

UNIVERSITY OF VAASA

School of Marketing and Communication

Language Expertise in Specialised Society

Juho Silventoinen

Bitches and Irish Opossums

The Effects of Translation Strategies on Characterization in *Breaking Bad*

Master's Thesis

Vaasa 2019

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Author: Juho Silventoinen
Master's Thesis: Bitches and Irish Opossums. The Effects of Translation Strategies on Characterization in *Breaking Bad*
Degree: Master of Arts
Programme: MA Programme in Language Expertise in Specialised Society
Date: 2019
Supervisor: Helen Mäntymäki, Nestori Siponkoski

ABSTRACT

Tässä pro gradu -työssä käsitellään käännösstrategioiden vaikutusta karakterisointiin. Tutkimuksen kohteena ovat *Breaking Bad* -televisiosarjan hahmon Jesse Pinkmanin hokema ”bitch” sekä sen suomenkieliset käännökset sarjan tekstityksissä. Sarjan alustana toimii suoratoistopalvelu Netflix. ”Bitch”-hokemaa käytetään sarjassa Pinkmanin karakterisointiin. ”Bitch” on haastava kääntää, koska se ei monissa tapauksissa käänny luontevasti suomeksi ja edellyttää täten erilaisia käännösstrategioita, jotta käännöksessä ei ilmene lähdekielen interferenssiä. Hypoteesin mukaan erilaisten käännösstrategioiden käytön haittapuolena kuitenkin on, että ne muuttavat Pinkmanin karakterisointia. Lisäksi tutkittiin, vaikuttavatko televisiotekstityksen tekniset rajoitteet käännösstrategian valintaan. Tutkimuksen materiaalina oli 18 ”bitch”-esimerkkiä.

Tutkimuksen keskeisiä käsitteitä ovat karakterisointi, slangi, audiovisuaalinen kääntäminen ja ekvivalenssi. ”Bitch”-hokeman suomenkielisistä käännöksistä oli tunnistettavissa viisi eri käännösstrategiaa, ja hokema itse oli jaoteltavissa kahteen eri luokkaan sen käyttötarkoituksen perusteella. Analyysi koostui viidestä osasta, joista kussakin analysoitiin yhden käännösstrategian vaikutusta Jesse Pinkmanin karakterisointiin. Sekä lähdetekstistä että käännöksestä tunnistettiin slangin deskriptiivisiä piirteitä ja niiden karakterisoivia vaikutuksia. Tekstien vertaaminen toisiinsa näiden pohjalta paljasti, muuttiko käytetty käännösstrategia karakterisointia.

Vaikka jotkin käännösstrategiat tukivat lähdetekstin karakterisointia, jotkin strategiat muuttivat tekstitysten karakterisointia huomattavasti. Tekstityksen teknisillä rajoitteilla ei kuitenkaan vaikuttanut olleen vaikutusta käännösstrategian valintaan: joissain tapauksissa oli käytetty karakterisointia voimakkaasti muokkaavaa käännösstrategiaa, vaikka karakterisoinnin samanlaisena säilyttävää strategiaa olisi voinut käyttää ongelmitta.

KEYWORDS: audiovisual translation, subtitles, characterization, slang, equivalence

1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this MA thesis is to study how translation strategy choices affect characterization in the context of a subtitled television series. I have chosen to study the characterization of the secondary main character Jesse Pinkman in the television drama series *Breaking Bad* (2008–2013). More precisely, I will look into whether the translation strategies together with the limitations of subtitles change the characterization of Jesse Pinkman through his “bitch” refrain which he uses of other people on a frequent basis. The source language is American English and the target language is Finnish.

As for research questions, I set out to ask whether and how the five translation strategies arising from the findings used in translating “bitch” affect the characterization of Jesse Pinkman: do the Finnish subtitles convey a different Jesse Pinkman to the Finnish target audience? I hypothesize that the application of varied translation strategies will change the originally intended characterization. I will also attempt to explain why the translator may have chosen the particular translation strategy, for example because of the technical limitations of subtitles. Essentially, I seek to showcase the power and responsibility that a translator as a mediator can have over the end product, and whether, and to what extent, the target audiences receive what the author of the source text intended to convey.

Jesse Pinkman’s common refrain “bitch” poses a translational challenge for Finnish subtitling because the word is used uniformly as a versatile tool of characterization and humour in the source text, but many of its English-language uses in the source text lack a directly translatable Finnish counterpart that would be as flexible as the original item in linguistic terms. This combined with the technical limitations of subtitling makes “bitch” an illustrative subject of study of the impact that translation strategies may have on characterization.

For example, “bitch” may be used as a means of establishing Jesse as a funny person in a particular scene, which is an act of characterization. But if this comedic “bitch” has

been omitted, it can be concluded that the original intention of portraying Jesse as a comedic relief and a funny person is downplayed through the translation strategy of omission, which may result in Jesse being presented as a more serious character to the Finnish audiences. Of course, the audiovisual context in the form of auditory feedback, facial expressions, and tone of voice needs to be taken into account.

The origins of my interest in the topic date years back. I started to watch *Breaking Bad* in 2013 on a minor streaming website. There were no subtitles available on the website, so I settled for listening to the original dialogue. Even though there were no Finnish subtitles to pay attention to when I started watching *Breaking Bad* on the streaming website, I started to wonder how I would personally translate some ostensibly challenging uses of “bitch” I heard in the original dialogue. As the single-word refrain kept appearing consistently under very different circumstances and in versatile contexts, I began to wonder how one would go about translating it into Finnish. This was the topic I studied in my Bachelor’s thesis *Yo! Gatorade Me, Bitch! Translation of Versatile Bitch in Breaking Bad* in 2015. This Master’s thesis is a continuation of the work done in the BA thesis, and builds on its findings.

The style vs content dichotomy is at the heart of this thesis. In this particular case, the concept posits that in translating “bitch” the translator has to balance between two translation approaches. The first approach is “style”, or being faithful to the consistent and immutable usage of “bitch” as a vehicle of characterization in the original dialogue, and reproducing this consistency in the Finnish translation. In principle, this means settling on a fixed Finnish translation of “bitch” throughout the series and subtitling it invariably as such every time “bitch” is said by Jesse Pinkman in the source text, even when a translation strategy like omitting the refrain as an unnecessary expletive could be a justifiable option from another point of view.

This style emphasis acknowledges and retains the original characterization and humor aspects of source text’s stylistic consistency, but runs the risk of producing a target text that sounds clumsy, unconventional or even unnatural to the target audience. These traits are generally not desirable in a translation. However, this can also be construed as

an asset: it is hypothetically possible that the resulting clumsiness of the translation can be used to convey a sense of roughness and comedy in Jesse's speech that the use of "bitch" is meant to create in the source text.

The second approach is domesticating the original dialogue for the Finnish audience in accordance to what is deemed natural usage of the language in the target culture. This means that "bitch" is domesticated, or in other words translated contextually, so that the Finnish translations match the linguistic functions of each "bitch". In principle, this means placing less or no value at all on the humour and characterization aspects that the consistent and immutable use of "bitch" in the target text produces; through this scope, Jesse's refrain is not deemed special and can thus be treated like any other slang, swear or filler word, and it can be even omitted altogether. While the function emphasis may produce a more natural-sounding target text by handling "bitch" in a way that is more in line with the linguistic conventions of the target language, this approach may trade off the characterization and humour aspects.

If a certain translation strategy is not adhered to uniformly throughout, I assert that the end product has the worst of both worlds. Thus a clear choice between the two approaches has to be made: since the recurrence and immutability of "bitch" is the basis for both characterization and humour, translating it inconsistently even sparingly is a deviation from the consistent immutability of "bitch" in the source text. Such inconsistency is, then, a violation of the intended style and characterization. Due to this, for the large part, style and function contradict one another in translating the series and are not easy to reconcile satisfactorily. Choosing to domesticate the dialogue for the Finnish audience and disregard the functions of "bitch" in the source text greatly diminishes the characterization of Jesse Pinkman in the target text, which can be argued to be a notable disservice to the source text. Consequently, the translator has to make the call as to whether the style or domestication emphasis is more important, but the disregarded emphasis still has a profound impact on the outcome.

In my BA thesis, I merely looked into how "bitch" was translated and what strategies were used, and whether the translator had favored the style or function emphasis in any

systematical manner. The BA thesis left unexplored territory for further study, namely the effects of such choices on characterization.

In the Background chapter, I will introduce *Breaking Bad*, Jesse Pinkman and the “bitch” refrain. In the Theory chapter, I will cover characterization, audiovisual translation and subtitling, technical restrictions of subtitling, “bitch” in linguistic terms, and translation strategies. In the Findings and Discussion chapter, I will present illustrative examples of “bitch” where the utterance functions as a vehicle of characterization, and see how the translation strategies employed affect the original characterization of Jesse Pinkman. In the Conclusion chapter, I will summarize the thesis, answer the research questions, and suggest topics for further study.

1.1 Material

The overall study material of this thesis is comprised of the “bitches” spoken by Jesse Pinkman in *Breaking Bad*, their Finnish translations as subtitles on Netflix, and the surrounding context of the “bitches”. The first part of the analysis will be based on the work done for my Bachelor’s thesis for which I collected a sample of “bitches” and looked into whether there are observable translation strategy trends among the “bitch” translations. The aim of the BA thesis was to look into the Finnish translations of “bitch” available on the online streaming service Netflix and see whether the context and technical limitations of subtitling resulted in variation in the translation of the “bitch” in the Netflix subtitles. The hypothesis was that these factors do result in variation and stylistic inconsistency.

In order to conduct the BA thesis study, I viewed all the 54 “bitch” presented in a compilation video (Youtube 2013) and narrowed the material down to 35 examples. This was done because the usage and context of many “bitches” is more or less the same, so therefore I did not find analyzing all 54 cases compiled necessary for the study; I deemed a varied selection of 35 examples an adequately representative amount of data. For example, expressions like “son of a bitch” were excluded because in those instances the “bitch” was a part of a fixed expression and thus did not qualify for the

characteristic kind of refrain I thought relevant to study. The 35 examples were then divided into insult and padding categories by their function in the dialogue. The translation strategies used for categorizing the examples further were derived from the theoretical material. A table presenting the general categories and the distribution of the “bitch” examples is shown below.

Table 1. The distribution of translation strategies and functions of the word *bitch* (Silventoinen 2015)

	Insult	Padding expression
Direct Translation	8	3
Hyponym	2	3
Omission	4	11
Sentence/Clause Structure Change	0	2
Toned Down	1	1
Total	15	20

In the Discussion chapter of the BA thesis, I selected seven examples out of the 35 for further analysis and dissection. These seven “bitches” were chosen because I found them to be the most significant and illustrative ones. The most profound finding of the BA thesis was, as hypothesized, that the “bitch” was translated in a varied and rather inconsistent manner as opposed to the formal consistency of the “bitch” in the source text. I concluded that this approach robbed Jesse Pinkman of his trademark refrain in the Finnish subtitles on Netflix. Table 1 shows trends in regard to translating “bitch”.

I selected 18 “bitches” to be discussed in this MA thesis. Three of them represent the direct translation strategy, three represent hyponyms, three the sentence/clause structure change strategy, five the omission, and four the toning down strategy. The examples were chosen on the basis of their typicality in order to illustrate how each translation strategy affects Jesse’s characterization. When applicable, exceptional instances of the

translation strategies were brought into the discussion, too, in order to work present counter examples and thus cover a wider variety of the translational choices; these atypical translations for example feature instances where a “bitch” functioning as an insult is omitted, when there is a clear trend of such usages of the refrain being usually translated directly.

1.2 Method

I will carry out the discussion by comparing the slang properties found in the source text and the target text. The examples will be discussed by translation strategy category. First I will give a description of the example scene to be discussed and necessary background information for understanding the context and character motivation. Then there will be a transliteration of the English-language source text (spoken character dialogue; denoted by “*ST*”), the corresponding Finnish subtitles on Netflix (denoted by “*TT*”, target text), and finally a back translation of the subtitles into English. The back translation will be rendered as literally to the subtitles as possible without infringing on intelligibility; this means avoiding idiomatic translations and culture-specific expressions and therefore adherence to word-for-word translation.

Since the core question of the study is whether the translation strategies used in the subtitles affect Jesse Pinkman’s characterization, the discussion is divided into five categories by translation strategy. The five translations strategies arising from the overall material are direct translation, hyponym, omission, sentence/clause structure change, and toning down. The strategies will be defined and explained later. Each category will feature typical examples of “bitch” translations to showcase how the given translation strategy affects Jesse’s characterization in the subtitles. Somewhat exceptional examples will be discussed, too, to demonstrate what happens to the characterization when a translation strategy is applied atypically and a clear trend is deviated from. For example, “bitches” functioning as insults are typically translated directly, so it is worthwhile to analyze how Jesse’s characterization is impacted when such a “bitch” is omitted altogether and why the translator has made such an exceptional choice in the particular case.

The first step in the analysis procedure is to identify what slang properties the source text “bitch” and the Finnish translation display. The slang properties are from Mattiello (2009: 74), and they are categorized into speaker-oriented and hearer-oriented properties. Not all of them apply to Jesse’s use of “bitch”, so I will use only the relevant ones. Of the speaker-oriented slang properties I will focus on informality and obscenity/vulgarity, and of the hearer-oriented slang properties I will focus on strong impression, offensiveness, aggressiveness, colourfulness, and playfulness. If the slang properties of the source text are missing or altered in the subtitles, I will look for elements of marked speech which could be used to compensate for the reduction or exclusion of the original slang properties. Compensatory elements can convey informality or obscenity/vulgarity for example and therefore make up for the characterization effects of the missing “bitch”.

Since subtitles are an audiovisual medium, the characterization effects of the acting, audible manner of speaking and the contexts of a given line and a given scene, too, need to be factored into defining the intended overall characterization of the source text; the “bitches” are not uttered in isolation. Therefore when assessing the degree to which the original characterization is replicated in the subtitles, it is essential to look beyond the slang properties of “bitch” even though they are the primary gauge used in the analysis. With the total characterization of the source text established, it can be compared with the Finnish translation to see whether the translation replicates what the source text intends, and whether the outcome is different.

Whether the target text characterization of Jesse is different or not, the translator’s choice to use the particular translation strategy needs to be explained, and especially so in instances where the strategy used deviates from the observed trend. To explain these choices, I will draw upon the inherent properties of the source text, cultural and linguistic differences between English and Finnish, the style vs content dichotomy (namely prioritizing the style of the text vs prioritizing the message of the text), the technical limitations of subtitling, and relevance theory. In addition to analyzing the reasons why a given translation fails to replicate the source text partially or entirely, I

will also ponder on suggested solutions with which the characterization might have been retained to a higher degree. Moreover, I will touch upon the adequacy of interpretative resemblance and feedback effect which the translator can rely on to complement the subtitles.

2 *BREAKING BAD*, JESSE PINKMAN AND “BITCH”

In this chapter, I will introduce *Breaking Bad* and Jesse Pinkman as a character, and elaborate on the role and importance of the “bitch” refrain. I will also tell about the show’s platform, the online streaming service Netflix.

2.1 *Breaking Bad*

Breaking Bad is an American television series created and produced by Vince Gilligan, often categorized as a crime drama and sometimes as a neo-western. The series was originally aired on the AMC network and it ran from January 2008 to September 2013 for five seasons and a total of 62 episodes. *Breaking Bad* tells the story of Walter White, who is the protagonist of the series. At the heart of *Breaking Bad* is the theme of change: taking a kind and ordinary man and turning him into the antagonist of the story, or as the series’ creator Vince Gilligan has put it, a transformation “from Mr. Chips to Scarface” (Vulture 2019), referring to a fictional schoolteacher and a fictional drug lord, respectively.

Walter White (henceforth referred to as ‘Walt’ since that is how he is often called in the series) is an overqualified and overworked yet underpaid high school chemistry teacher in Albuquerque, New Mexico. His family, consisting of his pregnant wife Skyler and handicapped son Walter Jr., have trouble making ends meet so Walt has to earn extra income by working at a car wash after his regular day job at the school. One day Walt is diagnosed with inoperable lung cancer and is given two years to live. This motivates Walt to “break bad” and pursue a profitable career in methamphetamine trade as a way to ensure his family’s economy after his inevitable passing from the lung cancer. Walt’s extensive skills and knowledge of chemistry make him an expert on producing high quality methamphetamine. Walt then comes into contact with his former high school student Jesse Pinkman who is involved in methamphetamine business. Walt proposes they begin to work together, as they can benefit greatly from each other: “You know the business, and I know the chemistry” (Season 1, episode 1). Due to Walt’s expertise, the methamphetamine the two produce – dubbed “Blue Sky” for its exceptional purity and

blue colour – becomes highly coveted in the market. Walt adopts the pseudonym “Heisenberg” which he uses when conducting drug business.

As the series progresses, Jesse and Walter get pulled deeper and deeper into the dangerous world of drug trade and ruthless cartels, all the while trying to evade the suspicions of Walt’s brother-in-law Hank Schrader who is a Drug Enforcement Administration agent. Walt and Jesse’s journey has completely different effects on the two main characters. Walt’s motivations for being involved in the drug business gradually evolve into greed, selfishness, and thirst for power at any means necessary, which ends up overshadowing his original intention of simply providing for his family.

As opposed to Walter’s descend into greed and egoism, the events of the series set Jesse on a different path: he grows increasingly disgusted with the criminal life and the prices he has to pay for it. He experiences several personal tragedies and hardships throughout the story, and they affect him emotionally to such a degree that by the fourth season he wants to get out of drug trade and build a new and more hopeful future. In a way, Jesse and Walter slowly switch places as the series progresses. Whereas Walter starts out as a good yet timid man who ends up embracing his dark side and villainy, Jesse is reckless and generally indifferent at the beginning of the series, but is revealed to have an increasingly stronger humane and compassionate side to him.

2.2 Jesse Pinkman

In the interests on this thesis, Jesse Pinkman can be presented from two points of view: as a character and as a language user. The “character” perspective encompasses Jesse’s personality traits, personal history, and background, and delineates Jesse’s narrative role and narrative functions in the story of *Breaking Bad*. The “language” point of view describes the characteristics of Jesse’s language use which are a significant aspect in the context of this thesis.

2.2.1 Jesse Pinkman as a character

Jesse Pinkman is a young Caucasian man in his mid-twenties. He is the secondary protagonist of *Breaking Bad*, and the person who introduces Walt to drug business. He can be seen as Walt's sidekick and a comedic relief in the series. At the beginning of the story, Jesse is a petty criminal involved in rather small scale drug business, making and selling methamphetamine under the pseudonym Captain Cook. By all accounts, Jesse is a "small fish" in New Mexico's drug world as he has only few and relatively minor connections to drug dealers above the "street level", but he is committed to his way of life.

For all intents and purposes, Jesse can be described as a deadbeat: his days revolve around recreational drug use and partying, and he has no particular future prospects, no long-term plans, and no intentions of rectifying his life. This apathy and general lack of ambition have been prevalent in Jesse's life for years as he was a poor and unmotivated student in high school. This is evidenced by Walt's disappointed and condescending remark upon learning of Jesse's criminal line of work in the first episode of the first season when the two meet for the first time after Jesse's high school days: "Honestly, I never expected you to amount to much, but... methamphetamine? I didn't picture that." (Season 1, episode 1)

Jesse does not seem to have many close people in his life. He has two friends nicknamed Badger and Skinny-Pete who are much like Jesse in that they are recreational drug users and lead opportunistic care-free lives as well. As for familial ties, Jesse has a bad relationship with his parents who do not accept his lifestyle and the choices he has made. They have kicked Jesse out, but allow him to live in his late aunt's house that they own. In addition to parents, there is a younger brother, Jake, in Jesse's immediate family. Jake is shown to be a successful and accomplished student of whom the parents are clearly proud. In a stark contrast with his brother, Jesse's parents find their eldest son a disappointment and an under-achiever who makes constantly bad decisions and is unable to get his life together.

As for Jesse's behaviour and conduct, he can be generally characterized as immature, irresponsible, and unintentionally comical. As someone leading a criminal lifestyle, Jesse seeks to establish himself as a self-confident and hardened rogue who is and will not be bossed around by others. He tends to pursue this image to such an exaggerated degree that it becomes unintentionally comical most of the time. An example of this can be found in the second episode of the first season, *Cat's in the Bag*. In the episode, Walt's wife Skyler has grown suspicious of Walt's uncharacteristic and weird behaviour. She gets hold of Jesse's number which she then calls, but Jesse does not pick up the phone. Instead, his answering machine message plays "Yo, yo, yo, one, four, eight, three-to-the-three-to-the-six-to-the-nine. Representing the ABQ! What up, bitch? Leave it at the tone." (*Cat's in the Bag*). Jesse essentially speaks the message like a rap music verse and draws out the "bitch" with a strong and brash emphasis. All in all, his tone can be described as boisterous and inappropriate. This is the kind of image Jesse wants to give of himself, but instead of it coming across as "cool", most people perceive it as silly and immature, and it is played for laughs in the series.

