal humour may also have eluded the translator and, as a result, they have been omitted from the translation. **A total amount of 24 instances of wordplay were completely omitted or lost in translation, and a total amount of 18 instances of allusions were also completely omitted or lost in translation.** There were no instances of addition in either wordplay or allusions. The table below illustrates the percentages of the translation strategies that were used in the translation of *Blackadder*.

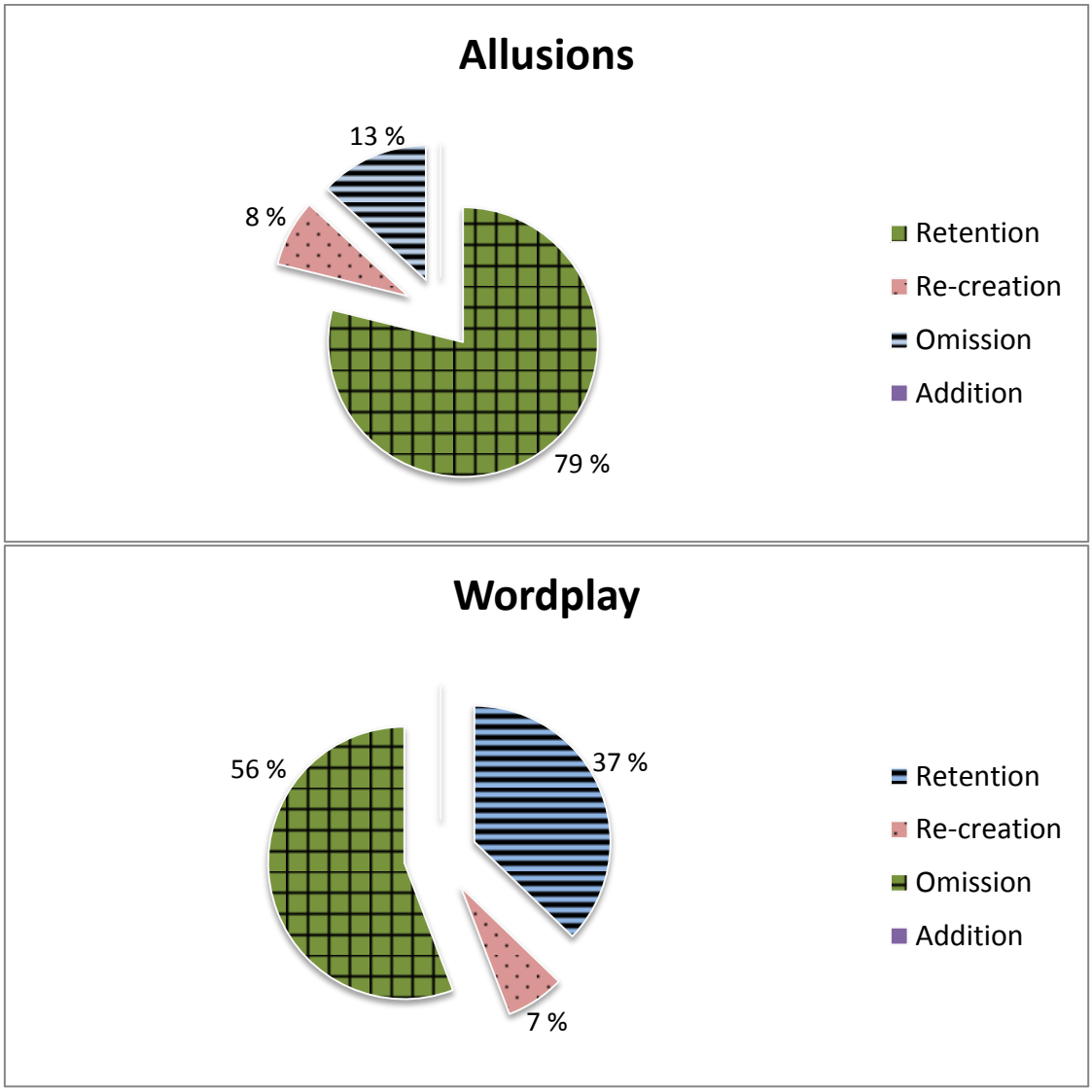


Figure 5. Translation strategies in the subtitles of *Blackadder*

It becomes clear from the above figures that – out of the two main translation strategies set out by Holmes (1988) – retention was clearly favoured over re-creation; there was 37% of retention in wordplay and 79% of retention in allusions. In the translation of wordplay, a significant part of the content source text (56%) was omitted from the subtitles. In other words, over half of the source text wordplay in *Blackadder* was completely omitted by the translator or, alternatively, it was translated so that it lost its humorous content. Only 7% of the verbal humour was re-created, and there were no instances of added wordplay in the subtitles. In the translation of allusions, omission

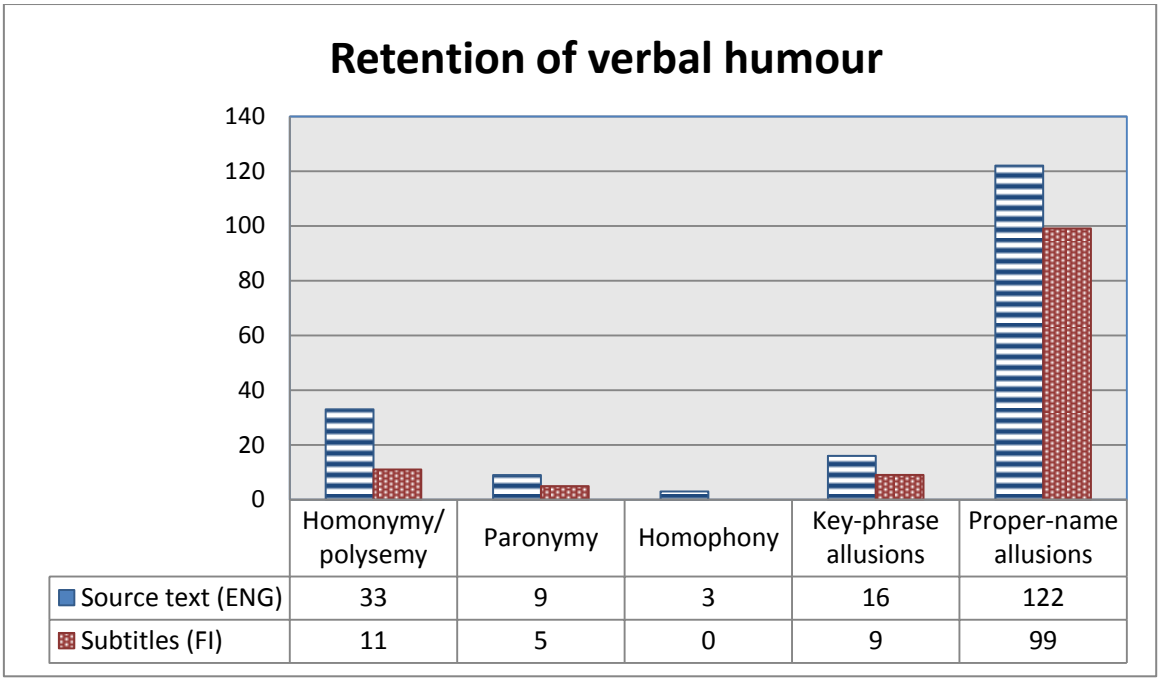
accounted only for 13% of the translation strategies. Verbal humour in allusions was re-created in 8% of the instances, and there were no additions of humour. In the translation of allusions, re-creation was used to replace an unfamiliar reference with a more familiar one. The replacements, however, did not substantially alter the content or the humour.

As stated before, it becomes clear from the data that retention was the favoured translation strategy in both the translation of wordplay and allusions. In the translation of wordplay, retention was used to maintain the same category of humour although the **focus of the humour and the word class was sometimes slightly shifted**. In other words, if the English wordplay focused on the many meanings of a noun, the Finnish wordplay sometimes focused on the many meanings of a verb. Nevertheless, the category of humour remained the same and the humour was retentive. Regarding wordplay, retention was used in the translation of homonymy/polysemy in 37% of the instances. It was also the most common strategy in the translation of paronymy at 55.5%, but the strategy was never (0%) employed in the translation of homophony. Retention was also the most common translation strategy for allusions; 82% of proper-name allusions and 56% of key-phrase allusions were retained.

5.2 Retention of Verbal Humour

Verbal humour was retained in the target text translation if it preserved the source culture and language features, and if it contained the same category of humour. In other words, the humour was retentive if paronymic wordplay in the source text remained paronymic wordplay in translation. The aim of the retentive strategy was also to disrupt the cultural codes of the target language and signal the difference between the source culture and the target culture (Venuti 1995: 20). This does not, however, mean that the verbal humour in question would be unfamiliar or unintelligible to the target audience. Instead, it signifies that the translator has retained the same humour category and thus remained faithful to the source text. The table below shows the overall retention in both the translation of wordplay and allusions.

Table 5. Retention of verbal humour in the Finnish subtitles



	Homonymy/ polysemy	Paronymy	Homophony	Key-phrase allusions	Proper-name allusions
Source text (ENG)	33	9	3	16	122
Subtitles (FI)	11	5	0	9	99

It is possible to deduce from this table the categories of verbal humour in which retention was most used. **Retention was most used in the translation of allusions**, especially in the translation of proper-name allusions (99 out of 122). This trend is consistent with the hypothesis that was set out in the beginning of this thesis. The hypothesis for the translation of allusions was that the Finnish translator would employ the strategy of *minimum change* in the translation due to the wide-spread belief that it is not the translator's task to explain the allusions (Leppihalme 1992: 187). However, this strategy risks rendering some culture-specific allusions unintelligible to the target audience and, as a result, some humour would be lost. The results for the retention of wordplay, on the other hand, lead to interesting and unexpected results. The original hypothesis for the translation of wordplay was based on a study made by Holmes (1988) where he observed that linguistic features (in this case, wordplay) would most often be re-created in a translation. According to Holmes (1988: 49), culture-specific features (such as allusions) were historicised and exoticised, whereas language-specific features (such as wordplay) were naturalised and modernised. Nevertheless, **homonymy/polysemy was only retained in a third of the instances, paronymy in**

only a little over half of the instances, and absolutely no instances of homophony were retained. These findings will be more explicitly illustrated in the following two sections.

5.2.1 Examples in Wordplay

Instances of retention in the translation of wordplay can only be illustrated with examples of homonymic/polysemic and paronymic wordplay because there were no uses of retention in the translation of homophony. An example of retention in homonymic wordplay can be seen below:

(27) Wellington: Britain has the finest trade, the finest army, the finest navy in the world. And what have we for royalty? A mad Kraut sausage-sucker and a son who can't keep his sausage to himself.