Glaring differences in conduct and personality between Walt and Jesse are an often-used source of humour in *Breaking Bad*, as displayed by the aforementioned answering machine scene. The absurdity and unexpectedness of a well-conducted and orderly man like Walt teaming up with an adolescent-minded and impulsive person like Jesse lies at the heart of the series' comedy, so it is important that the personality differences carry over to the Finnish subtitles.

Another very illustrative scene depicting Jesse's even childish conduct is in episode 8 of season 3, *I See You*. In the scene, Jesse is alone in the methamphetamine laboratory where he and Walt work for Gus Fring, a drug kingpin who employs them. Walt is at the hospital visiting his brother-in-law Hank who is seriously injured, and it is unclear when Walt will be able to come back to the laboratory and resume work. Consequently, Jesse has no other option but to wait since he cannot make methamphetamine without his partner. Lively and impulsive as he is, Jesse quickly grows bored at waiting and begins to kill time by playing with various pieces of the laboratory equipment, including riding a wheeled chair around and using an air-blowing device to inflate his protective

laboratory suit like a balloon, and proceeding to do a comical dance in the ballooned up suit. All this time Jesse is exhilarated and looks like a child in an amusement park. A happy and relaxed song plays in the background, further reinforcing the levity and the comedic aspects of the scene and Jesse's behaviour.

However, there is a more decent and responsible side to Jesse. Deep down he is a caring and innocent-hearted person capable of maintaining serious romantic relationships, two of which he invests himself in during the series. Jesse is also shown to be protective of children on many occasions. While visiting his parents during his attempts to rebuild trust between them and himself, Jesse finds out that his younger brother Jake has taken up the habit of smoking cannabis every now and then. When the parents find a cannabis cigarette in the house – which they do not know is actually Jake's – they promptly accuse Jesse of bringing drugs in their home, but instead of telling them that the cannabis is actually his brother's, Jesse is eager to take the blame on himself in order to save his brother from trouble, even though it means that his parents will now despise him even more. This is a strong display of Jesse's underlying unselfishness and instinct to act protectively of children, which is shown several times throughout the series.

Jesse is the secondary main character (deuteragonist) in *Breaking Bad*, and can be argued to fulfill the role of Walt's sidekick. As such, Jesse functions as a contrastive character to Walt and as a comedic relief in the series, often in a clear contrast with the other characters. Even though Walt is the protagonist of the series and the story revolves around his metamorphosis, Jesse's journey is equally important and intertwined with Walt's, and essential to the plot. Notably, Jesse undergoes a drastic change as a person as well, but a reverse one compared to Walt. As for Jesse's contrastive role, the differences between Walt and Jesse are used to both create comedy and to highlight the character's changing personalities through juxtaposition, the latter of which will be discussed first.

Jesse is used to mirror Walt's character arc in order to highlight Walt's transformation. The changes that Walt goes through are made more striking and prominent by contrasting them with Jesse's development, as the two characters drift in opposing

directions. Whereas Walt starts out as a kind, timid and reasonable man who slowly turns into a ruthless and selfish egomaniac, Jesse on the other hand starts out as a selfish and opportunistic person who finds an unselfish and compassionate side in himself, and ends up being burdened by all the harrowing things he has seen and done; whereas Jesse develops a conscience, Walt discards his. The two developing in opposing directions is used to narratively enhance Walt's characterization as a man who undergoes a drastic change in personality. With Jesse's character arc included for comparison, Walt's transformation is made more distinct: Walt's increasingly selfish and greedy choices often affect Jesse, so Walt's changes are evident in his partner. This narrative function of Jesse as a contrastive character works as a strong storytelling element.

One notable example of Jesse functioning as contrast to Walt's development is in episode 9 of season 5 (*Blood Money*), where Jesse is so guilt-stricken and emotionally disturbed by one of their associates having shot dead a child who had accidentally witnessed them stealing valuable chemicals from a freight train that Jesse wants to anonymously donate half of his drug earnings – two and a half million dollars – to the dead child's parents (and the second half to the granddaughter of Mike Ehrmantraut, their long-time associate whom Walt recently killed). Walt, however, has grown so desensitized to extreme solutions and indifferent to collateral damage at this point that he finds Jesse's guilt-driven bout of charity senseless. Walt manages to convince Jesse to discard his plan and keep his hard earned money, but later Jesse goes on a drive through the suburbs at night and begins tossing money out of the car windows, as his conscience does not allow him to keep his earnings which he thinks are blood money. These scenes illustrate how far Walt has gone in terms of losing his morals, and how he does not feel guilty of the damage he has caused both directly and indirectly: Walt's lack of regret and guilt are magnified via Jesse's overwhelming sense of guilt.

The second narrative function of Jesse in *Breaking Bad* is his role as the series' major comedic relief. A great deal of humour is derived from the absurdity and unordinary nature of a 50-year-old high school teacher teaming up with his former 25-year-old problem student to manufacture and sell methamphetamine, an arrangement that entails many challenges between the two. The challenges often arise from juxtaposing Walt

and Jesse's personalities in a way that bring about a disagreement or some other interpersonal collision (sometimes escalating into a physical fight) between them. Walt and Jesse make rather incompatible co-workers as Walt is meticulous, professional and systematic in his approach to making methamphetamine, and Jesse finds his partner's working methods insufferably rigid and foreign. The teacher-student dynamic from their past resurfaces, but the context of methamphetamine trade makes it a source of comedy.

An example of this teacher-student dynamic is in episode one of season one (*Pilot*). Walt has stolen necessary chemistry equipment from the high school he teaches. After arriving at Jesse's house with the vast selection of equipment, he begins to showcase various chemistry flasks and lecture on them with excitement. Unimpressed, Jesse sips beer indifferently, and a comedic music plays in the background. Jesse finds most of the equipment redundant for making methamphetamine. He gives Walt a sideways glance, points at a certain flask and says that "I cook in one of those. The big one", implying that he does not see any need for all the different flasks Walter has brought. The following conversation ensues:

(1) Walt: "One of these? No, this is a volumetric flask. You wouldn't cook in one of these."

Jesse: "Um yeah, I do."

Walt: "No, you don't. The volumetric flask is for general mixing and titration. You wouldn't apply heat to a volumetric flask! That's what a boiling flask is for. Did you learn nothing from my chemistry class?"

Jesse: "No. You flunked me, remember?"

Walt: "No wonder."

Jesse: "Prick."

(Season 1, Episode 1: *Pilot*)

Walt and Jesse then proceed to quarrel about the quality of Jesse's methamphetamine and whether they will put Jesse's trademark, chili powder, in their product. Then Jesse finds a laboratory apron among the equipment, further increasing his exasperation with

Walt's over-preparedness and insistence on interfering with Jesse's established working methods that he deems fully sufficient himself.

(2)

Jesse: "What the hell is this?"

Walt: "Lab safety equipment. We're also gonna have an emergency eye wash station. These chemicals and their fumes are toxic. In case you didn't know that."

Jesse: "Well you can dress up like a faggot if you want, but not me."

(Season 1, Episode 1: *Pilot*)

The conversation is characterized by both Walt and Jesse acting exasperated and frustrated at each other: Walt for still having to educate Jesse on proper laboratory code and equipment use – things that Walt takes for granted – and Jesse for Walt insisting on creating a professional and rigid workplace rules, and making things much more complicated than Jesse is willing to accept. It is a matter of two different worlds colliding.

In addition to Walt and Jesse's personalities playing off of each other, comedy is derived from Jesse's individual behaviour and language use. A good example of this is the laboratory scene described earlier: while waiting for Walt at the laboratory, boredom overwhelms Jesse and he begins to kill time by playing with the laboratory equipment. The ensuing scene is comical, and that effect is further increased when Jesse is caught in the act by a stern henchman tasked with supervising Walt and Jesse's work. The henchman clearly did not expect to see Jesse fooling around like a bored child.

Another example of a scene where Jesse works as a comedic relief is in episode 6 of season 2 (*Peekaboo*). In the episode, Jesse finds the house of drug addicts who have stolen his methamphetamine intended for sale. Jesse is hesitant and scared of storming in the addicts' house though, as he expects a physical confrontation. Armed with a gun, he stands next to the house's front door, tries to calm himself down, and nervously talks

to himself in an attempt to find the right combination of words for threatening and intimidating the addicts he is scared of confronting.

(3)

Jesse: “Where’s my money, bitch? Where’s my money... where’s my... where’s my... money, bitch, huh? Bitch. Where’s my money, bitch? Oh that’s good. Where’s my money, where’s my money, bitch. Bitch, where is my money?”

(Season 2, episode 6 *Peekaboo*)

After settling on the right formulation of words for demanding the money back, Jesse moves on to practicing the rest of the confrontation with the addicts as he pictures it happening. He nervously whispers and mumbles an array of threats by himself, including lines like “I’ll bury you” and “I’m crazy, muchos loco!” until he is interrupted by a postwoman delivering mail to the addicts’ house. Startled, Jesse quickly hides the gun behind his back.

(4)

Postwoman: “Good morning!”

Jesse: “Good morning.”

Postwoman: “Honey, you’re blocking the mailbox.”

Jesse: “Uh, yes, sorry. Sorry.”

Postwoman: “It’s gonna be a nice day, huh?”

Jesse: “Oh yeah, yeah. High seventies.”

Postwoman: “You have a great day!”

Jesse: “Right on, you too!”

(Season 2, episode 6 *Peekaboo*)

The comedy here is derived from three elements. The first one is the comical overabundance and repetition of “bitch” which is already established as Jesse’s trademark by this point. The second element of humour is found in the fact that Jesse tries to act tough, which does not come naturally to him and even when he tries his best,

he is not a believable in the enforcer role at all. He is very nervous and insecure about his daunting task. Lastly, the unsuspecting postwoman showing up at the house unexpectedly and cheerfully chatting with Jesse completely ruins Jesse's desperate preparation, and comically shows how much of a fish out of water he is in a situation like this.

2.2.2 Jesse Pinkman as a language user

Jesse's speech is characterized by clumsiness and simplicity. He is shown to stumble and struggle with well-articulated expression, and when required to change his register to a more formal one, his delivery is forced and unnatural. Jesse's normal register consists extensively of slang and interjections such as "bitch" and "yo". Jesse's speech strongly reflects his background, giving hints of naivety and low level of formal education, which are indirect ways of characterization as they rely on the audience's interpretation of the cues given (Cunico 2009: 103).

An example of Jesse's immature register is when he describes the appearance of opossums as "totally freaky alien rats" (Season 3, episode 10: *Fly*), and calls a barn simply a "cow house" (Season 1, episode 1: *Pilot*), the word "barn" apparently not being part of his active vocabulary. Jesse's lack of knowledge of terms and more sophisticated expressions is furthermore evident in episode *Kafkaesque* in season 3, episode 9 where Jesse is attending a Narcotics Anonymous support group meeting and he is asked to share with the other attendees what is presently going on in his life. Jesse naturally cannot tell the truth of him working for a local drug kingpin and producing methamphetamine in a secret underground laboratory, so he changes the details of his daily life but complains honestly about his employer, co-workers and working conditions.

(5)

Jesse: "My boss is a dick. The owner's a super dick. I'm not worthy to meet him but I guess everybody's scared of the dude. The place's full of dead-eyed douchebags, the hours suck, and nobody knows what's going on, so..."

Group leader: “Sounds kind of Kafkaesque”.

Jesse: “Yeah. Totally Kafkaesque.”

(Season 3, episode 9: *Kafkaesque*)

What is notable here is Jesse’s puzzled response which is evident in the look on Jesse’s face and in the tone of his voice. They give away that he is not familiar with the word “Kafkaesque” and does not understand the reference, yet he tries his best to give the impression that he knows what the group leader meant, and goes along with the comment. This is an implication of Jesse not being a learned person. In addition to not mastering sophisticated vocabulary, Jesse sometimes rambles on in a naïve fashion. In episode 10 of season 3, *Fly*, Jesse tells Walt about an opossum that used to live under his aunt’s house.

(6)

Jesse: “An opossum. A big, freaky-looking bitch. Hey, since when did they change it to ‘opossum’? What’s up with that? I mean, when I was coming up, it was just – it was just ‘possum’. You know, ‘opossum’ makes it sound like he’s Irish or something. Why they’ve gotta go changing everything? Whatever, it’s just big rats. Giant pink-tailed rats with their pink rat faces, totally freaky alien rats.”

(Season 3, episode 10: *Fly*)

This rather naïve and comical rumination on the naming conventions of opossums and Jesse’s description of the animal’s appearance are highly characteristic of Jesse’s register. The pointless and colloquial rambling lends Jesse an air of levity and even a sense of innocence, as his monologue is rather close to something that a young child would probably think out loud. This manner of speech is also used, again, to differentiate between Walt and Jesse’s conduct. Walt quickly grows frustrated at Jesse’s rambling story and impatiently urges him to cut to the chase.

(7)

Walt: “Is there a discernible point to this story? A point that you will be arriving at in the near future?”

Jesse: “It was a total bitch to get out. It took forever.”

(Season 3, episode 10: *Fly*)

Even when interrupting Jesse out of frustration, Walt's speech is eloquently phrased, especially in comparison with how Jesse speaks and how he manages to include "bitch" even in this short response. This highlights the characters' different registers and personalities. On the basis of these examples, the status of the "bitch" refrain as a vehicle of characterization is proven further: the recurrence of the word encompasses and represents the whole of Jesse as a speaker and language user, and creates contrast between the characters. Thus "bitch" is a constant tie or quick reference to Jesse's register, personality and background.

2.3 The role of "bitch" in *Breaking Bad*

"Bitch" is Jesse's commonly used refrain in *Breaking Bad*. There are 62 episodes in the series, and Jesse says "bitch" in most of them at least once. Jesse has essentially monopolized the word; other characters say "bitch" very rarely in *Breaking Bad*. It can be argued that this is most likely intentional on the writers' part, as it is rather evident that they sought to give Jesse a catchphrase or a trademark utterance. On these grounds it can be said that "bitch" is distinctively a part of Jesse Pinkman's character and even a part of his characterization, elevating the word above a mere obscenity status in Jesse's speech and in the series. "Bitch", when uttered by Jesse specifically, is used as a means of characterization and humour. These usages often overlap. Interestingly, the humour aspect of "bitch" operates on more than one level. *Breaking Bad* often derives humour from Jesse saying "bitch" in inappropriate situations and contexts, but the very fact that Jesse says "bitch" on a regular basis becomes a running joke itself in the series. However, it is a different source of humour in that it is one noted only by the audience, and never by the fictional characters interacting with Jesse. All these usages grant "bitch" a special status in Jesse's dialogue, and a constituent of his characterization.

Literary Devices defines characterization as a narrative device used for highlighting details of fictional characters (Literary Devices 2019). Characterization can be classified into indirect and direct means, the former of which relies on the audience's ability to

interpret characterization cues themselves (Cunico 2009: 103); this requires the audience to observe characters' behaviour and speech among other things (Literary Devices 2019). Hence "bitch" is a distinct utterance and a recurring element in Jesse's speech, it can be concluded that "bitch" is a part of Jesse's characterization. What this means, then, is that "bitch" is an essential part of the dialogue as a piece of characterization. With this observation, not only the significance of "bitch" becomes more evident, but also its challenging nature.

On one hand, if the "bitch" refrain is an important aspect of characterization in *Breaking Bad*, omitting it even occasionally from subtitles would do a disservice to an essential part of the character. Cunico (2009: 100) writes that even slight tonal shifts in translated linguistic items, such as character names, can meaningfully change the impression that the audience or readers get. This, arguably, extends to catchphrases and often repeated utterances as well, since what characters say undoubtedly impact the impression they give of themselves.

Furthermore, translating "bitch" inconsistently would bring about similarly weakened characterization in the target text. Then, on the other hand, translating the "bitch" consistently, or in other words, using it the same way in the subtitles as it is used in the original dialogue would violate a set of principles associated with high quality subtitling. Even though the translational issues with the "bitch" as a vehicle of characterization are somewhat more multi-layered than the traditional question of equivalence in translation, Bell puts it concisely: if a translator chooses the literal word-for-word approach, he is criticized for the "ugliness" of a "faithful" translation; and choosing the non-literal meaning-for-meaning approach entails criticism of the "inaccuracy" of a "beautiful" translation – either way, the translator cannot win (Bell 1993: 7).

Firstly, "bitch" is a swear word. According to Cintas and Remael, swearwords – along with taboo words and interjections – are often toned down in subtitles or omitted altogether if spatial restrictions call for it (Díaz Cintas 2007: 195). Secondly, "bitch" functions differently in the English language than in Finnish, and having to transfer

highly colloquial speech (original dialogue) into highly condensed text (Finnish subtitles) only adds layers of complexity on an already challenging translational issue. “Bitch” has a wide variety of functions and tones in English. Its direct conventional equivalent in Finnish is “narttu”, meaning both a female canine and an ill-tempered or unpleasant female person (Suuri englanti–suomi-sanakirja 2005: 124).

3 CHARACTERIZATION AND AUDIOVISUAL TRANSLATION

In this chapter, I will introduce and define the central concepts, terms and theories discussed in this thesis. I will begin by explaining what characterization means and what kind of methods are used to produce characterization. Then I will define “bitch” in linguistic terms and discuss translation of slang and informal speech. Next I will introduce audiovisual translation and subtitling, and elaborate on the field’s distinctive traits and technical restrictions which have an effect on the translation of “bitch” in *Breaking Bad*.

3.1 Characterization

In general terms, characterization in fiction can be understood as an intentional description, representation or depiction of an agent (a character) in the narrative (Livingston 1996: 149–150). Defining characterization comprehensively is not a straightforward task, though. Livingston (1996: 151) suggests a broader definition, one which posits that any kind of representation that intentionally assigns properties to an agent ought to count as characterization. However, this definition has the downside of perhaps being too broad: according to this approach, even the most trivial of descriptions involving agents are to be interpreted as characterization. Admittedly, such a broad approach may not be satisfactory for the purpose of formulating a practical and clear definition.

In order to give characterization a more exact definition, Livingston, then, suggests a narrower alternative. He proposes that only descriptions which directly aim at attributing distinctive features to an agent ought to be regarded as characterization (Livingston 1996: 151). Livingston (1996: 151) notes, however, that such a definition excludes for example statements about characters’ whereabouts and descriptions of their actions. This emphasis on the author’s intentionality may be too exclusive to work as a comprehensive definition.

While Livingston stresses the author's role and intentionality in defining characterization, Cunico (2009: 102) proposes a more audience-driven approach: characterization is a particular impression of a character or the audience's comprehension of a character attained with the aid of the audience's cognitive abilities and inferential mechanisms that they have already developed for making sense of real people. In this view, characterization can perhaps be seen as interplay between the author and the audience whose contributions play a crucial part in producing characterization. In conclusion, characterization can be understood as the formation of a particular impression about a character in the audience's mind, and also as the author's more or less intentional depictions and representations of a character. These perspectives overlap in their utilization of the audience's cognition and inference. When the author has the audience make sense of fictional characters in fictional settings the same way they naturally make sense of real people in real settings, the resulting effect is characterization. Next I will discuss the means of characterization.

Characterization arises from cues and textual factors on the author's part. These means can be classified into explicit and implicit categories (Cunico 2009: 102). Explicit characterization employs more direct means of building a profile or image of a character (Literary Devices 2019). Explicit characterization cues make use of the character in question, other characters, or the narrator to paint a picture of the character (Literary Devices 2019). It can be viewed as a descriptive method in contrast with the interpretative nature of implicit characterization which indeed relies on the audience's interpretation and inference (Cunico 2009: 103). The audience has to observe the character's behaviour, speech, appearance, the responses of the other characters, and other more subtle and indirect elements in order to draw conclusions about the character (Literary Devices 2019). Next I will look into what factors affect the reader's perception of characters, and what are the precise constituents of characterization.

The study of characterization and the nature of characters can be approached from a humanizing or Structuralist approach, terms used by Cunico (2009: 101). The humanizing approach, as the name implies, constructs a picture of a character as a complete human being who has existence outside and beyond the scope of the text

(Cunico 2009: 101). In this view, the text only offers a temporary window through which the reader may observe the character for the duration that the author has allowed for.