Wellington: Britannian kauppa, armeijat, laivastot ovat maailman parhaat. Mutta entä kuninkaallisemme? Hullu saku makkaranimijä ja poika, joka ei pysty pitämään makkaraansa kurissa.
[The trade, army and navy of Britain are the best in the world. But what about our royalty? A mad jerry sausage-sucker and a son who can't control his sausage.]

(S03E06SC06).

The above example shows a crude remark made by the Duke of Wellington where he criticises the frivolous and wanton behaviour of Prince George and the King. The homonymic wordplay is derived from the two meanings of *sausage* (*food* and *male reproductive organ*). In this context, *sausage* (*food*) also denotes in a demeaning way to the nationality of the King who was of German descent. The Finnish subtitles have managed to retain the same category of humour. Furthermore, the translator has managed to preserve homonymic wordplay in the same word class because the word *sausage* (in Finnish *makkara*) can be used to denote both the food and the male organ in Finnish. Therefore, the humour is successfully conveyed to the target audience in the

same humour category. The use of retention in paronymic wordplay can be seen in the example below:

(28) Baldrick: Sir, you're as dead as some doo-doos.
Blackadder: The expression, Baldrick, is 'as a dodo'. Dead as a dodo.

Baldrick: Olette kuollut kuin kiivi.
[You're as dead as a kiwi.]
Blackadder: Se sana on kivi. Kuollut kuin kivi.
[The word is stone. Dead as a stone.]

(S04E02SC05).

This particular scene occurs when Blackadder has been arrested for disobeying the orders of his General, and Baldrick is certain that Blackadder will receive a death sentence. The paronymic wordplay occurs between the rather similar sounding words *doo-doo* (*a child's word for poop*) and *dodo* (*extinct bird*). The translation retains this form of paronymic wordplay with the words *kiivi* (*kiwi fruit* and *kiwi bird*) and *kivi* (*stone*). Both of these Finnish words are pronounced and written almost identically. As a result, the paronymic humour is successfully transferred to another language and culture. It is also interesting to note that the translator retained the reference to birds in the Finnish subtitles, although the species of birds differed.

5.2.2 Examples in Allusions

Instances of retention in the translation of allusions can be illustrated for both categories of key-phrase and proper-name allusions. It is clear from the large number of retention in allusions (82% for proper-name allusions and 56% for key-phrase allusions) that the translator recognised a significant number of the references. An example of the retention in a key-phrase allusion can be seen below:

(29) Blackadder: But perhaps before Lord Topper starts to talk he might like a glass of wine. He looks a bit shaken.
Topper: Shaken but not stirred.

Blackadder: Ehkäpä lordi Topper haluaisi lasin viiniä ensin. Hän näyttää hieman ravistuneelta.
[Maybe Lord Topper would like a glass of wine first. He looks a bit shaken.]
Topper: Ravistettu, muttei sekoitettu.
[Shaken but not stirred.]

(S03E03SC13).

In this particular scene, a minor character called Lord Topper has secretly been acting as a hero and saving French aristocrats from the guillotine. In other words, he is partly referred to as a mysterious and secret agent. The allusion in this example is a clear reference to the secret agent James Bond and his preferred mode of drinking Martinis. The English reference is quite an obvious one even to the Finnish target audience because James Bond films have been widely popular in Finland during the decades. As a result, the translator has directly transferred the Finnish equivalent of the famous saying to the Finnish subtitles and successfully retained the humorous aspect. It is also important to note that in this case the English quote is quite familiar to the target audience. An example of retention in a proper-name allusion can be seen below:

(30) Blackadder: Did all those men die in vain on the field of Agincourt? Was the man who burnt Joan of Arc simply wasting good matches?

Blackadder: Kuolivatko kaikki nuo miehet turhaan Agincourtin kentällä? Tuhlasiko Jean D'Arcin polttaja vain hyviä tulitikkuja?
[Did all those men die in vain on the field of Agincourt? Was the arsonist of Joan of Arc simply wasting good matches?]

(S03E03SC02).

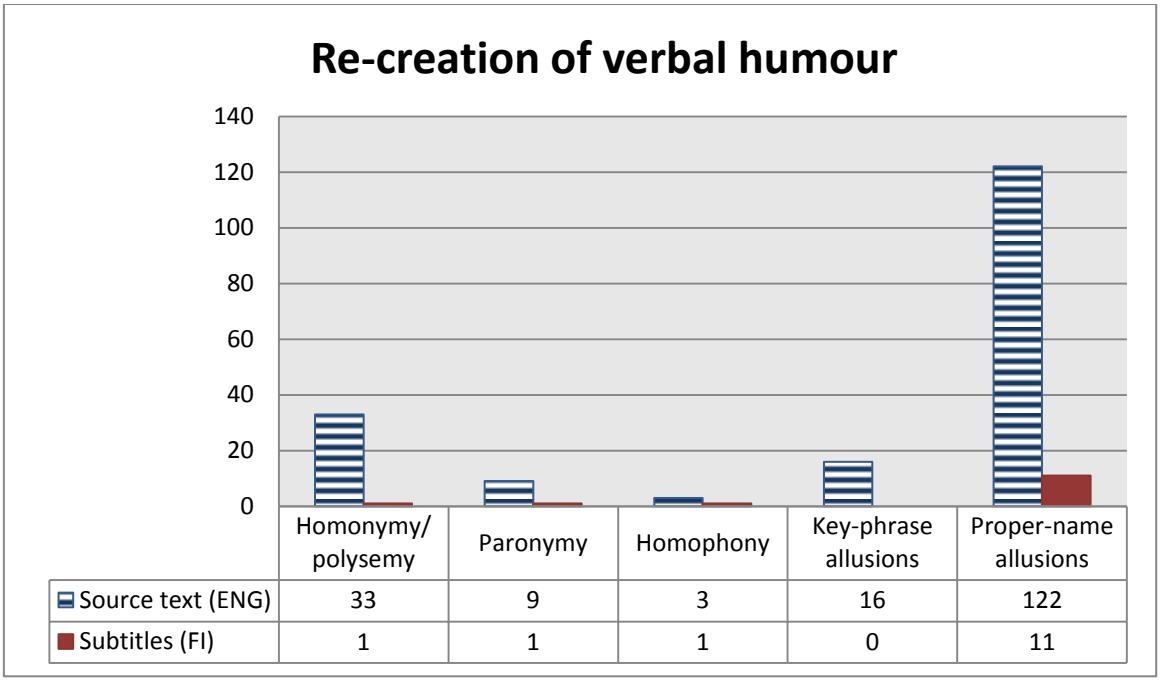
In this example, Blackadder's hometown is temporarily infatuated with the French and, as expected, Blackadder does not share this obsession. He attempts to remind the people of all the bloody wars fought between England and France, but he does this in a very sarcastic and aggravated manner. There are two proper-name allusions in this particular example: *Agincourt* and *Joan of Arc*. The story of Joan of Arc is well known in most Western countries, but the Battle of Agincourt is a less familiar event to those not

interested in battles between the English and the French. The battle of Agincourt was a famous battle between the English and French in the Hundred Years' War in 1415, and it is undoubtedly an event that is familiar to the source culture audience. However, it is less known in the target culture and can be considered as an *unfamiliar allusion* (Leppihalme 1997: 80). The reference to Joan of Arc, on the other hand, can be considered as a *transcultural allusion* due to its familiarity (Leppihalme 1997: 80). Nevertheless, the translator has retained both of these proper-name allusions in the Finnish subtitles. It must also be noted that even though the target audience would not recognise the allusion to the battle, its meaning becomes clear from the context.

5.3 Re-creation of Verbal Humour

Verbal humour was re-created in a translation if it brought the source text closer to the target audience, and if it contained a different category of verbal humour (e.g. paronymy was changed into homophony) or an alteration of the humour. The translation was re-creative if it appeared as fluent as the source text and gave the "[…] appearance that it reflects the foreign writer's personality or intention or the essential meaning of the foreign text […]" (Venuti 1995: 1). The aim of a re-creative strategy was also to cause as little discomfort to the target audience as possible by removing all foreign content. Re-creation was deemed as an especially helpful tool in cases where the verbal humour was too culture- or language-specific to be easily conveyed to the target audience. In other words, the translator was able to take more liberties with the content. The table below shows the overall re-creation in both the translation of wordplay and allusions.

Table 6. Re-creation of verbal humour in the Finnish subtitles



	Homonymy/ polysemy	Paronymy	Homophony	Key-phrase allusions	Proper-name allusions
Source text (ENG)	33	9	3	16	122
Subtitles (FI)	1	1	1	0	11

It is possible to deduce from this table the categories of verbal humour in which re-creation was most used. Regarding the translation of allusions, **re-creation was most used in the translation of proper-name allusions (9%), but it was never employed in the translation of key-phrase allusions (0%)**. The findings also show that it was hardly ever used for the translation of wordplay because **only one instance of homonymic/polysemic (3%), paronymic (11%) and homophonic (33%) wordplay was translated according to the re-creative strategy**. Therefore, the findings from this study completely refute the hypothesis that was set out in the beginning of this thesis. These findings will be more explicitly illustrated in the following two sections.

5.3.1 Examples in Wordplay

Instances of re-creation in the translation of wordplay will be illustrated with examples of paronymic, homonymic/polysemic and homophonic wordplay. An example of re-creation in paronymic wordplay can be seen below:

(31) Prince: The public love me. Why, only the other day I was out in the street, and they said "We hail Prince George! We hail Prince George!"
Blackadder: "We hate Prince George", sire. "We hate Prince George."

Prince: Ihmisethän rakastavat minua. Kun olin kadulla, he lauloivat: "Ole tervehditty, Yrjö-prinssi…"
[People love me. When I was out in the streets they sang "All greet Prince George…"]
Blackadder: "Olet perseestä, yrjöttävä prinssi…"
[You suck, disgusting prince...]

(S03E01SC01).

In this particular scene, Prince George is convinced that his subjects love him unconditionally. Blackadder, however, is quick to shatter these delusions. The instance of paronymic wordplay in the source text revolves around the rather similar pronunciation of the words *hail* and *hate*. This aspect, however, has not been retained in the subtitles possibly due to the lack of two equivalent and appropriate words. Instead, the translator has re-created the verbal humour by transforming the single humorous instance from the source text (*hate*/*hail*) into a whole humorous sentence (*ole tervehditty, Yrjö-prinssi* / *olet perseestä, yrjöttävä prinssi*). Granted, the two Finnish sentences do not evoke paronymy in the same sense as the source text, but the two sentences are nevertheless quite close to each other. Therefore, it is plausible to suppose that the insulting sentence could be misheard and misinterpreted. As a result, the verbal humour is re-created and the humorous content is preserved. An instance of re-created homonymic/polysemic wordplay can be seen in the example below:

(32) Mary: There was a man, I cared for a little […] but he bought it.
Blackadder: I'm so sorry, I didn't realise that was the arrangement.
Mary: I mean, he died.