One can compare the outlook of the humanizing approach to meeting a stranger: we do construct our own characterizations of new acquaintances that are present in our lives only for a brief moment, but what we learn of them during, say, an hour or two, does not typically encapsulate the entirety of their character. The humanizing approach takes a similar stance on studying characterization in fiction: we merely pass by the characters that the author introduces to us, and a lot of information is left unrevealed. Consequently, the character's motivations for their actions can be speculated on despite the absence of textual evidence, since the humanizing approach posits that characters are not defined exhaustively by the text and information that is made available to the reader (Cunico 2009: 101).

On the other hand, the Structuralist approach – which can also be described as a “de-humanizing” approach in contrast with the previously discussed perspective – views characters strictly in terms of their function, actions, and contribution to plot development (Cunico 2009: 101). A character is thus seen more as an element arising from and bound by the text, and to a lesser extent as an independent personality whom the author has invited to wander into the plot. Or, as Cunico puts it, the potential complexity of a notion of character is reduced and dissolved into textuality (Cunico 2009: 101), and there are no motivations, traits or existence beyond the cues made available to the reader.

Cunico notes that a combination of the humanizing and Structuralist approach has been favoured recently (Cunico 2009: 101). While making use of textual analysis, this mixed approach also factors in the cognitive resources that readers use for making sense of real people (Cunico 2009: 101). This combination posits that instead of shedding or suspending their accumulated knowledge and experiences of the world, readers employ these cognitive assets in interpreting texts. To summarize, neither the reader's cognitive resources nor “de-humanizing” textual analysis ought to be disregarded in the study of

literary characterization. The reader's interpretations arise from the interplay between the reader's schemata (structured knowledge of events, situations and relations) and the characterization cues presented in the text (Cunico 2009: 101).

It can be thus argued that characterization is dependent on the audience and is carried out by the audience as much as by the author, since characterization is an interpretative action on the viewer's or reader's part (Cunico 2009: 102). When someone reads a text or watches a film, they tend to imagine and expect the fictional setting to reflect our real world, and the fictional characters to behave in a way that reflects the behaviour of real people, which we have experience of (Cunico 2009: 102). In other words, characterization relies on the audience's real life experiences and cognitive resources. Cunico posits that readers draw on their own cognition and inference, which are developed for real life people, to make sense of fictional characters (2009: 102). This is a combination of textual and cognitive factors that formulate a particular impression or image of a character in the reader's mind (Cunico 2009: 102).

We all have some semblance of cognitive knowledge that the author of the fictional work "activates" with textual cues they put into the story. Those cues allow us to construct the precise character that the author has envisioned (Cunico 2009: 102). Munday (2012: 96) raises the term "markedness" which he uses to describe choices that stand out as unusual and may be picked up by the audience. Díaz Cintas and Remael discuss this topic as well, defining marked speech broadly as speech with non-standard or non-neutral language features; furthermore, they posit that speech can be marked by style or register, and marked speech includes taboo words, swear words, interjections and exclamations (Díaz Cintas & Remael 2007: 187).

Applying these definitions, the "bitch" refrain is clearly an item of marked speech, which arguably requires a more thoughtful approach from the translator's part: markedness implies some level of specialty and there is often a reason for markedness. Munday suggests that the key to a good translation of a marked item is finding the motivation behind the markedness (Munday 2012: 96). So, the translator of *Breaking Bad* ought to identify the markedness of the recurring "bitches" and find a way of

translating them so that the original reason or motivation behind the markedness is not lost. Markedness along with the other defining features of “bitch” will be discussed in greater detail next.

3.2 Definition and categorization of “bitch”

Before markedness can be discussed further, it is necessary to first establish what the English word “bitch” means. *Oxford Learner’s Dictionary* (2019) lists four meanings and uses for “bitch” as a noun:

- (1) A female dog (Example: “a greyhound bitch”)
- (2) An offensive way of referring to a woman, especially an unpleasant one; slang, disapproving (Examples: “You stupid little bitch!”, “She can be a real bitch”)
- (3) A thing that causes problems or difficulties; slang (Example: “Life’s a bitch”)
- (4) An informal complaint about somebody/something or a conversation in which you complain about them (Example: “We’ve been having a bitch about our boss”)

(Oxford Learner’s Dictionaries 2019)

As per these definitions, “bitch” can be classified as an informal word, a slang word, and a swear word, and Merriam-Webster online English dictionary corroborates this by giving basically similar definitions and usages (Merriam-Webster 2019). A swear word is, then, defined by Merriam-Webster as a “profane or obscene oath or word” (Merriam-Webster 2019).

“Bitch” translates literally into Finnish as “narttu” and has basically the same meanings and uses as “bitch”, namely referring to a female dog and functioning as a derogatory and antagonizing slur for a woman (Suuri englanti–suomi-sanakirja 2005: 124). In addition, for the English slang expression “she can be a real bitch” is given a practically literal Finnish translation “hän osaa olla varsinainen narttu” (“she can be a veritable

bitch”) (Suuri englanti–suomi-sanakirja 2005: 124). “Bitch” is also given the translations “paska”, “paskamainen” and “helvetin hankala”, whose literal back translations are “shit”, “shitty” and “difficult or cumbersome”, respectively (Suuri englanti–suomi -sanakirja 2005: 124). The example sentence “life’s a bitch, isn’t it?” is translated as “elämä on paskaa, eikö totta?” which translates literally as “life is shit, isn’t it true?” (Suuri englanti–suomi-sanakirja 2005: 124) Furthermore, the online dictionary Sanakirja.org expands these translations and gives “bitch” additional Finnish equivalents “akka” (“hag”, a derogatory word for an old woman), “ämmä” (a derogatory word for a female), “kusipää” (“piss head”, roughly the same as “shit head”), “lutka” (“slut”), and “muija” (a derogatory word for a female) (Sanakirja.org 2019)

These examples make it already clear that the usage of “bitch” and “narttu” begin to diverge in their respective languages fast. The literal Finnish translation “narttu” cannot be used to mean unpleasant or cumbersome circumstances the way that “bitch” can; and, in addition, “bitch” functions as a noun in such a case, whereas the Finnish translation has to use adjectives to communicate the same meaning. “Narttu”, “ämmä”, “akka” and other Finnish noun equivalents can be turned into adjectives though – “narttumainen”, “ämmämäinen” and “akkamainen” (“bitchy”) – but they do not mean the same as “bitch” does as an adjective. The aforementioned adjectives strictly describe behaviour or actions in a negative and derogatory sense. Their extent of usage in the Finnish language is thus markedly narrower than the usage of “bitch” in English. Moreover, “bitch” can and is used immutably in the original lines of Jesse Pinkman in *Breaking Bad*, which is a case of form contributing to the sense. Carrying that immutability (form) over to the Finnish subtitles is a challenging task; carrying over the sense is certainly feasible, but the immutability of the form seems near impossible to retain.

3.2.1 Marked speech and register

Speech can be marked by style or register, and markedness can represent both socially and geographically defined groups (Díaz Cintas & Remael 2007: 187). Díaz Cintas and Remael cite Wales’s definition of style as a manner of expression and variation in

language use (Díaz Cintas & Remael 2007: 187), and add that style arises from the choice of words, grammatical structures, and literary devices; they also note that in an ideal situation, the subtitler should respect the way characters speak, and not only focus on the mere content of their utterances (Díaz Cintas & Remael 2007: 187).

As for the definition of register, Díaz Cintas & Remael offer several definitions. One of them posits that register can be understood as systematic variation of language in particular contexts such as advertising, legal language, or sports commentary. Moreover, register is a variety of language use determined by topic, subject matter or activity such as mathematics or the field of medicine. Another definition posits that a register is linguistic variation arising more from the “use” than the “user”, meaning that the situation and communicative context have a significant role in what is said and how it is said. (Díaz Cintas & Remael 2007: 189) All in all, register can be viewed as context or usage oriented linguistic variation.

The concept of markedness or marked speech is pertinent to the frequent use of “bitch” in *Breaking Bad*. Markedness means distinct choices or patterns of choices that stand out as unusual or otherwise prominent in the text, and potentially gain the reader’s attention (Munday 2012: 96). These unusual or otherwise prominent linguistic items include non-standard and non-neutral words and expressions, taboo words, swearwords, interjections and exclamations (Díaz Cintas & Remael 2007: 187). In cases like this, it is important to try and discern the motivation and intent behind markedness. Arguably, “bitch” as a recurring word is a clear pattern of choice on both Jesse and the show’s writers’ part, and it is a swearword and an exclamations, which renders “bitch” unanimously as marked speech. Because of this, “bitch” calls for translation strategies that acknowledge its special status.

3.2.2 Slang

This brings the discussion to the translatability of “bitch”. Since the word has already been established as a slang word, the question of “what is slang?” needs to be answered

first. Before the issue of translatability can be tackled, slang as a concept must be first defined and the properties associated with it mapped out.

In a social and functional sense, slang is a marker of group identity (Mattiello 2009: 68). Furthermore, in a more linguistic sense, slang is defined as a type of language that consists of words and phrases which are very informal, more typical of speech than writing, and often used in a restricted context or among a certain group of people (Oxford Living Dictionaries 2019). Interestingly, despite the straightforwardness and apparent simplicity of the aforementioned definition, Mattiello notes that slang is notoriously difficult to define (Mattiello 2009: 67). Traits such as high level of informality, unconventional vocabulary, colourfulness, playfulness and humour are, however, widely accepted features of slang along with the aim of establishing a certain social identity for the speaker and/or making a strong impression on the conversational partner or other hearer (Mattiello 2009: 67). As per the *Oxford English Dictionary*, slang is defined as a highly colloquial subset of language that is considered below the level of standard educated speech (Mattiello 2009: 68).

Certain sociolinguistic properties are generally ascribed to slang. They are speaker-oriented properties, hearer-oriented properties, and intrinsic properties, and they are useful as descriptive criteria against which the level of success of slang translation can be measured (Mattiello 2009: 68). I will first present the properties and criteria in a table, and then proceed to elaborate on them. It is noteworthy, though, that not all of the descriptive criteria are met in Jesse Pinkman's usage of "bitch", or they are not particularly prevalent. Moreover, many of the criteria are mutually exclusive, so a certain slang expression is not even expected to meet all of them (Mattiello 2009: 74). Because of this and the limited scope of the thesis, only select property subsets and criteria will be covered in greater detail in the next section.

Table 2. Descriptive criteria of the slang variety (Mattiello 2009: 74)

Speaker-oriented properties:	Hearer-oriented properties:	Intrinsic properties:
Group-restriction	Playfulness	Extra-grammatical morphology
Informality	Freshness/novelty	Semantic indeterminacy
Time-restriction	Faddishness	
Subject-restriction	Humour	
Obscenity/vulgarity	Strong impression	
Unconventionality	Offensiveness	
Localism	Colourfulness	
Secrecy/privacy	Musicality	
	Aggressiveness	

The speaker-oriented slang properties (the first column on the left, see Table 2.) communicate that the speaker is a part of a certain distinct social group; in this light, it can be argued that slang words and expressions are used deliberately to display the speaker's social standing (Mattiello 2009: 68). Of the speaker-oriented slang properties, "informality", "obscenity", and "vulgarity" are criteria that Jesse's use of "bitch" predominantly meets, and therefore the focus of this section and subsequently the analysis in chapter four.

Speaker-oriented slang properties are used as a social adhesive, as a means of keeping the members of the social group together and create a distinct sense of "us" in contrast with people who are not part of the group; at the same time, the speaker-oriented properties are also used a means of keeping those outsiders out (Mattiello 2009: 68). This is what "group-restriction", a widely acknowledged property of slang, stands for. The second criterion in the left-hand column, "informality", is a notably fundamental property of slang and is often used to steer away from seriousness or formality and shift to a more familiar and less inhibited tone (Mattiello 2009: 69). As for Jesse Pinkman,

his colloquial speech and slang usage are distinctive characterization cues that set him apart from the majority of the other characters, perhaps most importantly from Walter.

“Time-restriction”, refers to how slang changes over time and is inevitably superseded by new vocabulary and new patterns of speech. (Mattiello 2009: 69). It is, however, not significant from the point of view of this thesis. On the other hand, the fourth property, “subject-restriction”, refers to how slang often works as special or specialized vocabulary of a certain profession, occupation or activity in the society (Mattiello 2009: 69), and is thus meaningful for studying the translation of “bitch”. In *Breaking Bad*, Jesse’s social group is essentially made up of drug addicts and petty criminals who have their own vocabulary and expressions.

“Obscenity” and “vulgarity” are relevant properties to “bitch”. They refer to the previously mentioned feature of slang being commonly regarded as being below educated language standards; taboo words, usually related to sex, religion and bodily functions, are considered offensive in the society (Mattiello 2009: 69), and “bitch” certainly falls into this category.

“Unconventionality” refers to the intention of breaking linguistic conventions (Mattiello 2009: 69–70), but it is not particularly pertinent to the topic at hand. In a similar vein, “Localism” is not of much importance here. It refers to how slang varies between locations and from dialect to another (Mattiello 2009: 70). Such location-bound implications are not present in Jesse’s use of “bitch”. “Secrecy” and “privacy” as properties arise from the speaker’s needs to communicate cryptically and exclusively, and are characteristic of counter-culture groups like drug addicts (Mattiello 2009: 70). Such slang use is used heavily throughout *Breaking Bad* as the show prominently features drug addicts and people involved in drug business, but these properties do not extend to “bitch”, and therefore fall outside the focus of this thesis.

The aim of hearer-oriented slang properties is to produce a particular effect on the listener (Mattiello 2009: 70). Of these properties, “strong impression”, “offensiveness”, “aggressiveness”, and to some extent “colourfulness” are relevant to “bitch” as a slang

word. The rest are not very pertinent to the thesis, but I will introduce them briefly. For the sake of clarity, I will explain the properties in the order they are given in the table, making exceptions when convenient and conducive to the coherence of the section.

“Playfulness” is a property commonly ascribed to slang, and even considered one the major purposes behind slang usage: slang speakers often make an effort to appear amusing and entertaining through creative deviation from linguistic standards (Mattiello 2009: 70). Despite this, and the fact that humour is a significant element of the “bitch” in *Breaking Bad*, the aforementioned criterion does not fall within the in-character use of “bitch”, since a deliberate intent to amuse is not among Jesse’s motivations for his frequent use of the word. However, it is apparent that playfulness is the intended characterization on the writer’s part, which does fall within the scope of the study. For this same reason, the particular “humour” property presented in the previous table is largely excluded from scrutiny in this thesis.

By the same token, “freshness”, “novelty” and “faddishness” are not pertinent to “bitch”. The first two are both defined as “linguistic exuberance” and rapid changes in the slang’s lexicon which attract the hearer (Mattiello 2009: 71). “Faddishness” means strangeness and even extraordinariness of slang expressions (Mattiello 2009: 71), which “bitch” does not really represent. The “humour” (or irony) property – which has already been deemed largely omittable here – is usually found in slang in the form of comical exaggeration, implications or punning (Mattiello 2009: 71). Humour is a meaningful function that has been written into the routine use of “bitch” in *Breaking Bad*, but the “playfulness” property covers it when discussing the characterization intended by the writer; it is separate from characterization intended by the character himself.

The “strong impression” property means the deliberate intention of slang use to impress or shock the hearer to the point of being startling, arresting or striking (Mattiello 2009: 71). Indeed, since “bitch” is a swear word and it is used as an insult, shocking or startling the conversational partner is a relevant criterion for determining how well the nature and intention of slang use in Jesse’s speech has been transferred into Finnish subtitles. “Strong impression” is closely related to “offensiveness” which inherently

encompasses only derogatory words such as taboo and swear words, and slang is often rife with them (Mattiello 2009: 71–72). Since “bitch” matches this description, the “offensiveness” property is relevant for this study. From “strong impression” and “offensiveness” it is logical to move on to “aggressiveness” next. This property of slang is used to convey vicious and hostile verbal aggression, even malice (Mattiello 2009: 72).

Lastly, “colourfulness” and “musicality” are means of making one’s speech more vivid, varied and interesting (Mattiello 2009: 72). One notable tendency of slang is to aspire for colourfulness and the pure joy of communication (Mattiello 2009: 72). These properties are somewhat related to the use of “bitch”, and the “colourfulness” criterion will be considered in the discussion. Finally, the intrinsic properties of slang include “extra-grammatical morphology” and “semantic indeterminacy”, which mean the enrichment of language with neologisms and new semantic interpretations of existing words, respectively. These criteria do not match the use of “bitch” in Jesse’s speech, so they, too, will be excluded from the analysis.

Now, the criteria for recognizing slang and its intended effects are identified. When a translator begins to work on a source text including slang speech, the first step is to see whether the alleged slang meets some of the previously introduced criteria. As said earlier, many of the criteria contradict one another and all of them are thus not expected to be met. (Mattiello 2009: 74) The translator should aim to retain the original meaning of the slang expression he or she attempts to translate. This necessitates finding the most equivalent expression in the target language. The degree of equivalence can be determined with the help of the descriptive criteria previously listed. (Mattiello 2009: 74)

3.3 Audiovisual translation and subtitling

Audiovisual translation is a form of translation that combines and deals with auditory and visual elements. Munday (2012: 9) defines interlingual translation (translation from one language to another) as “interpretation of verbal signs by means of some other

language”. Díaz Cintas & Remael characterize subtitling, a variety of audiovisual translation, as a translation practice that uses written text, generally placed on the lower part of the screen, to present the original dialogue of the speakers, discursive elements in the image, and the information contained on the soundtrack (Díaz Cintas & Remael 2007: 8).

Furthermore, Díaz Cintas & Remael state that all subtitled programmes are comprised of three primary elements: the spoken word, the image, and the subtitles (Díaz Cintas & Remael 2007: 9). For a more concise definition, British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) explains subtitles as a “textual representation of dialogue and other important audio” (BBC Academy 2019). Even though the BBC guidelines mostly discuss subtitling in the context of subtitling for viewers with hearing impairment because of English-speaking countries’ rather low need of interlingual subtitling, the definition arguably applies to subtitling for people with no hearing impairment as well.

There are several forms or modes of audiovisual language transfer, but a general distinction is made between subtitling and dubbing, which can be further divided into sub-categories such as surtitles and voiceover (Linde & Kay 1999: 1). This thesis is concerned with subtitling, as it is the mode of language transfer used in the case of bringing *Breaking Bad* to the Finnish audiences, and thus only subtitling will be discussed.

3.3.1 Subtitling principles and guidelines

A number of lists carving out subtitling principles and rules of thumb have been laid out by different scholars and authors. Díaz Cintas & Remael summarize subtitling ideals concisely into three bits: subtitles must be synchronized with the image and dialogue, correspond semantically to the source language dialogue in an adequate manner, and be displayed on screen long enough for the audience to be able to read them comfortably (Díaz Cintas & Remael 2007: 9).

As for a more detailed account on what requirements subtitles ought to meet, one such list is given by Ivarsson and Carroll (1998: 157–158) in their book *Subtitling*, titled “Code of Good Subtitling Practice”. The list is comprised of 25 entries, but not all of them are pertinent to the topic at hand. Therefore I will select only the relevant ones. (My numbering.)

- (1) Translation quality must be high with due consideration of all idiomatic and cultural nuances.
- (2) Where compression of dialogue is necessary, the results must be coherent.
- (3) The language register must be appropriate and correspond with the spoken word.
- (4) There must be a close correlation between film dialogue and subtitle content; source language and target language should be synchronised as far as possible.
- (5) There must be a close correlation between film dialogue and the presence of subtitles.

(Ivarsson & Carroll 1998: 157–158)

Munday notes that while these sort of rules oversimplify the nature of language in how they attempt to “impose a prescriptive written format on the subtitles”, they may be valuable from a practical perspective and at establishing professional standards (2012: 274). Munday also presents another take on defining subtitling directions by citing a summary of “subtitling guidelines” given by Díaz Cintas & Remael as follows: grammar and lexical items are usually simplified and cleaned up; and interactional features and intonation are only partially maintained. Not all the features of speech are lost, but rendering them all would result in illegible and exceedingly long subtitles. (Munday 2012: 272) The spirit of the guidelines is then condensed into the idea that subtitling focuses on items that are informationally most relevant.

3.3.2 Subtitling strategies

Subtitling is restrained by various factors, and according to Georgakopoulou (2009: 29), “there is no systematic recipe to be followed”. This necessitates a thoughtful selection of a translation strategy, and in order to make a wise decision, Georgakopoulou (ibid.) suggests that function (relevance to plot), connotation (implied information), feedback effect, media related constraints, and the target audience’s knowledge of the language and culture of the source language programme be assessed when deciding on the most applicable translation strategy. In the interests of this thesis, I will next discuss translation strategies pertinent to the topic and subtitling.