Mary: Oli eräs mies, josta pidin vähän [mutta hän] osti osuutensa taivaasta.
[There was a man I liked [but he] bought his share of Heaven.]
Blackadder: Anteeksi, en tajunnut, että oli kyse siitä…

[I'm sorry, I didn't know it was about that…]
Mary: Tarkoitan, että hän kuoli.
[I mean that he died.]

(S04E05SC08).

In this particular scene, Blackadder is lying in bed with a lady friend and they talk of their past affairs. The homonymic/polysemic wordplay in the source text revolves around the two meanings of the word *bought it* (*to purchase something* and *to die*). Blackadder mistakes the sentence "he bought it" to mean that the man had purchased certain sexual favours from the lady, and he offers to pay her. However, the lady actually meant that his previous lover died because "bought it" is an English slang word for dying. This type of wordplay has not been retained in the Finnish subtitles. Instead, the translator used the same strategy as in the previous example and rendered the one-word wordplay (*bought it*) into a whole humorous sentence (*osti osuutensa taivaasta*). The sentence can indeed be understood in two ways: either the man purchased heavenly favours from the lady, or he literally claimed his share of Heaven by dying. An instance of re-created homophonic wordplay can be seen in the example below:

(33) Baldrick: You know, the funny thing is – my father was a nun. […] I know because whenever he was in court and the judge used to say 'Occupation', he'd say 'Nun'.

Baldrick: Hassua on, faijakin oli huppuheppu. Jopa oikeudessa hän oli aina huppelissa.
[It's funny, my dad was also a hood chappie. Even in court he was always tipsy.]

(S04E01SC03).

In this particular example, Blackadder forces Baldrick to dress up as a nun for one of his many schemes, and Baldrick states that his father also used to be a nun by occupation. The homophonic wordplay revolves around the similar pronunciation but different spelling of the word *nun* (*occupation*) and *none* (*nothing*). Homophony is a difficult category of wordplay to translate, which is evident from the fact that no instances of homophony were retained and only one instance was re-created. There is a play on two somewhat similar words, *huppuheppu* (*hood chappie*) and *huppelissa* (*to be tipsy*) in the

Finnish subtitles. The reference to a hood is vaguely connected to a nun's habit, although otherwise the humorous source text content is taken out of context. The Finnish subtitles have a play on the alliteration of the word *huppuheppu*, but otherwise there is no clear connection between the aforementioned word and *huppelissa*. Therefore, even if the instance is still slightly humorous, it has lost much of its original content.

5.3.2 Examples in Allusions

Instances of re-creation in the translation of allusions can only be illustrated for proper-name allusions because no key-phrase allusions were re-created. An example of the re-creation in a proper-name allusion can be seen below:

(34) George: I always loved history […], Henry VIII and his Six Knives.

George: Olen aina rakastanut historiaa […], Henrik VIII ja hänen kuusi raivoaan.
[I've always loved history […], Henry VIII and his six rages.]

(S04E06SC02).

This particular scene contains George's reminiscences of his fondness for schooldays and lectures, especially history classes. The proper-name allusion is a clear reference to King Henry VIII and his six wives. *Six knives* is meant as a symbol for his six wives whom he either divorced or had killed. The Finnish translator has not directly retained the allusion to knives but, instead, opted to choose a word that more closely resembles the word *wives* in Finnish and is more intelligible to the target audience. In other words, the translator has created a humorous resemblance with the words *raivoaan* (*his rage*) and *vaimoaan* (*his wives*). Whereas the source text version linked the wives to murder, the translation linked the wives to rage. As a result, the humour is re-created.

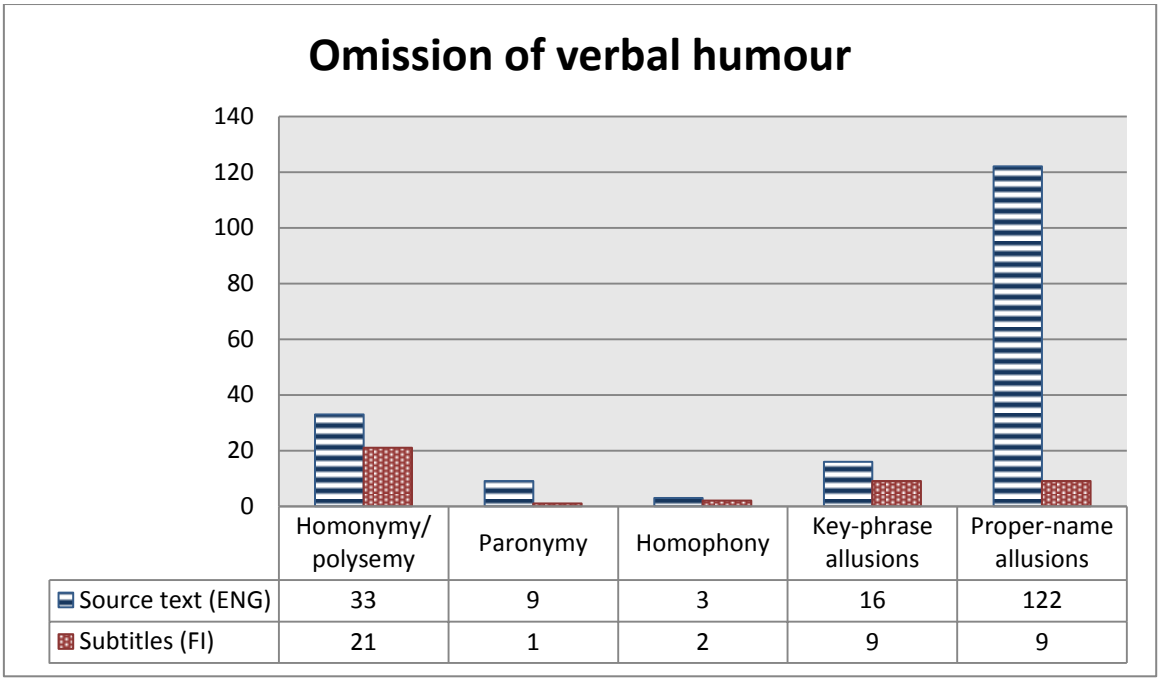
5.4 Omission and Addition of Verbal Humour

The process of audiovisual translation always necessitates condensation and omission to some extent. As discussed before, some items such as interjections and names are easily omitted since they do not inhabit a central role in the plot and the message, but other features can be more difficult to exclude. Especially a narrative-driven show like *Blackadder* will convey a great deal of information in the dialogue, and much of that information has to be condensed or omitted to suit the time and space restrictions.

As the earlier Figure 5 shows, a total of 56% of wordplay was omitted from the translation, which is a significant number of omitted or lost wordplay. The high percentage can be accounted for the fact that the translator either did not recognise the wordplay or it was deemed impossible to translate due to time-, effort- or money-related reasons. Translation is a challenging and time-consuming process and the translator must be provided with adequate working conditions in order for him or her to produce successful translations. Figure 5 also shows that a total of 13% of allusions were omitted from the translation. The figure is not as striking as the figure for the omission of wordplay, but it is nevertheless quite a high percentage. The figures for omission account for wordplay and allusions that were completely omitted or translated in a way in which they lost their humorous content. Table 7 below illustrates the amount of total omission and lost content that was found in the Finnish subtitles.

The translation strategy of addition is somewhat problematic in subtitling due to the many restrictions and limitations in the medium. There were no direct cases of added humorous content in the form of wordplay or humorous allusions. Some other forms of humour, such as rhyming and alliteration, were discovered in the translation, but these forms of humour were not the focus of this thesis. Consequently, they were overlooked in the study.

Table 7. Omission of verbal humour in the Finnish subtitles



	Homonymy/ polysemy	Paronymy	Homophony	Key-phrase allusions	Proper-name allusions
Source text (ENG)	33	9	3	16	122
Subtitles (FI)	21	1	2	9	9

This table clearly illustrates the great number of wordplay and allusions that were either omitted from the subtitles or, alternatively, translated in a way that they could no longer be classified as verbal humour. Over half (63.5%) of homonymic/polysemic wordplay was either purposefully omitted or transferred into a non-humorous form. Only 11% of paronymic wordplay was lost in translation, whereas the majority of homophonic wordplay (67%) was completely omitted from the translation. Regarding allusions, only 7.5% of proper-name allusions were omitted, whereas over half (56%) of key-phrase allusions were lost in translation. These findings will be more explicitly illustrated in the following two sections below.

5.4.1 Examples in Wordplay

Omission was accounted for in two different ways: either the translator had omitted all humorous content from the subtitles or, alternatively, the source text was translated in a way in which it lost all of its verbal humour. Out of the 21 omitted cases of wordplay, 9 instances (43%) were completely omitted from the subtitles, and 12 instances (57%)

were translated unsuccessfully. These two types of omission will be illustrated below with two instances of wordplay. An instance of omission due to the unsuccessful translation of homonymic wordplay can be seen below:

(35) Blackadder: Oh, God, bills, bills, bills. One is born, one runs up bills, one dies. Honestly, Baldrick, sometimes I feel like a pelican – whichever way I turn, I've still got an enormous bill in front of me.

Blackadder: Laskuja, laskuja. Sitä syntyy, hukkuu laskuihin ja kuolee. Mihin vain käännänkin pääni, näen siellä valtavan laskun. [Bills, bills. One is born, drowns in bills and dies. Wherever I turn my head I see a huge bill.]

(S03E05SC01).

In this particular example, Blackadder is in an especially bad mood due to his poor financial situation. As a result, he is ranting about all the bills he has to pay. The homonymic wordplay in the English source text revolves around the two meanings of the word *bill* (*beak of a bird* and *sum to be paid*). In the source text, Blackadder likens his problems with *bills* (*to be paid*) to the existence of a huge, actual *bill* (*of a pelican*) constantly in front of him. In the Finnish subtitles, this humorous wordplay is translated in a way in which it does not successfully convey the source text humour. Instead, Blackadder's translated remark only suggests bitterness and anger. An instance of omission due to the complete omission of homonymic wordplay can be seen below:

(36) Blackadder: [Apsley House] is the seat of the Duke of Wellington. Those ladies I fancy would be his nieces.
Prince: So you fancy them too. Don’t blame you. Bravo! I spent a night of ecstasy with a pair of Wellingtons and I loved it.