A number of translation strategies and choices are relevant to the translation of “bitch” discussed in this thesis: omission, literal translation, hyponym, sentence structure change, and toning down. They will be covered next. Pettit (2009: 45) cites a list of translation strategies pertinent to overcoming the challenge of translating culture-specific terms. The most relevant strategies in regard to “bitch” are as follows:

- (1) Omission – the culture-specific term is excluded completely
- (2) Literal translation – the target text matches the source text as closely as possible
- (3) Equivalence – the translation has similar meaning and function in the target culture
- (4) Generalization or neutralization of the original term
- (5) Explication – paraphrasing or explaining the culture-specific term

(Pettit 2009: 45)

Now I will explain the hyponym, sentence structure change and toning down strategies found in the table. A hyponym means a word or term that is more specific than a broader and more general term under which it falls; for example, “spoon” is a hyponym of “cutlery” (Lexico.com 2019), and “tulip” of “flower” (Díaz Cintas & Remael 2007:

203). In my BA thesis, the hyponym strategy meant the translation of “bitch” as other swear words than “narttu” or “ämmä”. Sentence structure change means altering the sentence and clause units (Chesterman 1997: 96-97) in order to circumvent the translational problems that the original use of “bitch” has produced.

The toning down strategy is somewhat akin to neutralization and can be interpreted to mean the same, but in the context of this study it refers specifically to the act of replacing “bitch” with a Finnish word that may not be a swear word or obscenity at all, yet retains its function as for example a noun in a sentence. An example of this is the occasion when Jesse refers to an opossum as a “bitch” and it is translated as “otus” (season 3, episode 10), meaning a “creature” or “critter”. It is a notably milder and less vernacular choice of a word than the original.

I regard “bitch” as a culture-specific term in how it behaves unlike any conceivable equivalent in the Finnish language. It is consequently an expression that has highly culture and language-specific uses. In the episode *Fly* (season 3, episode 10), two instances of Jesse saying “bitch” are noteworthy examples of how the refrain is treated like a culture-specific expression.

In the episode, Jesse tells Walt a story about an opossum that used to live under his aunt’s house and make distracting noises. Jesse describes the opossum as a “big freaky-looking bitch”. This is translated as “iso pelottava otus”, literally “a big scary creature/critter”. The “bitch” cannot really be completely omitted here as it functions as a noun and a noticeable stress is placed on it in the sentence, which basically begs for the subtitles to acknowledge it in the form of textual correspondence. The “bitch” is both neutralized and paraphrased (translation strategies (4) and (5) on the previous list, respectively).

Eventually the opossum was caught, but the operation was not easy, as evidenced by Jesse noting that the opossum “was a total bitch to get out”. The Finnish translation reads “sitä oli vaikea saada ulos”, literally “it [the opossum] was difficult to get out”, which completely disregards the exasperated and informal tone of the original line. The

“bitch” is, again, neutralized in the translation and the implication of the refrain is explained; if something is a “bitch” to get out, it implies difficulty, hardship and inconvenience to a varying degree. This implication and the act of using informal language are completely missing from the translation.

Due to the constraints of the subtitling medium – spatial and temporal restrictions and the viewers’ reading capacities – not everything that is said on screen can be translated and turned into written captions: having too many lines of subtitles displayed at once would block the image, admittedly a very important element of the audiovisual context, and such an amount of text would also be hopelessly out of synchronization with the soundtrack and the natural flow of speech. In addition, such subtitles would also overrun shot changes, impacting the cohesion of the viewing experience negatively.

The aforementioned constraints therefore necessitate translation strategies like omission which is not an uncommon strategy at all. It is customary that various exclamations and simple forms of address or greeting are left out of subtitles for rather obvious reasons (Ivarsson & Carroll 1998: 93). Such words and expressions simply carry little relevance and meaning in general, and are therefore the first candidates for exclusion. However, the matter is entirely not that straightforward, which the very topic of this thesis, too, points out: a balance has to be maintained between the clarity and stylistic function of a given utterance, which is dubbed the “dilemma of accuracy” (de Linde & Kay 1999: 4). Many elements of speech, especially colloquial speech, appear redundant and thus omittable, but they may very well be important tools of constructing a character’s style, personality, and spoken discourse (de Linde & Kay 1999: 4). This then poses translators with the challenge of respecting the original dialogue without violating subtitling principles exceedingly.

Translation of emotionally charged and non-neutral language in subtitles typically requires more consideration from the translator than the matter would at the first sight give grounds for. Expressions of this nature, such as taboo words, swearwords, and interjections, are typically toned down or even completely omitted in subtitles if space is limited, but this can have an adverse effect on rendering the source text faithfully to

the target audience. Emotionally charged expressions typically serve specific functions in dialogic interaction and, thereby, in the overall story. Moreover, taboo words and swear words can be significant contributors to characterization or serve thematic functions, which calls for a cautious approach on the translator's part. (Díaz Cintas & Remael 2007: 195–197)

The handling of taboo words and swearwords in subtitles is further complicated by the fact that even if a direct equivalent between the source and target languages is found, they may be culturally too dissimilar either because they function differently in a linguistic sense, or because they possess different connotative meanings and are of dissimilar strength (for example, the direct target language equivalent may be considered more offensive in the target culture than the source language item in the source culture). Different cultures have different sensibilities, and, consequently, their own set of swearwords and taboo words. (Díaz Cintas & Remael 2007: 196). As for a guideline, Díaz Cintas & Remael give the recommendation that subtitlers are to identify and assess the impact and emotional charge of a given taboo word in the source culture, and match it with a target culture equivalent that is appropriate in the context. (Díaz Cintas & Remael 2007: 196)

Subtitling is a unique variety of translation in that the source text and the target text are presented simultaneously and in cohabitation to the viewer. Indeed, the subtitler does not even alter the source text – he or she only adds an element without removing anything from the audiovisual whole (Munday 2012: 270). This is unusual in the field of translation, as it exposes the translation to immediate comparison with the original and creates a phenomenon known as “gossiping effect” or “feedback effect” (Díaz Cintas & Remael 2007: 55). The latter term will be used in this thesis. The feedback effect means that since the source text is constantly present in the translation, it allows the viewer to directly observe how faithful or accurate the translator has been to the source text (Díaz Cintas & Remael 2007: 55), much like a gossipier whispering what the translator has tried to alter or exclude from the intended original communication. Expectedly, the feedback effect has a hand in how an audiovisual viewing experience plays out, and it consequently affects the translation process. This impact comes with

both its pros and cons for the viewer and the translator, who must especially take the latter into consideration when producing subtitles.

Díaz Cintas & Remael raise two considerable issues that the feedback effect has on the viewing experience. Firstly, there is the issue of perceived discrepancy: viewers often pick up certain lexical items that they hear in the dialogue, and expect to see exact and directly recognizable equivalents to those items in the subtitles. If a lexical item bearing sufficient resemblance does not appear, the viewer tends to feel noticeable discrepancy between what they have heard and what they have read; the subtitles are then deemed “lacking”, and it is not uncommon that the viewer is inclined to believe that the translator has forgot to translate the lexical item that they deem missing. (Díaz & Cintas 2007: 56)

The second major downside to the feedback effect is linked to a sense of perceived discrepancy as well, but rises above the lexical level. When an actor in a programme or film gives a performance that is loaded with a certain emotion or has a distinct style, viewers expect the subtitles to reflect the performance in both quality and quantity. In other words, an aggressive monologue demands aggressive language in the subtitles, a laconic remark should not become a lengthy subtitle, and a talkative character should not be made to appear quiet by giving him or her noticeably short subtitles. (Díaz Cintas & Remael 2007: 57) On top of being in conflict with general subtitling guidelines, these kinds of subtitles can be considered to be violations of intended characterization as they give the viewers markedly different recounts of how the characters communicate.

Now, the feedback effect can also be an asset for the translator and the viewer, because the context together with visual and auditory information can complement the subtitles and fill in the omitted information, allowing the translator to work more flexibly within the constraints of subtitles, and the viewer to gather the nuances and details left out from the subtitles (Díaz Cintas & Remael 2007: 163–164). These factors benefit the subtitles of *Breaking Bad* in that the viewers can always hear Jesse say “bitch”, which is something that the translator can theoretically rely on to some degree; the spoken dialogue is always present and unadulterated for viewers without hearing impairments.

(This is obviously not the case with deaf and hard-of-hearing audiences, which only further proves the importance of accurately rendered subtitles.)

Since “bitch” is established as Jesse’s recurring and expected catchphrase early on in the series, it can be argued that the viewers learn to pick it up from the spoken dialogue even when the word is toned down, reformulated or excluded from the subtitles altogether. It would possibly follow, then, that reliance on the complementary function of the feedback effect could be used as a valid translation strategy – if not as an excuse for ignoring “bitch” completely in the subtitles, at least as one means of maintaining some semblance of continued characterization when the translational toolbox falls short of the task. After all, the auditory element is strongly present in the audiovisual context, and taking advantage of this asset can very well prove to be useful.

Nevertheless, one should remain skeptical as to whether the feedback effect is potent enough to serve as a substitute for a Finnish equivalent of “bitch” appearing in the subtitles. Indeed, since the viewers are probably expectant of “bitch” and they have grown to recognize the word with acuity, the drawback of perceived discrepancy, which was discussed earlier, remains an unsolved dilemma in this case. When the viewers develop heightened sensitivity to the occurrences of “bitch” and learn to pick it up and perhaps pay extra attention to it, omissions of “bitch” from the subtitles become markedly more obvious, possibly to the point of the exclusions creating a distracting sense of discrepancy between the dialogue and the subtitles. Moreover, “bitch” is a marked linguistic item in the context of *Breaking Bad* and a carrier of characterization, a status which calls for as direct a translation as possible in and of itself: when swearwords, taboo words or other idiosyncratic speech items contribute to characterization, it is essential to translate them (Díaz Cintas & Remael 2007: 197).

3.3.3 Equivalence, content, form and relevance

In this section, I will address aspects of subtitling that also permeate the craft of translation in general but are relevant to the translation of “bitch” in *Breaking Bad*. These aspects are equivalence, the content versus form dichotomy, and relevance. The

concept of equivalence is at the heart of any kind of translation and can be understood as something as simple as similarity between the original translatable text (source text) and the translation (target text). The concept of equivalence has, however, more depth to it. Munday (2012: 66–67) cites Nida (1964) and presents two kinds of equivalence: formal equivalence and dynamic equivalence.

Formal equivalence, also referred to as structural equivalence (Hatim & Munday 2004: 40), can be understood as “word-for-word” correspondence between a source text item and a target text item. According to Nida, an essential aim of formal equivalence is that the target language item matches as closely as possible with the different elements of the source language item (in Munday 2012: 66). Hatim and Munday (2004: 40) offer another take and define formal equivalence as a relationship where a word or phrase in the source language is replaced with a corresponding “formal” word or phrase in the target language. However, one should not confuse this with a direct (or literal) translation, as Hatim & Munday go on to note; whereas direct translations usually disregard context and the intended implications in the process of retaining the formal features, a formal translation is, for one, concerned with the context. It is a strategy that is employed to retain a particular rhetorical or linguistic effect (Hatim & Munday 2004: 42). This is called contextual motivation. It means that formal features are carried over to the translation only if they are contextually important and contribute to the overall meaning of the text. (Hatim & Munday 2004: 41)

Dynamic equivalence, which came to be dubbed “functional equivalence” later, was based on the concept of “equivalent effect” by Nida (in Munday 2012: 67). This means that the translator understands what the relationship between the message and the original receptor is in the source language and then attempts to reproduce an equivalent relationship between the translation and the new receptors. Munday continues that the message must be adjusted to the target audience’s linguistic needs and cultural background; in other words, the expression that the translator and the translation process produce should sound and feel completely natural in the target language with no signs of interference from the source language. The “foreignness” of the source text should be minimized. (Munday 2012: 67) When compared to literal translation, the strength of

dynamic equivalence is that it can be employed to convey a wide range of contextual value and effects, which a literal translation cannot genuinely achieve (Hatim & Munday 2004: 43). These kinds of effects rely strongly on their content instead of their form (*ibid.*).

There is all the more reason to address the classical dichotomy between content and form in the realm of translation (Hatim & Munday 2004: 10), since it is a concept that lies not only at the heart of the craft of translation, but at the very heart of this thesis, too. Content, which can be also called “sense”, stands for what is meant with a given message; it lies underneath the superficial layer and is not dependent on exact wording or tone. Content is the intended thought behind the words.

On the opposite end of the spectrum lies “form”. Whereas “content” refers to the “what” of what is said or written, “form” is the “how” of communication; it stands for the way and the means through which a given message is delivered. It is thus interchangeable with “style” in this context (Hatim & Munday 2004: 10). Form or style serve as vessels for the intended content, and are means of creating a certain effect or eliciting a certain reaction from the target audience. The crucial and very practical difference between the sense and the form is, according to Hatim & Munday (2004: 10), that the sense may be translated but the form often cannot be; and in cases where the form is a meaningful part of the sense, the problem of untranslatability begins to rear its head (Hatim & Munday 2004: 10). This is typically present in the likes of poetry, songs, and puns, where for example rhyme and double meaning are difficult if not impossible to recreate in the target language (Hatim & Munday 2004: 10).

Since the concept of style is relevant to this thesis, it is essential to define it. Boase-Beier (2006: 4) defines style as “the perceived distinctive manner of expression” but goes on to note that even though this definition may appear simple, complexities arise when one begins to delve into what kind of different meanings and interpretations the words “perceived” and “distinctive” can have. For example, by whom is the manner of expression perceived – by the audience, a critic, or perhaps a social group? (Boase-Beier 2006: 4) Each of these may very well have markedly individual interpretations

depending on who is tasked with defining them. And yet another layer of complexity is added upon style in the context of translation by the fact that translation involves two texts by default, both of which can have their own individual styles (Boase-Beier 2006: 4). Furthermore, Boase-Beier (2006: 52) cites Enkvist et al. (1973) and posits style as optional variation within a language. In order to understand the role of style in translation better, Boase-Beier presents four viewpoints for considering style in translation:

- (1) The style of the source text as an expression of its author's choices
- (2) The style of the source text in its effects on the reader (and on the translator as reader)
- (3) The style of the target text as an expression of choices made by its author (who is the translator)
- (4) The style of the target text in its effects on the reader

(Boase-Beier 2006: 5)

A challenging aspect of style is that its building blocks are often considered the least relevant in subtitling due to the inherent constraints of the medium (spatial and temporal restrictions and the viewers' reading and processing capacity). These contributors to style and characterization may be tautologies and repetitions whose purpose is to uphold the flow of the conversation, such as "well" and "you know" (Ivarsson & Carroll 1998: 87). Yet a subtitler should not ignore and omit them without consideration as they can indeed be meaningful building blocks of characterization or stylistic choices.

As for relevance, de Linde and Kay (1999: 5) cite relevance theory which is used to explain the replacement of a longer linguistic item with a shorter one. The intention is that the shorter item bears an "interpretative resemblance" to the longer item (de Linde & Kay 1999: 5). What this means is that while the translation is not literal, it conveys the same core idea as the original; that it can be interpreted to mean relatively the same concept or thought. However, this does have the potentially harmful drawback of

interpretative resemblance not being similar enough: the specific original linguistic item may have been used to typify an important character trait or carry irony, sarcasm or other nuanced meanings that a non-direct translation does not achieve (de Linde & Kay 1999: 5).

Boase-Beier (2006: 44) goes into more detail regarding relevance theory. She cites Gutt (2000) for the most important suggestions of the theory for explaining translation choices. The first suggestion is that translation is relevance-dictated and relevance-dependent communication: if a translator has processed a certain piece of information, it has been deemed relevant enough. The logical implication drawn from this is, then, that what is left out is irrelevant. The second suggestion is that translators communicate the intended meaning of the source text, not just the words or the superficial layer; translation is an interpretative act, as opposed to a descriptive act. A translator communicates what is meant, not just what is written or said. Finally, the third entry on the list suggests that when style – the way things are expressed - has an important role in a text, direct translation is required; indirect translation would only convey the substance and disregard the stylistic layer. (Boase-Beier 2006: 44) On this basis, I believe that the relevance theory is useful for explaining the translation of “bitch” in the Finnish subtitles of *Breaking Bad*.

On top of the challenges that the equivalence, content, form, and relevance aspects entail, the inescapable technical restrictions of subtitling increase the number of factors which make “bitch” an item that eludes straightforward translational solutions. If *Breaking Bad* were for example a novel instead of a television series, the translator would not have to struggle with time or space constraints: a printed sentence on the page of a book is on display indefinitely, and the pages are not turned at fixed intervals independently of the reader’s pace. Neither is a literary translator pressed to condense sentences, nuanced meanings, and stylistic and cultural undertones within a pre-determined and inflexible maximum number of characters per paragraph, each readable only for an allotted and inflexible amount of time. In the case of a novel, the translator could adjust and rewrite Jesse’s lines with a lot of creative leeway to replicate his original linguistic style faithfully, but it is not possible with subtitles. What these

analogues illustrate are the inherent challenges of subtitling, and they have an effect on translating “bitch” in *Breaking Bad*. I will discuss these aspects next.

3.4 Technical restrictions of subtitling

As previously established, subtitling is arguably a unique field of translation: in subtitled audiovisual works such as television programmes and films, the interplay of text, sound and image brings about spatial and temporal confines that restrict translation quantitatively and qualitatively. This means that the subtitler has to work within the limits of physical screen size and film structure in general, and the reading capacities of viewers (Linde & Kay 1999: 48).

An audiovisual medium like a television programme progresses at a pace that is independent of the viewer. This means that an audiovisual work has a fixed total duration length, and it consists of segments – scenes and shots – which also have fixed duration lengths of their own. This naturally imposes limitations on how much text can be shown on screen, and for how long; the former are called spatial limitations, and the latter temporal limitations. Granted, strict spatial limitations can apply to books and other printed materials too, but the duration-specific limitations of subtitling are arguably rather unique to the medium. A line of dialogue in a book is visible for the reader for however long they wish to rest their gaze upon it, while a line of dialogue in a television programme is ‘there’ only for the duration of its audible utterance. The textual element of subtitles needs to adhere to the pace and rhythm of the spoken dialogue, which will be discussed in detail later.

In subtitling, spoken dialogue is converted into written text. Due to the unique aspects of the audiovisual context, the dialogue has to be reduced to meet the technical conditions of the medium and the reading capacities of viewers. Of the two general categories into which technical limitations are generally divided, I will first deal with spatial restrictions, which deal with space-related aspects. It is worth noting, though, that the technical restrictions of subtitling have some degree of overlap. However, in the

interest of clarity, I will address them as individually as their interconnectedness reasonably allows for.

3.4.1 Spatial restrictions

Spatial restrictions are set by physical screen space and more specific subtitling conventions which are ultimately dictated by screen space, too: the number of lines on screen, and the number of characters per line. In general, the maximum number of lines displayed simultaneously is limited to two, and the number of characters per line is not to exceed forty (Linde & Kay 1999: 6). Díaz Cintas & Remael give a more detailed maximum recommendation of 37 characters per line, and the total of 74 characters for two lines of subtitles (2007: 96). Furthermore, the lines should not take up more than two twelfths of the screen space (Díaz Cintas & Remael 2007: 82). With only 37 characters usable per line, interpersonal expressions and expletives such as “bitch” surely are common candidates for omission when dialogue needs to be stripped to its bare essentials and core message.

To summarize, these inescapable restrictions on usable space – be it screen space in general, maximum number of lines or maximum number of characters available to the translator – essentially mean that everything that is said in the audio simply cannot be transferred into subtitles. Even if temporal restrictions were somehow removed, filling the screen with captions would still be a very undesirable solution: obviously, the imagery of an audiovisual work cannot be blocked excessively with a layer of text. The number of lines displayed on screen at once, and the number of characters per line by the same token, are thus capped for the benefit of viewing experience and ease of reading. The drawback of ensuring these undoubtedly important qualities is, however, that the amount of information that can be encapsulated into subtitles is markedly reduced, making the translation and subtitling process a cautious game of compromise and weighing what information is truly relevant and what is not. This is made more complex still by the abundance of perspectives and emphases that a translator can take and which have a filtering effect on the outcome.

3.4.2 Temporal restrictions and synchronicity

Temporal restrictions arise from the reading speeds of viewers and the need to synchronize subtitles with the dialogue and shot changes (Linde & Kay 1999: 6). The underlying principles derived from temporal restrictions are quite simple: subtitles need to be on display for long enough so that the viewers have enough time to read them comfortably, but at the same time subtitles have to go in tandem with their corresponding dialogue, and they ought to follow shot and scene changes. The “six-second rule” posits that an average viewer is able to read two full subtitle lines comfortably in six seconds, given that there are some 37 characters per line at maximum (Díaz Cintas & Remael 2007: 96). This would then suggest an approximate reading speed of 140 to 150 words per minute (Díaz Cintas & Remael 2007: 97).

One can imagine how distracted a viewer can become if subtitles are poorly timed, making them feel notably separate from the lines of dialogue they are supposed to represent. The subtitler is obliged to do their best to respect cinematography aspects such as camera cuts, and match the duration of the subtitles to the rhythm and pacing of the dialogue (Munday 2012: 271–272). Well-timed subtitles are important as they contribute to the internal cohesion of the programme and help viewers identify speakers (Díaz Cintas & Remael 2007: 90).

The synchronization aspect of temporal restrictions means co-timing oral utterances and written text (Linde & Kay 1999: 15). Synchronization can be divided into synchronicity between subtitle and sound, and synchronicity between subtitle and image (Linde & Kay 1999: 39). Synchronicity between subtitle and sound involves aspects such as speech rates, subtitle presentation rate – which is often deemed synonymous with reading speed (Linde & Kay 1999: 45) – and lead and lag times. Synchronicity between subtitle and image involves for example shot changes. (de Linde & Kay 1999: 39)

As for synchronicity between subtitle and sound, the following listing of minimum requirements has been given in BBC Subtitle Guidelines, cited by de Linde & Kay; while the list is given primarily within the context of intralingual subtitling (such as

subtitling for deaf viewers and viewers with loss of hearing), the requirements also apply to subtitles in general. The list is as follows:

- (1) Subtitles should match the pace and rhythm of speaking as closely as possible
- (2) When the speaker is shot, the subtitles should not anticipate speech by more than 1.5 seconds
- (3) Subtitles should not stay on the screen for more than 1.5 seconds after speech has stopped
- (4) Subtitles should not be displayed on the screen after the speaker has disappeared

(de Linde & Kay 1999: 46)

De Linde and Kay (1999: 46) summarize the essence of these synchronization principles in the following way: “Subtitles must not only keep in time with the beginning and end of utterances but also with the natural flow of speech”, and go on to note that one primary consideration of television subtitling is to avoid “silent moving mouths”, as this creates frustration among deaf viewers (1999: 46). This is also relevant for viewers who are not hearing impaired, as it falls in line with Ivarsson & Carroll’s principle mentioned earlier that there must be a close correlation between film dialogue and the presence of subtitles; if there are dialogue and lines, there needs to be subtitles. De Linde and Kay put it as “all obvious sounds should have some form of subtitle accompaniment” (1999: 46). Furthermore, if subtitles do not coincide with the beginning and end of their respective speech segment and consequently remain too long on screen, viewers are likely to re-read them. This causes an unnecessary “false alarm”. (de Linde & Kay 1999: 46) In short, subtitles should be neither leading nor lagging. Simply put, these terms refer to the synchronicity (or lack thereof) between the appearance of a subtitle and the beginning of a corresponding bit of dialogue or other sound: if a subtitle appears on screen before the corresponding spoken line has begun, it is a case of “lead time”; and if a subtitle appears on screen after the corresponding utterance has become audible, it is a case of “lag time” (de Linde & Kay 1999: 15).

On synchronicity between subtitle and image, de Linde & Kay (1999: 48) posit that subtitles need to synchronize with both speech and the moving image. Subtitles over-running shot changes can cause notable perceptual confusion in viewers (1999: 48). De Linde & Kay (ibid.) note that a distinction between different varieties of shot changes should be made: shot changes that occur during a single scene and shot changes that occur between major scenes. The grounds for the distinction are not only conceptual, but the effects that the different kinds of shot changes can have on viewing experience are meaningful. Subtitle lag over a shot change separating two major scenes can cause confusion (de Linde & Kay 1999: 48).

4 THE EFFECTS OF TRANSLATION STRATEGIES ON CHARACTERIZATION

In this section, I will analyze whether the translation strategies used by the translator and the restrictions of subtitles change the characterization of Jesse Pinkman in regard to his “bitch” refrain, namely whether Jesse comes across as a different personality to the Finnish audience. In 4.1, I will present an overview of the translation strategies used in translating “bitch”. In 4.2 I will outline the basis, method, and structure of the discussion. The discussion itself will be conducted in 4.3., and is divided into five categories: direct translation, hyponym, omission, sentence/clause structure change, and toning down.

4.1 Overview of the findings

I will discuss the translation strategy distribution table introduced earlier in subsection 1.1 for an overview of the translation strategy distribution in translating “bitch”. The table serves as an overview of the translations strategies such as omission and direct translation used in the Finnish translation of *Breaking Bad*.

It needs to be noted that the table is not complete representation as it does not include every instance of “bitch” in *Breaking Bad*. All “bitches” said by Jesse are not equally noteworthy because some “bitches” appear as fixed parts of idiomatic expressions like “son of a bitch”, and similar usages repeat throughout the series. Therefore limiting the sample size to only the most illustrative examples was deemed sufficient for observing trends and emphases in translation strategies. Mapping out and including every occurrence of “bitch” would have given more data than was necessary for the aim of the study. The aim was to find general trends and emphases, so the limited sample size was deemed sufficient and justified to that end.

Table 1 presented in the introduction shows distinct translation strategy trends for translating “bitch”. The insult function – which is comprised primarily of the strong impression, offensiveness, and aggressiveness slang properties – tends to be translated directly. Interestingly, however, omission is the second most popular strategy in the

“insult” column after direct translation, which one might not expect. Then again, when “bitch” serves as a padding expression, it has been treated overwhelmingly with omission. This is a problem from the characterization perspective because each use of “bitch” inherently displays some slang properties and contributes to the continuity of Jesse’s linguistic and indirect characterization. As hypothesized, such stark a contrast in the selection of translation strategies is likely to result in changes in characterization.

Since the translation choices are highly varied, one can argue on this basis that the content-oriented approach takes clear precedence over the style-oriented approach. Moreover, it can be argued that retaining the consistent use and formal immutability of “bitch” present in the source text was thus not a priority in the translation process. With these observations established, one can discern a trend in how “bitch” has been treated in the Finnish subtitles. In subchapter 4.3, I will analyse what kind of effects these translation choices have on the characterization of Jesse Pinkman in the Finnish subtitles, and what the exact causes of those effects are.

To do this, I will present examples of “bitch” scenes where the characterization has been changed due to the translation strategies used, and identify the slang properties in both the original dialogue and in the Finnish subtitles using Mattiello’s list of slang properties. I will then compare the two on this basis and aim to explain the differences by relying on Relevance Theory and the technical limitations of subtitles.

4.2 Method and structure of the discussion

The very starting point for the following discussion and this thesis is the assumption that Jesse is characterized by his “bitch” refrain in *Breaking Bad*. It has been established that “bitch” is a slang word, and slang has certain properties and is defined by certain criteria presented in the previous chapter. These criteria can be then used to measure the presence and intensity of slang in both the source text and the target text and to see whether the characteristic slang properties of the former are carried over to the latter. And since Jesse is characterized by the effects and implications of these properties, it

can thus be determined whether the Finnish translation of “bitch” replicates these effects and to which extent or produces a new characterization.

Whether there are changes in Jesse’s characterization or not, the observations need to be explained. For this I will look into the translation strategies used and the restrictions of subtitles, from which the differences arise. After this I will be able to provide an answer to the research question of whether the target text Jesse is a different character, and also specify those differences with the help of the theoretical material and explain why the differences have emerged. I will conduct the analysis by presenting typical “bitch” examples of each translation strategy. Moreover, the examples are chosen to represent both the insult and padding functions of the refrain to a sufficient degree so that the study sample reflects the varied usage of the word in the series. I will also bring atypical applications of the translation strategies into discussion.

The context of each “bitch” example discussed will be given, as mapping out the circumstances and underlying motives of the dialogue are crucial to the analysis. There will be a description of each scene with additional background information. For each example I will provide a transcription of the spoken English dialogue (denoted by “*ST*”, source text), the corresponding Finnish subtitles (denoted by “*TT*”, target text), and an English back translation of the subtitles which I attempt to render as literally as possible in order to illustrate the differences between the source text and the target text.

When analyzing the examples, the first step is to observe what descriptive slang criteria the source text “bitch” and the translation in question meet, and identify what characterization effects they have or lack. Of the speaker-oriented slang properties presented earlier, I will focus on informality and obscenity/vulgarity. Of the hearer-oriented properties, I will focus on strong impression, offensiveness, aggressiveness, colourfulness, and playfulness. It needs to be noted of the last one, though, that I argue that the “playfulness” hearer-oriented property is more pertinent to what kind of an effect has been intended for the viewers of the series, and not so much for the characters that Jesse interacts with; the writers want to establish Jesse as a playful and somewhat immature character in his demeanor and language use, whereas Jesse himself has no

reason or motivation to deliberately demean himself by appearing playful to others in a similar vein. So, in regard to “playfulness”, the viewer is the “hearer”.

These steps allow me to compare the two characterization profiles and subsequently draw conclusions on whether the translation supports the intended characterization or deviates from it. Finally, I will explain the outcome via the translations strategies used and the restrictions of subtitles. After each translation strategy category, I will give a brief summary of how the strategy in question affects Jesse’s characterization.

4.3 Discussion

The discussion will be conducted in five separate translation strategy categories: direct translation, hyponym, omission, sentence/clause structure change, and toning down. Each strategy will be explained at the beginning of their respective segment, and the effects that each strategy has on Jesse’s characterization will be summarized at the end before proceeding to the next category.

4.3.1 Direct translation

I will first discuss the effects that direct translation has on the characterization of Jesse Pinkman. Here direct translation refers to the translation of “bitch” as its Finnish dictionary equivalents “ämmä” or “narttu” in a derogatory sense. Typical examples of direct translation will be covered first, followed by less typical examples. Table 1 indicates a trend in the use of this translation strategy; “bitches” that function as insults tend to be translated directly, whereas this strategy is applied notably less often to “bitches” functioning as padding expressions. This is problematic from the characterization point of view, since translating taboo words and swearwords is important in instances where such language contributes to characterization (Díaz Cintas & Remael 2007: 197).

Insulting uses of “bitch” are typically translated directly probably because the insult function is rather simple and straightforward to translate, and the usage of such insults is

similar in both English and Finnish. A “bitch” used as a slur targeted at the conversational partner at the end of a sentence is often easy to transfer to the target language as such and does not necessitate modifications. Furthermore, “bitch” as a straightforward insult has similarly straightforward Finnish equivalents which do also carry highly comparable connotations and tones.

The first example is from the episode *4 Days Out* (season 2, episode 9). Walt and Jesse have driven their RV meth lab out into the desert in order to cook methamphetamine in peace. After two days of cooking, they are preparing to head back to civilization. However, they find that the RV will not start because Jesse had left the car keys in the ignition switch, draining the car battery empty. They are now stranded in the middle of nowhere and cannot call for help, and start to argue over the situation; Jesse blames the RV’s “buzzer” alarm which should have indicated the battery is on but did not sound, while Walt blames Jesse for not realizing that leaving the keys in the ignition was a stupid decision regardless.

(8)

ST:

Jesse: “Woah, woah, no, this is not my fault, alright? The buzzer didn’t buzz.”

Walt: “The what?”

Jesse: “The buzzer, the buzzer that buzzes when you put the keys in, to like let you know the battery’s on. I know that, it didn’t buzz. Look, I didn’t turn the key or anything, alright? I’m not stupid. Did you hear the buzzer buzz? I did not. It’s faulted, it’s a faulty mechanism.”

Walt: “Is this just a genetic thing with you? Is it congenital, did your mother drop you on your head when you were a baby?”

Jesse: “The buzzer did not buzz, and you were the one who made me move the keys in the first place, remember?”

Walt: “I see your point. Your imbecility being what it is, I should’ve known to say: ‘Jesse, don’t leave the keys in the ignition the entire two days!’”

Jesse: "I wanted to leave them on the counter, bitch! Oh I'm sorry, at the 'work station'."

TT:

Jesse: "Ei tämä ole vain minun syytäni. Se ei soanut."

Walt: "Mikä?"

Jesse: "Hälytin, joka soi, kun avaimet pannaan virtalukkoon. Siitä tietää, että akku on päällä. Tiedän sen. Se ei soanut. En kääntänyt avaimesta. En ole tyhmä. Kuulitko hälyttimen? Se on epäkunnossa. Mekanismi on rikki."

Walt: "Onko tällainen sinulla geeneissä? Pudottiko äitisi sinut päällesi, kun olit vauva?"

Jesse: "Hälytin ei soanut. Ja sinä käskit minun siirtää avaimet."

Walt: "Ymmärrän, mitä yrität sanoa. Olet niin imbesilli, että minun olisi pitänyt sanoa: 'Jesse, älä jätä avaimia virtalukkoon kahdeksi päiväksi.'"

Jesse: "Halusin jättää ne pöydälle, narttu. Anteeksi, työasemalle."

Back translation:

Jesse: "This isn't just my fault. It didn't sound."

Walt: "What?"

Jesse: "The alarm that sounds when keys are put in the ignition switch. That way you know that the battery is on. I know that. It didn't sound. I didn't turn the key. I'm not stupid. Did you hear the alarm? It is out of order. The mechanism is broken."

Walt: "Is this in your genes? Did you mother drop you on your head when you were a baby?"

Jesse: "The alarm didn't sound. And you told me to move the keys."

Walt: "I understand what you're trying to say. You're so imbecile that I should've said: 'Jesse, don't leave the keys in the ignition for two days.'"

Jesse: "I wanted to leave them on the counter, bitch. Sorry, on the work station."

(Season 2, episode 9: *4 Days Out*)

The “bitch” in the source text is translated as “narttu”, which is the “female dog” sense of “bitch”, and works as an insult when used to refer to a person. As per the definition of direct translation in this study, that precise translation strategy has been applied to the “bitch” in question. In the scene, Jesse is firmly on the defense, insisting that their predicament is not completely his fault. He even makes an effort to turn the situation around by saying that he wanted to leave the keys on the counter in the first place, implying that if Walt had been fine with his original intention and had not insisted him to put the keys elsewhere, they would have avoided the trouble at hand.

Of the two speaker-oriented slang properties discussed, the “bitch” in the source text meets the definitions of both: it is informal in that it expresses an uninhibited tone and “familiarity” in the sense of interpersonal immediacy; that there is no wall of pretense or politeness behind them. As for the vulgarity property, the “bitch” here is below educated language standards and is a swearword. (Mattiello 2009: 69)

Of the hearer-oriented slang properties, the use of “bitch” in the scene matches the properties of strong impression, offensiveness, aggressiveness, and playfulness. The function of the “bitch” in Jesse’s line is to insult, which is an act of startling Walt, offending him and to convey hostile verbal aggression. Even though the playfulness property pertains to an effort of appearing amusing or entertaining through creative deviation from linguistic standards, it is not the case here. Jesse wants to make a strong impression on Walt, fortify his statement with aggression and assert confidence, not appear playful. The playfulness of the “bitch” arises from the recurring nature of “bitch” as Jesse’s catch phrase; the playfulness is played on the audience. (Mattiello 2009: 71–72)

As the “bitch” has been translated directly as a more or less equivalent slang expression, the translation shares most of its slang properties with the original “bitch”. “Narttu” is informal and carries an uninhibited tone like “bitch”, and is also below educated

language standards as a vulgar expression (Mattiello 2009: 69). As for the hearer-oriented properties, “narttu” is also used to carry a startling, arresting or striking effect, and it is offensive; moreover, the insult conveys verbal hostility much like the original (Mattiello 2009: 71–72). However, the playfulness property is weak or even completely lost because “bitch” is not translated consistently as the same word in the Finnish subtitles: the content of “bitch” is often rendered but the style is not.

The use of direct translation as a strategy for translating insulting “bitches” can be explained by the simplicity, straightforwardness and perhaps even the logicity of it: as terse interjections signaling power relations and establishing character, they typically appear at the beginning or at the end of their respective sentence, or they are isolated between commas (Díaz Cintas & Remael 2007: 165), which makes them relatively easy to incorporate into a translated sentence. Interjections can be virtually treated like one-word subordinate clauses which do not complicate or otherwise affect the rest of the sentence. As such, insulting “bitches” are rather formulaic to translate, especially when “bitch” does have direct Finnish equivalents when used as an offensive interjection, and even more so when “bitch” begins or ends a sentence or when it appears alone.

Much in the same vein, technical limitations of subtitles do not impose restrictions on the use of direct translation either when applying it to “bitches” functioning as insults: a “bitch” at the beginning or at the end of a sentence does not require much time or space to be displayed on screen, and in the case of this example, the pressure of temporal and spatial limitations is markedly light. The “bitch” is uttered at the end of a relatively short and simple sentence, so there is a plenty of leeway for the translator to include the “bitch” in the subtitle without having to resort to compromising translation strategies.

It is commendable that the “bitch” in the scene has been retained and translated directly since Jesse says the word with a noticeably strong emphasis; there is a clear pause between “I wanted to leave them on the counter” and “bitch”. The viewers hear Jesse say the refrain and also very likely recognize the word, so applying some other translation strategy to it would result in perceived discrepancy: subtitling such a distinctive, emotionally charged and stressed interjection as something milder would

make the audience feel like the translation undercuts Jesse's speech and emotional state (Díaz & Cintas 2007: 56). Indeed, the insult is the culmination of Jesse and Walt's altercation and a crucial contributor to his characterization. Jesse defending his mistake builds him up as stubborn and as someone who is not willing to yield easily. Moreover, his sarcastic remark about "work station" adds to the impression of Jesse as a defiant and argumentative person and, in a way, picks up where the "bitch" left; with the sarcastic retort, Jesse mocks Walt's tendency to insist upon rigid working practices and use of correct laboratory and chemistry terms – which is something that initially annoys Jesse to no end. The altercation develops the interpersonal dynamics between Walt and Jesse, and the "bitch" retort is an integral part of this.

By and large, the Finnish translation of "bitch" supports the original characterization: through the use of "ämmä": the target text Jesse comes across as angry, defiant and certain that he is not entirely at fault for draining the car battery. The use of coarse language that is characteristic of Jesse is replicated accurately. The heated altercation between Walt and Jesse also develops their interpersonal dynamics, not only Jesse's characterization. By translating "bitch" as "narttu" and by carrying the offensiveness and hostility over to the subtitles, the tumultuous nature of the odd duo's relationship is retained as well. All in all, a typical example of direct translation like this leaves the intended characterization largely intact and unchanged, save for the loss of Jesse's overall linguistic style which is no minor exclusion: the frequency at which Jesse repeats "bitch" throughout the series is an essential and intentional building block of his character. This inconsistency in the translation of "bitch" is problematic from the characterization perspective – even among the direct translation category. In the next example, "bitch" is translated directly but as "ämmä" instead of "narttu"; both are direct equivalents of "bitch", but not settling on either one when translating insulting "bitches" directly harms the immutability of Jesse's utterance and consequently his characterization.

The next example is from the seventh episode of the third season, *One Minute*. Jesse is in a hospital after Walt's brother-in-law, agent Hank Schrader from the DEA (Drug Enforcement Administration) has physically assaulted and severely injured him. The

attack was the result of Hank having grown extremely frustrated at his inability to find sufficient evidence to arrest Jesse, all the while being absolutely convinced that Jesse is linked to the distribution of the infamous blue methamphetamine, and thus must be the person he is looking for.

The breaking point for Hank was the plan Walt devised to distract his brother-in-law and get him away from the RV that he and Jesse were trapped in at a wreck yard. The plan involved faking a phone call from a distant hospital and making Hank believe that his wife, Walt's sister-in-law, had been in a serious car accident. As Walt presumed, the fake emergency made Hank panic. He drove immediately to the hospital, giving Walt and Jesse enough time to have the RV destroyed and leave without getting caught. Hank eventually realized that the call from the hospital was faked and that it had been a ruse to get him away from the wreck yard and the RV.