Blackadder: [Apsley House] on Wellingtonin herttuan asunto. Naiset olivat kai veljentyttäriä.
[Apsley House] is the residence of the Duke of Wellington. The ladies were presumably his nieces.]
Prince: Vietin hurmion yön ja se oli aivan ihanaa!
[I spent a night of ecstasy and it was absolutely wonderful!]

(S03E06SC02).

In this example, Prince George has had a one-night stand with two ladies from Aspley House. He is boasting to Blackadder of having a fantastic night with the ladies at their home, and it transpires that the ladies are actually the nieces of the Duke of Wellington. The homonymic wordplay in the source text is similar to the previous example. That is to say, it is a play on the two meanings of the word *fancy* (*to imagine* and *to be infatuated*). Blackadder remarks to Prince George that he imagines the ladies to be Wellington's nieces, but Prince George misunderstands his meaning and thinks that he, too, is fond of the ladies. Also, humour is derived from the utterance *pair of Wellingtons* because it usually denotes a *pair of Wellington boots*. In this example, however, it means a *pair of actual Wellington ladies*. These two instances of humour have been completely omitted from the Finnish subtitles. Instead, the translator has chosen to describe the loveliness of the event. As a result, the content has been drastically condensed and omitted so that it loses its verbal humour.

No instances of added homonymic/polysemic, paronymic, homophonic or homographic wordplay were recorded in the Finnish subtitles. Nevertheless, the subtitles contained some instances of for example alliteration or rhyming in places where there was no alliteration or rhyming in the source text. However, these two forms of verbal humour were not studied in this thesis.

5.4.2 Examples in Allusions

The two forms of (complete and partial) omission that were explained earlier were also accounted for in the translation of the source text allusions. Out of the 19 omitted cases of allusions, 10 instances (52.5%) were completely omitted from the subtitles, and 8 instances (42%) were translated unsuccessfully. These two types of omission will be illustrated below with two instances of allusions. An instance of omission due to the unsuccessful translation of a proper-name allusion can be seen below:

(37) Blackadder: [The doorbell rings] Probably some berk with a parrot on his shoulder selling plaster gnomes of Sir Francis Drake and his Golden Behind.

Blackadder: Kaiketi joku vittupää papukaija olallaan myymässä pienoiskuvia sir Francis Drakesta ja hänen Kultaisesta Takapuolestaan.
[Probably some cunt head with a parrot on his shoulder selling miniatures of Sir Francis Drake and his Golden Bottom.]

(S02E03SC01).

In example above, the seafarer and adventurer Sir Walter Raleigh is returning to England, and the whole town eagerly welcomes him dressed in various kinds of interesting and funny outfits – that is, the whole town except for Blackadder. He expresses very clearly that he is not remotely interested in dressing up and welcoming Sir Walter, and he is especially cross and annoyed at other people for doing so. There are two allusions in this example: a reference to *Sir Francis Drake* and his famous ship *The Golden Hind* (sometimes written as *The Golden Hinde*). Therefore, the reference to "his Golden Behind" can be understood as a humorous reference to his well-known vessel. The vessel, however, is not perhaps well known to the target audience and, consequently, the allusion has been translated literally and lost some of its source text humour.

Although the allusion is not received in the same way in the source and target cultures, it can still remain humorous. Instead, the target audience may be lead to imagine that Sir Francis is exceedingly rich and privileged and, as a result, he is described as having a golden behind. It is interesting to note that the word *berk* (*stupid or foolish person*) has been translated into a word that carries a much stronger meaning in the Finnish language, namely *vittupää* (*cunt head*). With this transformation, the innocent-seeming and humorous source text word has actually taken on a far more negative and harsh connotation in the target language. An instance of the complete omission of a proper-name allusion can be seen below:

(38) Blackadder: The lieutenant looks as all soldiers look on these occasions – about as feminine as W. G. Grace.

Blackadder: Luutnantti näyttää samalta kuin kaikki sotilaat näissä tilanteissa.

> [The lieutenant looks the same as all soldiers in these situations.]

(S04E03SC02).

In this particular example, British soldiers fighting in the First World War are treated to a theatrical revue where one of the soldiers has dressed himself up as a woman and performed to the audience in drag. Several members of the audience consider the dress-up and performance to be quite successful, but Blackadder's opinion differs greatly and he likens the soldier's appearance to that of W. G. Grace, who was a famous British cricket player. W. G. Grace was a rather large and heavily-built man who sported a massive beard. In other words, Blackadder implies that the soldier does not look at all feminine. There is no reference to W. G. Grace in the Finnish subtitles due to its unfamiliar nature. Neither has the translator decided to replace the unfamiliar allusion with a more familiar reference to for example *Juha Mieto*. As a matter of fact, the whole second part of the utterance has been completely omitted from the subtitles. As a result, the translated utterance loses all of its humorous value.

6 CONCLUSIONS

The objective of this thesis was to discover whether the translation of the show *Blackadder* utilised the retentive or re-creative translation strategies as set out by Holmes (1988) in the subtitling of verbal humour from English into Finnish. Holmes's two translation strategies were also complemented with the strategies of omission and addition. The hypothesis that was set out at the beginning of this thesis was that the translator would favour the retentive translation strategy for culture-specific allusions, whereas the re-creative strategy would be used more often for the language-specific wordplay.