Furious, Hank goes to Jesse's house – the only person he knows to blame for the fake call – and lashes out without hesitation, injuring Jesse seriously. As the result, Jesse is hospitalized and Hank's recklessness gets his police officer license suspended. Now, Jesse is angry not only at his assailant but Walt, too: he blames him because the distraction plan backfired brutally on him. In the example scene, Walt is visiting Jesse at the hospital with their morally flexible lawyer Saul Goodman. After giving a monologue about how he plans to have a vengeance on Hank, Jesse says that when he is released from the hospital, he will get a new RV and resume cooking methamphetamine on his own. Saul warns Jesse that even though Hank's reckless and unlawful vigilantism has rendered the police somewhat hamstrung in regard to pursuing Jesse for the time being and the police cannot afford to risk another lawsuit, resuming drug business is still a bad idea: brazen actions on Jesse's part would force the DEA's hand and they would have no other option but to hunt Jesse down. Walt agrees with Saul's warning and tries to reason with Jesse and convince him to abandon the plan to continue cooking.

(9)

ST:

Walt: "How exactly do you think you're going to get away with that?"

They [the police] will catch you."

Jesse: "So what?"

Walt: "What?"

Jesse: "I have a get-out-of-jail-free card."

Saul: "Hey, I may have overstated the power of your face."

Jesse: "Not this. If the cops catch me, I give them what they want the most [turns to look at Walt] – you. They nab me, I make a deal to give up the great Heisenberg and his million-dollar drug ring. You're my free pass... bitch."

TT:

Walt: "Kuvitteletko oikeasti, että selviät siitä? Jää kiinni."

Jesse: "Mitä sitten?"

Walt: "Mitä?"

Jesse: "Minulla on vapaudut vakilasta -kortti."

Saul: "Saatoin liioitella kasvojesi tuomaa valtaa."

Jesse: "En puhu siitä. Jos poliisit nappaavat minut, annan heille sen, mitä he eniten haluavat. Sinut. Jos jään kiinni, teen sopimuksen. Ilmiannan suuren Heisenbergin ja hänen miljoonien arvoisen humerinkinsä. Olet lippuni vapauteen, ämmä."

Back translation:

Walt: "Do you really think that you will get away with it? You will get caught."

Jesse: "So what?"

Walt: "What?"

Jesse: “I have a ‘you are freed from prison’ card.”

Saul: “I may have exaggerated the power that your face has.”

Jesse: “I am not talking about that. If the police catch me, I will give them what they want the most. You. If I get caught, I will make a deal. I will turn in the great Heisenberg and his drug ring worth millions. You are my ticket to freedom, bitch.”

(Season 3, episode 7: *One Minute*)

The “bitch” in the original dialogue corresponds to the speaker-oriented slang properties of informality and obscenity because the word “bitch” is inherently informal and obscene as a swearword. The “bitch” also corresponds to the hearer-oriented slang properties of strong impression, offensiveness and aggressiveness, because the utterance works as an impactful ending to a self-confident and threatening speech. Jesse uses the word to signal that he has finally gained the upper hand, and he may even use the word in a more or less literal sense, as in he has made Walt his “bitch” – subservient, helpless and at his mercy. There is a clear sense of hostility in the line, which meets the “aggressiveness” criterion: Jesse feels superior and triumphant, and his speech has a strong hue of spite.

The “bitch” has been translated directly as one of the closest Finnish counterparts “ämmä” which has the dictionary meaning of “bitch”, referring derogatorily to a woman (Sanakirja.org 2019). “Ämmä” is an informal and somewhat obscene slur in Finnish, but it does not have the connotation of being someone’s bitch, namely subservient, helpless or at someone’s mercy. Despite the lack of this detail, “ämmä” does potentially have a strong impression on the hearer and it is inherently offensive; “ämmä” can imply qualities that are seen as negative, such as someone behaving in an annoying manner. In this sense, translating Jesse’s retort as “ämmä” is an apt choice in the scene’s context since he is annoyed and angry with Walt. Similarly to the “narttu” translation in the previous example, “ämmä” fulfills the slang properties of informality, vulgarity, strong impression, offensiveness, and aggressiveness. Through this lens, Jesse’s characterization remains the same.

The example scene is strikingly serious and heavy by its tone, but once again the audience is treated to comedy by the recurrence of “bitch”. There is some humour to be found in the fact that Jesse ends a very spiteful and hostile speech with his trademark utterance, even though, admittedly, this is a context where “bitch” fits naturally due to its triumphant connotations, namely as a means of asserting power and dominance over the conversational partner. Notwithstanding, Jesse’s catchphrase has gained such a status at this point in the series that it cannot be used without having at least a slight comedic effect on the viewer. However, since “bitch” has been translated inconsistently throughout the Finnish subtitles, the “bitch” in this scene does not have that playfulness property to it. In the translation, “ämmä” at the end of Jesse’s speech is just a regular, spiteful insult hurled at Walt; one can even argue that there is no comedic effect present in the subtitles whatsoever. On this basis, the characterization effect is lost. Fortunately, the viewer can once again hear Jesse say “bitch” due to the feedback effect, so the original consistency in the use of “bitch” is still present in this way.

Like in the previous example, the translation strategies available here are not restricted by the technical limitations of subtitles in the slightest: “bitch” has a plenty of space and time to be shown on screen without the translator having to resort to making any alterations or omissions. Translating “bitch” literally in this scene is the only reasonable option as there is nothing in the way of doing so. Boase-Beier’s proposition of using direct translation when the style of communication is important applies to this instance of “bitch”, since it is a way of acknowledging the style – the immutability of “bitch” – present throughout the original English usage of the word. This small effort is in vain, however, as the entirety or at least a notable number of “bitches” ought to be included and translated directly into Finnish if the original style was to be genuinely retained. All in all, this example does support the original indirect characterization.

The next example is multifaceted in that it could be categorized as a hyponym, too. However, I have made the decision to reserve the hyponym category for instances where “bitch” is translated as a swearword that is not used for insulting another person. An example of this would be for example “helvetti” which translates literally as “hell”

but is used similarly to “goddammit”. Even though “bitch” in the next example is translated neither as “ämmä” or “narttu” and therefore could arguably be dealt with in another category, the translation still functions as an interpersonal insult and will thus be discussed as a direct translation.

The next example is from the episode *Sunset* (season 3, episode 6). Walt and Jesse decide they have to dispose of their recreational vehicle (RV) which they have used as a mobile methamphetamine laboratory. Discarding the RV and destroying all evidence is necessary because Walt’s brother-in-law, DEA agent Hank Schrader has managed to narrow down his search of the source of the blue methamphetamine that Jesse and Walt are making on the exact type of RV that the duo have been using, and Hank is now closing in on them.

Walt and Jesse arrange a deal with the willing owner of a local wreck yard and drive their RV to the site for the vehicle and all the evidence of the laboratory and their involvement to be destroyed beyond retrieval. When Walt and Jesse are discussing inside the RV, they see Hank arrive at the wreck yard. They cannot exit the RV or drive away. Hank proceeds to inspect the RV and attempts to break in. He is interrupted by the wreck yard owner who accuses Hank of trespassing on private property and demands him to leave the premises immediately. Persistent, Hank removes pieces of tape off the RV’s door, revealing bullet holes. He notes that the holes are evidence of the VR being a shoot-out scene, and that the holes give a probable cause for investigation.

While Hank and the wreck yard owner debate over Hank’s a right to be on the site unsolicited, Walt devises a plan to get them out of the dangerous situation. Somewhat knowledgeable of the technicalities of the law, Walt whispers Jesse legal loopholes that can work in their favour, and instructs Jesse to repeat his words to Hank; he cannot afford to let Hank know he is in the same RV with Jesse.

(10)

ST:

Walt (whispering to Jesse): "How could you have known that they [the bullet holes] were there before you took off the tape? Say it."

Jesse (shouting to Hank from inside the RV): "How could've you known they were there before you took off the tape?"

Wreck yard owner (speaking to Hank outside the RV): "That's right. Probable cause needs to be readily apparent."

Walt (whispering to Jesse): "Private domicile and I will not be harassed."

Hank: "I give you three seconds to get your ass out here. One, two..."

Jesse: "This is my own private domicile and I will not be harassed! Bitch!"

TT:

Walt: "Mistä tiesit, että ne olivat siinä, ennen kuin irrotit teipin? Sano se."

Jesse: "Mistä tiesit, että ne olivat siinä, ennen kuin irrotit teipin?"

Wreck yard owner: "Niinpä. Aiheellisen epäilyn syyn on näyttävä selvästi."

Walt: "Yksityinen asumukseni, jossa minua ei saa ahdistella."

Hank: "Sinulla on kolme sekuntia aikaa tulla pihalle sieltä. Yksi, kaksi..."

Jesse: "Tämä on yksityinen asumukseni, jossa minua ei saa ahdistella. Horo!"

Back translation:

Walt: "How did you know that they were there before you took off the tape? Say it."

Jesse: "How did you know that they were there before you took off the tape?"

Wreck yard owner: “Indeed. The grounds of a probable cause must be clearly visible.”

Walt: “My private domicile where it is forbidden to harass me. Slut!”

(Season 3, Episode 6: *Sunset*)

Of the speaker-oriented slang properties, the “bitch” in the original dialogue meets the criteria of informality and obscenity. Of the hearer-oriented properties, the utterance meets the criteria of strong impression, offensiveness and aggressiveness – in this instance, Jesse uses the word out of sheer anger and aggression towards Hank. To Jesse’s mind there is no playfulness or humour involved, but there is an element of comedy present in both Walt’s reaction to Jesse saying “bitch”, and in the fact that the audience gets to hear yet another “bitch” by Jesse, which means that the “meta playfulness” property is picked up by the series’ viewers.

The Finnish translation “horo” (slut) does tick all the same slang property boxes as the original “bitch” except for playfulness. In this way the translation can be described as accurate and sufficient as essentially the same substance is communicated: “horo” is as informal and obscene a word as “bitch”, and a proper choice for offending and making a strong impression on the hearer. It also conveys aggression equally well. However, the playfulness criterion would require immutability of the refrain: since “bitch” is not translated consistently as “horo” throughout the series, the playfulness effect created by the immutability of the word’s usage in the original dialogue is irrevocably lost. Indeed, there are now three different translations of “bitch” when Jesse uses it to insult another person: “ämmä”, “narttu” and “horo”, the last of which is not a dictionary translation but more akin to “slut”, “whore”, “ho” or “skank” and is a colloquial pejorative for a sexually active and promiscuous woman (Sanakirja.org 2019).

However, despite the absence of the playfulness aspect in the Finnish subtitles and their increasing deviation from the source text’s immutable style, the comedic effect of “bitch” in this translation is not completely lost as the “bitch” in question has a double comedic function: firstly, there is the inappropriateness of the insult and its contrast

with the formal speech preceding it, namely the formal legal jargon. Walt's disbelief and bewilderment for Jesse blurting out an unnecessarily provocative "bitch" stands in contrast with Jesse's agitated and nervous mood. This works just as well in the Finnish translation as in the original dialogue since this effect is not dependent on consistent translation of "bitch". And, yet, again, the feedback effect allows the viewer to hear "bitch" being said, which may salvage the playfulness property to some degree.

But, even as helpful as the feedback effect might be, the comedic value created by the recurring nature of Jesse's refrain is not present in the subtitles. In the original dialogue, the frequent utterance of "bitch" gives an impression that Jesse may be somewhat compelled to dish out "bitches" even when it is not appropriate or smart; as if it was a tick, instinct, or compulsive habit of his. Even though "bitch" is an offensive word, its seriousness and offensiveness are worn off through its use as an arguably inadvertent catch phrase, making it comedic in Jesse's repertoire. This level of humour is picked up only by the audience, though, but it is lost in the Finnish subtitles due to the inconsistent and varied translation of "bitch" throughout the series. Translating this "bitch" as "horo" would achieve the same humorous effect as the original use had it been translated consistently as such throughout the series so far, but now it is just another swearword and insult made comedic only by the fact that the use is inappropriate in the context of the scene and because of Walt's silent, baffled reaction; the "style" aspect – namely the immutability of the refrain – is lost, and so is one important constituent of humour in this instance. This hurts Jesse's characterization.

Translating "bitch" as "horo" in this instance is not dictated by the limitations of subtitles. The "bitch" is said separately and given a great deal of time and space. The "horo" translation may not be truly direct, but it functions like "ämmä" or "narttu" to a degree that the drawbacks of relying on interpretative resemblance are not a concern here. However, since "bitch" typifies a notable character trait and the form of the word is important, the Finnish translation cannot be deemed fully satisfactory. This choice is insufficient also from the point of view that Boase-Beier provides: when style has an important role in the text, direct translation is an ideal or even obligatory strategy (Boase-Beier 2006: 44). In this example, the substance is communicated accurately and

in a way that makes the scene work, but the equally important stylistic layer is disregarded at the cost of characterization and fully realized humour.

As one might expect, direct translation is an apt strategy for preserving the intended characterization in the Finnish subtitles. However, what one might not foresee is that it produces a varied translation of “bitch”, at least partly due to the fact that “bitch” has two direct equivalents in Finnish, namely “ämmä” and “narttu”. Secondly, keeping the translation faithful to the style of the source text (the immutable use of “bitch”) throughout the Finnish subtitles is challenging; as noted earlier in the thesis, direct translation as a be-all-end-all strategy would inevitably risk producing translations that do not sound natural to Finnish viewers. Albeit ideal for handling the style of the source text, such translations would arguably fall short of relaying the content of “bitch”. Direct translation thus illustrates well the difficulty of balancing between style and content.

The high representation of direct translation strategy in the insult category is largely explained by the ease and straightforwardness of translating single-word insults: they do not require much space or time on screen, and they often appear in a rather isolated position; because of this separateness, they can be dealt with without the rest of the utterance affecting the translation. “Bitch” is also often translatable as either “ämmä” or “narttu”, and there is no need for further domestication. These factors largely explain the preference for applying direct translation to “bitches” that function as insults.

4.3.2 Hyponym

In this category, I will discuss “bitches” that are translated using hyponyms. This means that the translations are indirect and interpreted to a degree, domesticated even. Despite the “bitch” translations in the hyponym category being swearwords, they do not function as interpersonal insults like the direct translations “bitch” and “ämmä” do. Moreover, the function of the original “bitch” in the next examples is changed: by replacing “bitch” with a taboo word that is not insulting on an interpersonal level, the

translator changes a part of the interaction's nature, and, in essence, what Jesse means with his retorts.

As the result of a botched drug deal, Walt and Jesse have to dispose of the body of Jesse's former business partner Emilio, and kill Emilio's dangerous cousin Krazy-8 whom they have imprisoned in Jesse's basement. Since neither Walt nor Jesse is eager to choose between the two unpleasant tasks, they agree to decide with a coin flip that Jesse disposes of the body while Walt deals with Krazy-8 whom they are afraid to let go in fear of retaliation.

In order to make Emilio's body disappear efficiently and inconspicuously, Walt devises a plan to solve the body in strong acid. He gives Jesse detailed instructions for purchasing an appropriate plastic container that can withstand the acid, but Jesse grows frustrated with trying to find the right type of container and settles on dissolving the body in the bathtub upstairs at his apartment, thinking the material does not matter. The acid then eats through the bathtub and the bathroom floor, and the partly dissolved body, entrails and blood-soaked acid crash downstairs, resulting in a horrible mess.

As the last straw, Walt becomes upset upon learning that Jesse has endangered the safety of his family by accidentally revealing Walt and his son's names to Krazy-8. When Walt confronts Jesse about this, he catches Jesse smoking methamphetamine intended for sale. A heated argument and physical fight breaks out between the two. Jesse runs to his car and attempts to leave, but Walt yanks him out.

(11)

ST:

Walt: "Where the hell do you think you're going?" [Walt yanks Jesse out of his car]

Jesse: "Back off, man! Jesus!"

Walt: "We got work to do!"

Jesse: "No, no, you – you got work to do! I did my part!"

Walt: "Do you mean that obscenity that I spent the last two hours cleaning up? That is your contribution?"

Jesse: "Yo, kiss my pink ass, man! I didn't ask for any of this. How am I supposed to live here now, huh? My whole house smells like toe cheese and dry cleaning."

Walt: "Because you didn't follow my instructions!"

Jesse: "Oh heil Hitler, bitch!"

TT:

Walt: "Mitä helvettiä luulet tekeväsi?"

Jesse: "Irti!"

Walt: "Homma pitää hoitaa loppuun."

Jesse: "Hoida sitten! Tein jo oman osuuteni."

Walt: "Tarkoitatko sitä sotkua, jonka sain siivota?"

Jesse: "Idea ei ollut minun. Miten täällä voi muka enää asua? Koko talo löyhkää."

Walt: "Et noudattanut ohjeitani."

Jesse: "*Heil* Hitler, saatana."

Back translation:

Walt: "What the hell do you think you're doing?"

Jesse: "Let go!"

Walt: "The task must be finished."

Jesse: "Then finish it! I already did my part."

Walt: "Do you mean the mess that I had to clean up?"

Jesse: "It wasn't my idea. How is one supposed to live here anymore? The whole house stinks."

Walt: "You did not follow my instructions."

Jesse: “*Heil* Hitler, satan.”

(Season 1, episode 3: *And the Bag’s in the River*)

Once again, the “bitch” in the source text ticks the informality, vulgarity, strong impression, offensiveness, aggressiveness and playfulness boxes on the list of slang properties: “bitch” is an informal expression and below educated language standards, and Jesse utters it out of anger and exasperation. The “bitch” is an insult targeted at Walt, and the line as a whole is imbued with hostility and defiance; the “heil Hitler” retort, and calling other people Hitler or Nazi in the same vein, is a colloquial rhetoric of expressing dislike for one’s overly or unreasonably rigid, inflexible and overbearing ways, and the Hitler rhetoric is typically voiced by someone in a subordinate position to the person accused of acting like a Nazi. This applies to Jesse who is regularly shown to be annoyed and frustrated by Walt’s working habits which are notably more rigid than Jesse’s; furthermore, while Jesse views Walt and himself as equal partners now, Walt seems to have a condescending attitude towards Jesse, which probably stems from their background as a teacher and student and the dynamics inherent to those roles.

In the target text, “bitch” is translated as “saatana”. It translates directly as “satan”, but functions much like English-language interjections “goddammit” or “for fuck’s sake” in Finnish; it is essential to note that Jesse is not calling Walt “Satan” as an insult in the subtitles, but making a generally harsh interjection that happens to be rooted in religion vocabulary. This is a common feature among Finnish swearwords. Because of this change in function, the translation loses its nature as an insult directed at Walt and takes on the function of a non-personal interjection instead. Despite this difference in type, the “saatana” translation still has the slang properties of informality, vulgarity, strong impression, aggressiveness and partial offensiveness; “saatana” is a rather strong swearword in the Finnish language, even though it can be used in a less serious tone. However, “saatana” is a mere intensifier in the Finnish subtitles and thus does not have the element of direct interpersonal offensiveness, but it is a taboo word nevertheless. This grants the translation only partial offensiveness.

Even though the “bitch” is not translated directly, rendering it as a harsh swearword retains much of the original slang properties to the point that Jesse’s characterization remains largely the same in the Finnish subtitles. Granted, the hyponym strategy straightforwardly strips the target text Jesse of his characteristic refrain and thus deletes the slang property of audience-perceived playfulness again, but the translation is to be lauded for its successful domestication of Jesse’s use of “bitch”; the intensifier “saatana” does admittedly sound more natural in the Finnish subtitles than, say, insults “ämmä” or “narttu”. Perhaps this preference for domestication through a hyponym was the motivation behind the translator’s choice, since temporal or spatial restrictions certainly were not compelling factors here: Jesse’s full line consists of only three spoken words, and his next line does not follow immediately. Walt’s line “Et noudattanut ohjeitani” is displayed simultaneously on screen with Jesse’s “*Heil* Hitler, saatana”, but the maximum number of lines and characters per line allows for this effortlessly, so there is no need arising from technical restrictions to exclude the swearword from the subtitles. Simply put, the “bitch” is easy to include in the subtitles.

Even though “saatana” works well in the translation – it conveys many of the original slang properties and has a natural flow to it in the target language – the hyponym strategy is a questionable solution in the light of relevance theory’s suggestion that direct translation ought to be used when the style of the source text plays an important role (Boase-Beier 2006: 44). The immutability of Jesse’s “bitch” refrain is a stylistic choice indeed and perpetuates the playfulness slang property for the viewers, so relying on a translation strategy other than direct translation is a disservice to the source text’s characterization. However, on the other hand, relevance theory also suggests that translators are to convey the intended meaning of the text, and that interpretation is well within the rights of translators (Boase-Beier 2006: 44). The “saatana” in the subtitles does bear interpretative resemblance to the “bitch” in the source text in that they convey adequately comparable mindsets, motivations and intentions. But yet again, since the original “bitch” is used as a vehicle of characterization and it is a specific linguistic item as such, the drawback of interpretative resemblance is present: it does not and cannot replicate the characterization of the original item to the fullest or at all (Ivarsson & Carroll 1998: 5).