The hypothesis was based on previous studies made by Holmes (1988) and Leppihalme (1992). Holmes (1988: 49) discovered that the translators of poetry tended to favour the re-creative strategy for linguistic features and the retentive strategy for cultural features. Therefore, it was hypothesised that Holmes's theories would be similarly applicable to this study. Regarding allusions, Leppihalme (1992: 187) discovered in her studies that Finnish translators most often used the translation strategy of minimum change in the translation of allusions, Based on her study, it was hypothesised that the same strategy would be used for the translation of *Blackadder*. The hypothesis at the beginning of this thesis was also based on the unique nature of the show; the show is known for its witty verbal humour and it was considered important to preserve this well-known and characteristic feature.

Based on the findings and analysis presented in the previous chapter, it can be stated that (out of the two translation strategies defined by Holmes) retention was unquestionably used most often both in the translation of wordplay and allusions. The use of retention in the different humour categories also varied greatly. Retention was employed more in the translation of proper-name allusions than in the translation of key-phrase allusions. It was also the favoured translation strategy for the translation of paronymy and, to a smaller extent, for the translation of homonymy/polysemy. Homophony, on the other hand, was not retained. The use of re-creation also varied according to the humour category, although it was used only in a handful of cases. Re-

creation was employed only once in the translation of all the categories of wordplay. It was never utilised for the translation of key-phrase allusions, and there were only a few examples of re-created proper-name allusions.

Omission was frequently used as a translation strategy in the translation of *Blackadder*, and this finding coincides with, for instance, the theories of Irena Kovačič (1994). Over half of all the wordplay was omitted and a significant amount of allusions were omitted, too. It is interesting to note that omission was actually used considerably more often than re-creation in the translation of the show. This finding overturns the original hypothesis because omission was not thought to inhabit such a central role as a translation strategy due to the nature of the source material. Nevertheless, the findings show that it was used more often than re-creation. All in all, the most frequently used translation strategy in the translation of wordplay was omission, followed by retention and re-creation. The most frequently used translation strategy in the translation of allusions was retention, followed by omission and re-creation.

When utilising **retention in the translation of wordplay**, the aim was to preserve the same humour category. In many cases, even the same group of word class that the wordplay centred on was preserved in the translation. Sometimes the focus of the humour and the word class were slightly shifted in order to create similar wordplay and to preserve the same humour category in the target text. A shift like this was most likely necessitated due to the linguistic differences between English and Finnish. When utilising **retention in the translation of allusions**, the aim was to retain the source culture allusions. This strategy, however, risked the loss of humour if some of the allusions were unfamiliar to the target audience. Nevertheless, some allusions and their functions could be interpreted from the context and dialogue (as in Example 30).

When utilising **re-creation in the translation of wordplay**, the aim was to preserve the humour by altering the category of it. All three categories of wordplay were only re-created once, and due to this unexpected result it was impossible to draw any concrete conclusions regarding the tendencies in the re-creation of wordplay. The lack of re-creation in wordplay overturned the original hypothesis, and it is difficult to find any

definite reasons for its absence. One reason, however, may have been the decisions of the translator(s). Either the translator had not noticed the instances of wordplay or, alternatively, he or she lacked the capability or time to translate them; it is possible that the translator was working under an unfavourable deadline and could not concentrate on individual instances of humour as much as would have been necessary. When utilising **re-creation in the translation of allusions**, the aim was to transfer the allusion closer to the target culture by for example replacing an unfamiliar allusion with a familiar one. Only 11 cases of proper-name allusions were re-created, and there were no examples of re-created key-phrase instances. As with the findings presented previously, it is difficult to draw any concrete conclusions regarding the tendencies in the re-creation of allusions. The allusions that were re-created usually featured examples where an unfamiliar allusion was exchanged into a more familiar one. One reason for the low number of re-created allusions may be – as Leppihalme (1992: 187) stated – that Finnish translators in general do not see it as their responsibility to explain or simplify allusions to the target audience.

The lack of re-creation in both the translation of wordplay and allusions can be attributed to the individual influence of the translator and, perhaps more importantly, to the general approach to the translation of humour. Moreover, it should not be assumed that humour carries an equal role in the source text and in the translation; and also the nature of humour and the humour category must be open for change (Zabalbeascoa 2005: 187). According to this statement, the translator of humour is awarded the possibility to change the nature of the source text humour in order to preserve it in the translation. However, Chiaro (1992) discovered that translators in general were often reluctant to distance themselves from the source text by "[…] replacing an untranslatable joke with another one which would work in the target language […]" (85). It must be noted that this approach most often leads to the complete or partial omission of humour. Thus, it was not successful as a translation strategy if the object was to convey the humour to the target audience. The lack of addition in the translation of verbal humour may be attributed to the use of *canned laughter*. Canned laughter is used to signify the moment when there is humour in the show and, consequently, the laughter is always connected with the humour. As a result, the translator may have been

unwilling to add humour to scenes where there was no canned laughter to signify the presence of humour.

The results from this study largely overturned the original hypothesis; retention was chiefly used in the translation of allusions, but re-creation was hardly non-existent in the translation or wordplay. Instead, complete and partial omission occupied a central role as a translation strategy and, as a result, much of the humour of the original source text was lost in translation. This study could be continued with the addition of several other humour categories such as soundplay and irony. Furthermore, a comparative study of the TV and DVD translations could be made in order to find out how the differences in, for instance, character restrictions and limitations affect the translation of humour. As has been stated before, humour is a difficult area of study and, for that reason, some instances of humour may have been so subtle that they have accidentally been left out from this study. Therefore, it would be interesting to apply the same theories to similar British sit-coms in order to discover whether the results would be similar.

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