This is the case with the example discussed. Jesse frequently uttering the same swearword as if he was not capable of varying his language out of some kind of simple-mindedness contributes to his characterization as a naïve, comical and endearing character; indeed, the scene capitalizes on Jesse's appearance and clumsiness in order to strengthen this characterization. As Jesse retorts "Heil Hitler, bitch" at Walt, he makes a quick Hitler impersonation by placing his fingers under his nose as a mustache and hastily raising his other arm in the air in a mocking Nazi salute. Irrespective of the serious and angry tone of the altercation and its morbid cause, Jesse's body language and oversized clothes make his appearance stand out in a quite comical contrast to the situation they are facing. In addition, when Jesse is about to leave after the altercation, he has to climb back into his car through the window instead of the door because the door is jammed shut. This adds a great deal of levity and humour to both his characterization and the scene overall.

This early into the series, the general tone is not yet very serious or dark, and many otherwise heavy or dramatic scenes have an air of comedy and absurdity to them. Therefore the immutability of the "bitch" refrain and the characterization and comedic effects it entails are important, but not replicated by the hyponym strategy; hyponyms, along with other variation in the translation of "bitch", reduce Jesse's overall characterization even though hyponyms may succeed in conveying the intended original slang properties in individual contexts.

The next example is quite a bit similar to the previous one. Here, too, an exasperated "bitch" is translated as a general taboo interjection, but it is not targeted at anyone. In episode *Granite State* (season 5, episode 15) Jesse has been imprisoned in an underground cage by Neo-Nazis. When the occasion arises, Jesse tries to make an escape but struggles with trying to get the bolt lock on the door open. Jesse mutters to himself out of frustration and despair.

(12)

ST:

Jesse: “Come on, bitch!”

TT:

Jesse: “Aukea nyt, helvetti!”

Back translation:

Jesse: “Open now, hell!”

(Season 5, episode 15: *Granite State*)

In the target text, Jesse utters “bitch” out of frustration, despair and anger arising from him having trouble with opening the bolt lock. As such, the “bitch” is not targeted at anyone – Jesse is alone – and functions as a mere expression of the negative feelings he is experiencing in his current predicament. Still, the “bitch” displays the informality and vulgarity slang properties along with some aggressiveness. Since Jesse is alone, he is unlikely to be trying to make a strong impression on anyone, and neither is he trying to offend anybody. The colourfulness property is not pertinent here, either. Of the hearer-oriented slang properties only the definition of the playfulness property is thus met (namely the immutability of the recurring “bitch” refrain) which is not particularly surprising as there are no hearers present except the audience.

Like in the previous example, the Finnish translation “helvetti” functions the way “goddammit” or “for fuck’s sake” would function in the English language. “Helvetti” is not a swearword used for interpersonal insults, but a more general level interjection signaling anger, surprise, frustration or other similar emotions that typically require venting and a linguistic outlet. “Helvetti” is informal and vulgar, and has the potential of being used to startle or shock the hearer; “helvetti” is not an insulting swearword on an interpersonal level, yet it is a taboo word and thus it meets the definition of offensiveness to a degree. “Helvetti” can also be used to signal aggression but its role is, again, that of a non-personal intensifier. The colourfulness and playfulness slang properties do not apply to “helvetti” in this instance.

“Helvetti” communicates a similar level of frustration, despair and anger as “bitch” does on the original soundtrack, which makes it an apt translation content-wise; yet again, the original style is lost through the use of a hyponym. If one were to assess the accuracy of the translation of *Breaking Bad* on the basis of this scene alone, the domestication approach appears to be a laudable strategy, and a compelling one: content-wise, direct translation could have resulted in a somewhat non-natural sounding translation, so translating “come on, bitch” in a way that the same thought would be expressed in Finnish is understandable, and especially so when one considers interpretative resemblance and the notion of translation as an interpretative craft communicating intended meanings beneath the surface level of words and style (Boase-Beier 2006: 44). As Jesse’s line is very short, it can be paired with a correspondingly short subtitle without running into the temporal or spatial limitations of the subtitling format.

The next example takes place at Jesse’s house. He has held a big party that has lasted several days. Guests are slowly starting to leave, including Jesse’s best friends Badger and Skinny-Pete. Jesse would like them to stay, and stops them at the door. He engages in a conversation with Badger.

(13)

ST:

Jesse: “Seriously? Where’re you two going?”

Badger: “Jesse, I’ve been awake for like three straight days. I’m turning into a sleaze stack.”

Jesse: “So crash here. It’s not like I ain’t got the space.”

Badger: “Yeah that’s cool and all but I think I got, like, this cat, I think I’m, like, supposed to feed it.”

Jesse: “Whatever, you little bitch. What about you?” [Turns to speak to Skinny-Pete]

TT:

Jesse: “Mihin te olette menossa?”

Badger: ”Olen ollut hereillä kolme päivää. Muutun pian liskoksi.”

Jesse: “Nuku täällä. Onhan täällä tilaa.”

Badger: “Joo, ei siinä mitään, mutta minulla taitaa olla kissa kotona. Minun pitäisi kai ruokkia se.”

Jesse: “Ihan sama, molopää. Entäs sinä sitten?”

Back translation:

Jesse: “Where are you going?”

Badger: “I have been awake for three days. I will soon turn into a lizard.”

Jesse: “Sleep here. There is room here.”

Badger: “Yeah, that is alright, but I may have a cat at home. I should probably feed it.”

Jesse: “Whatever, dickhead. How about you?”

(Season 4, episode 2: *Thirty-Eight Snub*)

In this example, “bitch” displays the informality and vulgarity slang properties without a question: the former is an inherent property of slang, and the latter is given because “bitch” is a taboo word. However, the full realization of the hearer-oriented properties is at least partially debatable in this case. Since Badger is Jesse’s close friend, Jesse is not likely to call him “bitch” with the intention of startling, shocking or offending him particularly; also, even though the “bitch” communicates disappointment and probably an intention of taunting Badger a bit, this kind of rather mild and even playful use of “bitch” is devoid of any genuine viciousness or hostility, so the aggressiveness slang property is not really present.

While the “bitch” can be regarded as a friendly yet exasperated taunt, it is set apart from most instances of “bitch” by the fact that it is a part of a longer expression: “you little bitch”. It is not just “whatever, bitch” which, Jesse’s vocabulary, would hardly be nothing more than impersonal and basically meaningless padding, but “you little bitch” is a phrase that could be used by most characters in *Breaking Bad*. It is akin to the common phrase “son of a bitch”, the instances of which I have excluded from this analysis due to “bitch” being a fixated and idiomatic part of the saying, and therefore it

does not fall within the focus of this thesis. “Whatever, you little bitch” is close to such an expression despite not being of such fixated nature, but it is still unidiomatic enough to warrant attention here.

Jesse’s use of “bitch” in this particular context could be taken as Jesse mocking Badger for going home early. Basically “little bitch” could be substituted with “pussy”, “wimp” or “sissy” and it would carry the relatively same meaning. Essentially, the “bitch” here connotes negatively seen qualities such as submissiveness, weakness and meekness which could be regarded as antitheses to traditional masculinity.

Now, the Finnish translation “molopää” is not preceded by anything similar to “you little”. As the back translation demonstrates, it is simply just “whatever, dickhead”. “Molopää” is equally as informal and vulgar as “bitch”, and it also carries some offensiveness and aggressiveness. “Molopää” is, however, a rather stern and aggressive insult in Finnish and possibly tonally somewhat too harsh of a translation considering the tone and the way Jesse says “bitch” on the original soundtrack, namely rather quickly and without an emphasis. Moreover, “molopää” is quite general an insult and does not imply the belittling connotations of “you little bitch”. In this sense, the translation produces a slightly different underlying meaning in Jesse’s choice of words. And, again, the inconsistent Finnish translation of “bitch” takes away the playfulness slang property. The “molopää” hyponym runs the risk of characterizing Jesse as more impolite and more aggressive in the situation than he appears to be by his original use of “bitch”. Also, the implications of “you little bitch” are not carried over to the shorter and different translation.

Temporal and spatial restrictions are not dictating factors in translating Jesse’s line which is short and terse, and there is no rapid dialogue going on in the scene. “Molopää” is an acceptable application of the domestication strategy in that it does convey the content of the “bitch” in this context, but the style – the immutability of “bitch” – is gone. Interestingly, the direct translation “ämmä” would have been a suitable choice as it would have conveyed both the content and the style, and the

connotations of “you little bitch” better than “molopää”. The translator probably has not recognized “bitch” as an item of marked speech and viewed it as a throwaway slur which can be approached with the domestication strategy.

All in all, the hyponym strategy does not produce a characterization notably different from the source text. The changes that do happen are the result of hyponyms tending to alter nuances in Jesse’s speech. The hyponym strategy can be viewed as a branch of domestication since it is typical in the examples discussed that the “bitch” becomes an interjection without the element of interpersonal offensiveness; in other words, the type of the swear word changes. This often entails the removal of all interpersonal sense, for example in example (12) where the “bitch” in the source text can be interpreted to be targeted at the lock, but “bitch” is translated as a general interjection in the target text. Obviously, the varied use of hyponyms fails to replicate the stylistic consistency of the source text. This emphasis on delivering the content at the cost of style in the given examples is not dictated by the technical limitations of subtitles as they would allow for a multitude of translational solution with ease. Rather, the motivation behind the hyponym strategy seems to be indeed the focus on producing natural-sounding translations.

So far the translation strategies discussed have not affected Jesse’s characterization in a particularly significant manner, but the omission strategy that I will deal with next is more likely to result in altered characterization in the Finnish subtitles.

4.3.3 Omission

Here omission means the exclusion of “bitch” from the Finnish translation. As Table 1 indicates, omission has been a much favoured translation strategy regarding “bitches” that function as padding expressions: of the analyzed sample, omission was applied to only four insulting “bitches”, but to 11 padding “bitches”. This trend can be explained by the fact that interpersonal elements that communicate relations between speakers and define character, such as interjections, greetings and formulas of courtesy, are often omitted due to them apparently carrying little informational value. Moreover, such

features often have somewhat isolated positions in sentences – for example, at the beginning or at end of the sentence or between commas – which makes them separable elements. (Díaz Cintas & Remael 2007: 165) As separable and low in information, their omission can be generally deemed acceptable or even preferable for the ease of reading and the technical limitations of subtitles.

On the other hand, subtitlers ought to respect characters' manner of speaking, namely style, not only the content of their words (Díaz Cintas & Remael 2007: 187). This is arguably difficult to reconcile with the apparent redundancy of interpersonal features like interjections and greetings, which is the very crux of this thesis. Next I will discuss typical examples of “bitch” omissions and how this strategy impacts Jesse's characterization. In the next example, Jesse has recovered from the injuries sustained by Hank's assault and is now released from the hospital. Jesse's friend Skinny-Pete is coming to pick him up and drive him home, so a nurse takes Jesse outside in a wheelchair to wait for the friend to arrive.

(14)

ST:

Nurse: “Could it be okay waiting here by yourself?”

Jesse: “Yeah. Whatever.” [Jesse takes a pack of cigarettes from his pocket]

Nurse: “Sir, if you'd like to smoke, you need to be another twenty feet from the door.”

Jesse: “So roll me further, bitch.”

TT:

Nurse: “Pärjäätekö täällä yksin?”

Jesse: “Pärjään. Ihan sama.”

Nurse: “Jos haluatte polttaa, teidän on siirryttävä kauemmas ovesta.”

Jesse: “Työnnä sitten minut kauemmas.”

Back translation:

Nurse: “Will you be alright here alone?”

Jesse: “I will. Whatever.”

Nurse: “If you want to smoke, you need to move further away from the door.”

Jesse: “Push me further away then.”

(Season 3, episode 8: *I See You*)

In the source text, Jesse says “bitch” more as a padding word than any kind of a straight insult at the nurse. The assault has left Jesse in a mentally and emotionally dark place, and he behaves in an apathetic and sulky manner. When the nurse remarks that Jesse cannot smoke at his current spot, Jesse’s reply communicates a sense of indifference and even arrogance which are in line with his actions: he proceeds to light the cigarette despite the nurse’s remark, and there is a commanding tone in his voice. He also waves his hand nonchalantly as though signaling the nurse to feel free to move him further from the doors, but he is not going to do it himself. Jesse’s laconic reply comes across as comical, too; the nurse speaks politely and calls Jesse “sir”, yet Jesse talks back like he would talk to a peer of his. This kind of difference in register is a commonly used source of humour in the series, mainly manifesting in interactions between Walt and Jesse. It works here as well.

On this basis, Jesse’s “bitch” meets the speaker-oriented slang properties of informality and vulgarity, but perhaps only the hearer-oriented properties of strong impression, colourfulness and playfulness. Even though the “bitch” is definitely not friendly here, it is not particularly aggressive or hostile either. The strong impression slang property is fulfilled in that Jesse wants to signal his indifference; this may not be a particularly strong impression, but an impression nonetheless. The offensiveness property is partly ticked by “bitch” being an offensive word, but since Jesse’s intention is not to go out of his way to offend the nurse, the offensiveness property is not fully displayed. As a padding expression, the “bitch” serves to “spice up” Jesse’s line, so the colourfulness property is thus met. As for the playfulness property, it is again present by default; once more Jesse utters “bitch” for the amusement of the viewers.

“Bitch” has been completely omitted from the target text. This wipes away all the slang properties from the Finnish translation, and there are no compensatory elements of markedness to create at least some semblance of interpretative resemblance. The translation is a simple imperative without obscenities or taboo language. When observing only the subtitles, the omission of “bitch” results in total loss of Jesse’s

arrogant and indifferent tone. There is no informality, vulgarity, effort to make a strong impression, or intention of making his reply more colourful. The playfulness element is also lost. If not particularly polite, Jesse comes across as neutral and formal, which is not the intended characterization in the source text – not in this scene or in the overall series.

Omitting “bitch” in this instance can bring about some level of perceived discrepancy among the viewers: the “bitch” is clearly audible, and the viewers who have watched the series from the beginning instantly pick up the refrain and probably expect to see it replicated in the subtitles at least somehow. Since the “bitch” is omitted, the solution may leave the viewers thinking that the subtitles are “lacking” (Díaz & Cintas 2007: 56), and Jesse comes across as less laconic and less apathetic than in the source text. This can potentially disrupt the viewing experience. On a related note, translating interjections and other items of marked speech is important when they contribute to characterization. The translator should have recognized “bitch” as an item of marked speech and tool of characterization, and treated the refrain accordingly.

The reason why the “bitch” is omitted in this instance is hard to come by, save for the speculation that the translator indeed did not recognize “bitch” as a recurring tool of characterization and a stylistic feature, or he or she made a decision to prioritize content over style. Content-wise the “bitch” in the scene does not add much, so it is to be excluded. Still, it seems like an odd solution: there are no pressing time or space constraints as Jesse’s line is short and the “bitch” is in an isolated position at the end of the sentence. As per a suggestion of relevance theory, the “bitch” has just not been deemed relevant enough.

The next example is from the tenth episode of season three, *Fly*. Jesse and Walt are cleaning up laboratory equipment, which is hard work. Jesse is disappointed that they have to clean up after their work shift themselves, as they are highly-paid chemists of a wealthy drug cartel, and he did not expect menial “dirty work” to be part of their job. He expected other people to take care of that, and now complains about this unpleasant let-down to Walt.

(15)

ST:

Jesse: “You know, if this is supposed to be all like major league and all, we should have equipment maintainer guys. And water boys. You know. Yo, Gatorade me, bitch.”

Subtitles:

Jesse: “Jos tämän pitäisi olla huipputasoa, meillä pitäisi ainakin olla joku huoltamassa kampeita. Ja vesipoikia. Gatoradea tänne.”

Back translation:

Jesse: ”If this is supposed to be top level, we should at least have someone doing maintenance on the stuff. And water boys. Give me Gatorade.”

(Season 3, episode 10: *Fly*)

The “bitch” in the source text is a throwaway padding expression which is not targeted at anyone present; it is just a linguistic habit of Jesse. It can be argued that by “bitch” Jesse is referring to the imaginary water boys, telling them to toss him a bottle of sports beverage. As such the “bitch” does not carry much meaning or content, but it is an inseparable part of his character. Of the speaker-oriented slang properties, “bitch” meets informality and vulgarity, but from among the hearer-oriented properties it meets only the colourfulness and playfulness properties: the “bitch” enlivens Jesse’s line, and the viewers are treated to another “bitch” by Jesse. The strong impression property is debatable, but probably not Jesse’s intention here; the “bitch” is primarily an extra referential word. Nor does Jesse intend to offend anyone or appear aggressive, so those slang properties are not present either. Jesse’s underlying motivation for saying “bitch” in this scene is simply that it is the way he speaks; maybe there is some degree of frustration and disappointment at the lack of water boys and other assistants, so the “bitch” might also be an expression of those feelings.

“Bitch” is completely missing from the Finnish subtitles, but the translation is a rather impolite command or demand. It is not particularly rude, but something that could be yelled at a water boy, given that the speaker deems the water boy to be in an inferior position to himself or herself. In this sense, the commanding and informal tone of “Gatorade me, bitch” is admittedly somewhat replicated in the subtitles despite the

absence of marked speech; there is a hue of urgency and slight aggression or arrogance in the Finnish translation. However, the vulgarity slang property is missing along with strong impression, offensiveness, colourfulness, and playfulness properties. Even though one can interpret a hint of aggressiveness from the translation, it is notable that it does not come from slang or other comparable elements of marked speech. The slangness is completely missing, and only the informality and very slight aggressiveness are rendered in the translation. Jesse's characterization as an avid speaker of slang and as a somewhat simplistic language user is greatly reduced because of the omission.

Technical limitations of subtitling do not explain the omission of "bitch": once again, Jesse's line is very short and easy to fit within the temporal and spatial parameters of subtitling. There is no idiomatic speech convoluting the translation of "bitch", either; the refrain is in an isolated and relatively easily translatable position at the end of the sentence. However, a direct translation along the lines of "Gatoradea tänne, ämmä" would perhaps sound somewhat odd to the Finnish viewers, so some degree of domestication arguably makes sense. The "bitch" contributes to Jesse's characterization, so translating it would have been advisable. Even if direct translation would have been a suboptimal strategy due to the difficulty of producing a natural sounding translation in this instance, a hyponym for example would have at least salvaged a few more slang properties of "bitch" and done more justice to the original characterization. Furthermore, as is often the case with omissions, perceived discrepancy may cause the viewers to find the translation incomplete and even think that the translator has forgot to translate the "bitch". This is detrimental to the viewing experience.

Next I will discuss two less typical examples of omitted "bitches". What makes these examples noteworthy in the omission category is that both contain a direct insult, yet the "bitches" have been omitted. These are clear exceptions in the trend, as direct insults are typically translated directly on a consistent basis.

In the 12th episode of season 2, *Phoenix*, Jesse and his girlfriend Jane Margolis have been doing drugs in Jesse's apartment even though Jane is supposed to be in

rehabilitation. After Jane misses a support group session, her father Donald, who rents the apartment to Jesse, suspects that her daughter may have relapsed. In the scene, Donald storms into Jesse's apartment and finds her daughter and Jesse inside with various drug paraphernalia scattered around the house. Furious, Donald assaults Jesse who then picks up a baseball bat in self-defense. A heated altercation ensues.

(16)

ST:

Jesse: "Get away from me, man! Back off!"

Jane: "Jesse, no! Dad! Okay, everybody just calm down!"

Jesse: "What's with you, yo, huh? 'Cos I'll seriously bust you up."

Donald: "You miserable little smack head. Get the hell out."

Jesse: "Hey, I pay my rent, bitch! I got civil rights."

TT:

Jesse: "Näpiti irti minusta. Ala vetää."

Jane: "Jesse, ei! Rauhoittukaa kaikki!"

Jesse: "Mikä sinua riepoo? Täältä pesee oikeasti."

Donald: "Hiton narkkari. Painu helvettiin!"

Jesse: "Maksan vuokrani! Minulla on kansalaisoikeuksia."

Back translation:

Jesse: "Get your hands off me. Get lost."

Jane: "Jesse, no! Everybody calm down!"

Jesse: "What's your problem? I'll show you, seriously."

Donald: "Damn junkie. Go to hell!"

Jesse: "I pay my rent! I have civil rights."

(Season 2, episode 12: *Phoenix*)

The mood of the scene is very tense and Jesse is enraged by Donald's attack which he deems completely unsolicited and unreasonable. Jesse is strongly on the defense: he appeals to paying his rent regularly and having civil rights which, in his mind, ought to grant him full inviolability in this situation. The "bitch" here fulfills the informality, vulgarity, strong impression, offensiveness, aggressiveness, and playfulness properties – in other words, all on the list except for colourfulness. The "bitch" signifies a great deal of hostility and anger, and Jesse really wants to appear striking to his assailant. He is very unlikely to be using "bitch" in this situation to enliven his speech or to make an attempt at appearing amusing to Donald or Jane. The playfulness property is for the audience who get to recognize the recurrence of Jesse's trademark refrain and draw some characteristic humour out of it.

The Finnish translation is devoid of all slang properties since the "bitch" is omitted, and there is no attempt at replicating the tone of the source text through other linguistic features like in the previous example. The Finnish translation is basically very statement-like, almost descriptive; Jesse pays his rent and has civil rights. There is no informality, vulgarity, aggression or offensiveness in that. The omission renders Jesse's reply as a bit dry and even calm even though his mood is the absolute opposite in the scene. The translational solution here changes Jesse's characterization into an opposite of what the source text intends to convey.

Jesse's line is short and requires little space and time to be displayed as a subtitle on screen; therefore the technical limitations of subtitles are of no concern here and do not explain the omission of "bitch". Indeed, this example is a curious one in that the "bitch" in question is a clear direct insult targeted at Donald out of anger, yet unlike most insults, this instance is omitted altogether for some reason. There seems to be no compelling reason to omit "bitch". The refrain would have been unequivocally easy to translate and include in the subtitles as a direct translation due to the straightforward function and isolated position of the "bitch" at the end of the sentence. However,

linguistic items of this nature are often excluded since such interpersonal features usually contribute little to the overall message and rarely matter much (Díaz Cintas & Remael 2007: 165). Then again, when greetings, interjections, formulas of courtesy and other such elements contribute to characterization, they ought to be retained. Moreover, Jesse yelling “bitch” at Donald is an integral part of his communication in the scene.

The next example takes place near the end of the series. Walt and Jesse have had their final falling-out and they have gone their separate ways. At this point, their relationship is extremely hostile. Jesse is co-operating with the police and calls Walt with the intention of deceiving him into accidentally revealing the location he has hidden barrels full of drug money. Jesse knows the type of barrel Walt has used and has sent him a fake photograph of an unearthed barrel filled with dollar bills, and now threatens to burn it all unless Walt rushes to the site as fast as possible. The ruse manages to deceive panicking Walt who begins to beg Jesse not to destroy his earnings.

(17)

ST:

Walt: “Look, Jesse, I don’t know what you’re planning on doing here, but...”

Jesse: “Well, I’ll give you a hint, Walt. It involves a couple of five gallon cans of gasoline and a lighter.”

Walt: ”No no no no no, Jesse, please, listen to me.”

Jesse: “No, you listen to me, bitch.”

TT:

Walt: ”Jesse, en tiedä mitä suunnittelet, mutta...”

Jesse: ”Annan sinulle vinkin, Walt. Siihen liittyy pari 20 litran bensakanisteria ja sytkäri.”

Walt: ”Ei, ei, ole kiltti, kuuntele minua.”

Jesse: ”Ei, kuuntele sinä minua.”

Back translation:

Walt: "Jesse, I don't know what you're planning, but..."

Jesse: "I'll give you a hint, Walt. It involves a couple of 20 liter gasoline cans and a lighter."

Walt: "No, no, please, listen to me."

Jesse: "No, you listen to me."

(Season 5, episode 13: *To 'hajiilee*)

In the source text, Jesse is spiteful and seemingly enjoys tormenting Walt: he has finally gained the upper hand and Walt is at his mercy. The "bitch" in the source text is a spiteful taunt. It fulfills the slang properties of informality, vulgarity, strong impression, offensiveness, aggressiveness, and playfulness for the audience; Jesse does not intend to appear amusing to Walt. The "bitch" Jesse says is right at home at the end of his sentence telling Walt to stop talking. Albeit a deceit, Jesse is now finally in a position where he can tell Walt what to do instead of taking orders from his former high school teacher, which is a complete reversal of their interpersonal dynamics during the majority of the series' events up to this point: this is the moment when Jesse is in charge and there is no way Walt can overpower or override him. In a way, this moment is Jesse's long-awaited gratification for enduring having been put down, called names and belittled for so long by not only Walt but many people in his life.

Granted, some of that mood and content is present in the Finnish translation despite lacking "bitch". The reply "Ei, kuuntele sinä minua" ("No, you listen to me") does convey a somewhat comparable mood of shutting Walt down triumphantly and with intent, albeit it is admittedly less intense than in the source text. The translation does not have the properties of informality, vulgarity, strong impression, offensiveness, (fully realized) aggressiveness, or playfulness. The translation is not insulting and does create a notably changed indirect characterization of Jesse's personality and him as a language user. Jesse's characterization is markedly different in the subtitle.

Even though interpersonal elements are often omitted and this can be used as reasoning for excluding "bitch", it is curious that Jesse calling Walt by his name has been included

in the subtitle, but “bitch” has been not. Such an interpersonal feature as calling the other person by their name is a highly likely candidate for omission in subtitles as it carries very little meaning and is not a particular feature of Jesse’s character by any means. However, “bitch” – which is not only an important tool of characterization but also a weighty part of Jesse’s communication in the scene – is omitted altogether. This solution is somewhat atypical and basically does the opposite of what for example relevance theory recommends. Spatial or temporal limitations of subtitles do not require “bitch” to be omitted as there is a plenty of space and time to display the full translation of Jesse’s line. Furthermore, the “bitch” is unproblematic to translate because of the refrain’s isolated position at the end of the sentence and its function as a direct insult; “ämmä” or “narttu” would have been easy and advisable solutions.

In the next example, a fly has managed to get inside the laboratory and Walt refuses to continue working until the fly, a “dangerous contaminant” as he puts it, has been caught and removed. Jesse does not understand Walt’s obsession with the fly and his partner’s insistence on putting the day’s work on halt for such a seemingly petty reason, so he tries to keep on working and meeting the day’s production quota without Walt noticing. In order to distract Walt and hide the noises that using the equipment causes, Jesse rambles on about a random topic. He is simultaneously using the story to give Walt a subtle hint that such a small contaminant as a fly should not be taken too seriously.

(18)

ST:

Jesse: “Did you know that there’s an acceptable level of rat turds that can go into candy bars? It’s the government. Jack, even the government doesn’t care that much about quality. Do you know what is okay to put in hot dogs? Huh? Pig lips and assholes. I say, hey, have at it bitches, ’cos I love hot dogs!”

TT:

Jesse: “Tiesitkö, on tietty hyväksyttävä määrä rotankakkaa, jonka voi päästää suklaapatukoihin? Se johtuu hallituksesta. Edes hallitus ei välitä laadusta. Tiedätkö, mitä nakkeihin saa laittaa? Sian huulia ja peräreikiä. Minusta se on ihan sama, sillä nakit ovat mahtavia.”

Back translation:

Jesse: "Did you know that there is a certain acceptable amount of rat poo that can be allowed in chocolate bars? It is because of the government. Even the government does not care about quality. Do you know what is allowed to be put in hot dogs? Pig lips and assholes. It is all the same to me, because hot dogs are amazing."

(Season 3, episode 10: *Fly*)

In the source text, the "bitch" is a minor throwaway padding expression per se, a negligible filler word without much content as such; as a slang word it is informal by nature and taps into the realm of linguistic vulgarity. As is typically the case with padding "bitches" not aimed at anyone in particular, the "bitch" here does not tick the strong impression, offensiveness or aggressiveness boxes. However, it is notably playful and colourful as a part of the full phrase it appears in. The tone is light and relaxed as Jesse's monologue is all about making some random small talk in order to distract Walt and hint that if the government is willing to overlook contaminants in food products, maybe they should do so, too, in regard to their illegal product. The "bitch" is something that just happens to come to Jesse naturally and slips into his speech out of a habit.

Colourfulness as a slang property, or the means of making one's speech more vivid and lively (Mattiello 2009: 72), is at the center of Jesse's language use in the example. This characterizes Jesse as a speaker and personality who is relaxed, laid-back and does not express himself in a refined or eloquent manner; characterization-wise, these are important traits because they are often contrasted with Walt's more meticulous and "mature" language use. This juxtaposition between the main characters is a major source of humour and tool of indirect characterization, so replicating the characteristic features of Jesse's speech accurately is a crucial endeavour.

However, the "bitch" has been omitted from the Finnish subtitles. This, then, fails to transfer the playfulness and colourfulness slang properties over to the target text. Granted, retaining the "bitch" is a tricky task in this instance because the "bitch" is uttered together with a rather idiomatic expression "have at it", and "bitch" is in plural. A completely direct translation would result in a very weird phrase so it is out of

question. “Have at it” means roughly the same as “whatever”, “go for it” or “knock yourself out”, so it has been translated in a natural sounding way. However, “bitch” is not all that simple to incorporate into the Finnish phrase so the omission is understandable from this point of view, but the “Minusta se on ihan sama” translation nonetheless fails at replicating the original characterization.

To summarize, the omission strategy has the potential of changing Jesse’s original characterization completely, especially so in cases where “bitch” is used as an insult. The omission strategy strips the translation of all the original slang properties and presents Jesse as a more formal speaker and a generally better-mannered person. These changes contradict Jesse’s overarching characterization and even his appearance. A considerable element of Jesse’s characterization is his looks, namely his almost comical penchant for oversized urban clothing and the character traits that look implies. Jesse’s language register is an inseparable contributor to this portrayal of Jesse as a naïve personality or even a simpleton of sorts, so omitting the trademark “bitch” reduces the linguistic characterization by a great deal.

The use of the omission strategy does not appear to be dictated by the technical limitations of subtitles. In examples where an insulting “bitch” has been omitted, the reason for this is probably that the likes of expletives and other interjections tend to be omitted almost by default due to their ostensibly low informational value (Díaz Cintas & Remael 2007: 165). However, in instances such as example (15), the omission can be explained by the translator’s emphasis on domestication, too. “Gatorade me, bitch” is an expression that does not translate very naturally into Finnish without some degree of domestication, so omitting the “bitch” makes sense. Next I will move on to discuss how sentence/clause structure changes affect Jesse’s characterization.

4.3.4. Sentence/clause structure change

Sentence/clause structure change can also be viewed as rewriting or reformulation. This strategy is centered on transferring the content of what is said and disregarding the style more or less altogether. Quite frankly, one might not even consider the sentence/clause

structure change strategy as true translation in a strict sense; it is more akin to reformulation or such thorough domestication that the precise source text is difficult, if not practically impossible, to infer from the translation. In regard to “bitch”, sentence/clause structure change is typically applied to idiomatic or otherwise culture and language specific expressions which cannot be translated directly and hardly through the other strategies either. As mentioned earlier, the following examples essentially border on some level of untranslatability. The examples are very similar to each other in how “bitch” is used, but differences arise from how they are translated into Finnish.

In the first example of this strategy, Jesse, Walt and their new associates manage to steal thousands of liters of industrial chemicals from freight train without anyone noticing. The dangerous and complicated operation was on the brink of failure and nearly cost Jesse his life, but ultimately everything went according to the plan. Jesse is thrilled after the successful heist and can hardly believe their luck. He starts to yell and celebrate exuberantly.

(19)

ST:

Jesse: “Yeah bitch!”

TT:

Jesse: “Siitä sait!”

Back translation:

Jesse: “That served you right!”

(Season 5, episode 5: *Dead Freight*)

The “bitch” in the source text is a padding expression and an intensifier of Jesse’s thrill. It meets the slang property definitions of informality, vulgarity, colourfulness and playfulness, but not strong impression, offensiveness or aggressiveness; the “bitch” is not said out of a need to impress, shock, or offend anyone or to convey hostility. In essence, the “bitch” is an “add-on” accompanying the preceding “yeah”, elevating it to a higher level of boisterousness and intensifying Jesse’s interjection. It also perpetuates Jesse’s characterization as a language user: his vocabulary generally deviates from

educated language standards and he likes to express himself in a way that lends him “street credibility”; in other words, “bitch”, along with the other slang expressions he uses, signals his background, his way of life and his personality in general.

Now, the Finnish translation is not slang and does not feature any proper slang elements. In this sense, this is a case of omission and could be arguably discussed under that category, but the fact that the translation is essentially an interpretation of the original line places this example in the reformulation category. “Siitä sait” is an informal and colloquial expression often used to communicate *schadenfreude*. The translation fits the scene in that Jesse can be interpreted as shouting at the freight train triumphantly. Also, Jesse was close to getting injured seriously during the heist, if not losing his life, so “siitä sait” could be thought of as *schadenfreude* towards the train which threatened Jesse’s well-being, but Jesse survived and his crew managed to rob the train of its load. This animosity towards the train present in the tone of the translation can be argued to convey some level of aggressiveness, malice and intent of making a strong impression. An inanimate object like a freight train, of course, cannot be startled or shocked, but “siitä sait” does carry the implication of Jesse perceiving the train and the challenge it posed as a defeated opponent: Jesse and his crew came out on top despite the odds.

Both the source and target texts present Jesse as being in a celebratory mood. However, “siitä sait” is only partially informal since the translation is not slang and does not particularly deviate from linguistic standards. “Siitä sait” is not vulgar at all and does not display much colourfulness despite being a somewhat colloquial expression; due to these differences, the connotations of “bitch” regarding Jesse’s personality are not replicated in the target text, and thus his characterization is changed. And since the original style in the form of the recurring nature of “bitch” is not replicated in any way, the playfulness aspect is missing, too.

Since the source text is very short and is not part of a rapid dialogue, the deletion of “bitch” through the complete reformulation of the source text is not dictated by technical limitations: there would be plenty of time and space to display the “bitch” as

almost any sort of translation in the subtitle. In this case, the omission of “bitch” is the byproduct of the need to express the source text in a domesticated form: direct translation would have resulted in something like “jee, ämmä” which would frankly sound quite unnatural to the Finnish audience unless such foreignization would have been practiced consistently throughout the series, which is not the case. The translator has pursued dynamic equivalence here, which means, ideally, finding a target language equivalent that behaves as naturally in the target language as the original item behaves in the source language; this approach can require changes in grammar, lexicon or culture-specific aspects (Munday 2012: 67). The focus is on replicating the overall concept presented in the source text, not the separate constituents of the source language item (Munday 2012: 60). This approach has resulted in the omission of “bitch”.

As far as speculation goes, the stylistic layer and some slang properties might have been salvaged had the translator used, for example, the hyponym strategy: “yeah bitch” could be translated as something along the lines of “jee, saatana” or “jes, hitto vie”, both of which would function similarly to “yeah, goddammit” or “hell yeah” in the English language. Notably, the former suggestion is used in example (11) where “Heil Hitler, bitch” is translated with such an approach. To this extent, at least a partially direct translation could have been used without running into restrictions, and it would have been stylistically more faithful to the source text.

By the beginning of season 5, Walt and Jesse’s former employer and drug lord Gus Fring has died. The police have obtained Fring’s laptop, which, to Walt and Jesse’s horror, has evidence of their involvement in Fring’s drug business. The computer needs to be destroyed, but it is secured in the evidence locker at the police station. As there is no way to access the evidence locker inconspicuously, Walt devises a plan to load up a van with a powerful setup of industrial magnets, park the van next to the outer wall of the evidence locker room and turn on the magnets which then presumably erase all the information on the laptop’s hard drive. The feasibility of the plan needs to be tested first, though. To Walt and Jesse’s surprise, Walt’s magnet erasure hypothesis proves to work as expected: the magnets loaded up on a van render the test laptop unusable and

its contents beyond retrieval. Jesse gets excited about the successful test and yells cheerfully.

(20)

ST:

Jesse: “Yeah bitch! Magnets!”

TT:

Jesse: “Upeaa! Magneetit!”

Back translation:

Jesse: “Amazing! Magnets!”

(Season 5, episode 1: *Live Free or Die*)

The use of “bitch” in this example is very similar, if not practically identical, to the previous example: Jesse lets out a boisterous and celebratory exclamation because he is thrilled about something important yet uncertain having been achieved successfully. As a slang word “bitch” meet the informality and vulgarity slang properties, but its usage in this context does not display strong impression, offensiveness or aggressiveness. The colourfulness and playfulness properties are met, however. They characterize Jesse as someone who uses slang expressions routinely and whose self-expression is crude.

The Finnish translation is a complete reformulation on the stylistic level. As a perfectly standard and non-colloquial expression, “upeaa” (“amazing”) lacks informality, vulgarity, strong impression, offensiveness, aggressiveness, colourfulness and playfulness. This is very much expected, though, because the reformulation is essentially an omission, too. “Yeah bitch” and “upeaa” share a celebratory and excited tone but the latter fails to replicate the characterization effect of the former. “Yeah bitch” is colloquial and reflects Jesse’s personality, whereas “upeaa” achieves none of this.

Like in the previous example, the cause for the reformulation and the subsequent omission of “bitch” are explicable by the translator striving for dynamic equivalence. The technical limitations of the subtitling format are of no concern with such a terse and

minimalistic line of dialogue and are not the motivation behind the adoption of the sentence/clause structure change strategy. Admittedly, “yeah bitch” and “upeaa” do convey similar communicative messages and moods, but the translation falls short in all characterization aspects. “Yeah bitch” could have been translated as “jes, hittolainen” or something else akin to an approximate English equivalent of “yeah, goddammit”, a solution which would have retained some slang properties and remained at least somewhat faithful to Jesse’s source text characterization. Style and characterization seemingly were not the focal points in the translation process, and as an interjection carrying little content, “bitch” is an archetype of an item that typically ends up getting omitted from the subtitles without much consideration.

Later in the same episode, Walt and Jesse manage to erase the information on Fring’s laptop exactly as planned and make their escape in a get-away car. Once again, Jesse cannot contain his joy and lets out a triumphant shout.

(21)

ST:

Jesse: “Yeah! Bitch!”

TT:

Jesse: “Noin!”

Back translation:

Jesse: “Like that!”

(Season 5, episode 1: *Live Free or Die*)

The source text is practically identical to the two previous ones in terms of usage, tone, and context: “bitch” functions as a padding word, intensifier, and an expression of thrill and the joy of success. The refrain communicates informality, vulgarity, playfulness and some colourfulness but it lacks the slang properties of strong impression, offensiveness or aggressiveness. Again, the “bitch” usage itself characterizes Jesse indirectly as a rough and non-standard speaker, qualities which imply his background and socioeconomic status.

The translation is a full reformulation of the source text: it disregards the original form and structure of Jesse's line altogether and replaces it with a functional equivalent of the source text's approximate message. The translation is of formal and standard language and thus devoid of informality, vulgarity, strong impression, offensiveness, aggressiveness, colourfulness and playfulness. The absence of "bitch" is not compensated in any way, namely there are no compensatory elements of non-standard speech or marked speech creating comparable implications of Jesse's personality and status. Since the target text Jesse expresses his excitement and boisterousness through a notably milder register and vocabulary than his source text counterpart, also the mood and intensity of his excitement are conveyed as much milder. In the scene, Jesse yells at the top of his lungs even before saying his lines, and can hardly remain seated out of excitement and because of the adrenaline rush.

The source text is a short and simple vocal burst, and subtitling it comprehensively does not require much space or time at all. From this point of view, there is no reason to exclude "bitch". But akin to the previous reformulation examples, this instance is also difficult to translate without tampering with the stylistic layer of the source text. But, as Munday notes, the individual constituents of a translatable message are often necessary to transform into something different because the original message and the translation belong in two different languages, and different languages rarely express similar concepts the same way (Munday 2012: 60). In other words, it is not sufficient to translate "yeah" and "bitch" separately and then put the two translations together the way they are said in the source text; the message behind the whole utterance has to be decoded and then expressed so that it sounds natural in Finnish. Even though this need for functional equivalence can be used as understandable grounds for omitting "bitch", such reliance on interpretative resemblance ends up producing such a different register for Jesse altogether that perceived discrepancy between what the viewers see and hear and what they read on screen becomes an issue here; not only do the viewers notice the absence of the "bitch" which they expect to be replicated in some shape or form in the subtitles, they also receive a markedly downplayed characterization of Jesse.

In summary, the sentence/clause structure change strategy is noticeably similar to omission in that it removes the stylistic layer altogether and is completely focused on delivering only the content of the source text. In the examples discussed, such thorough reformulation is bound to delete all the slang properties, but one needs to consider the circumstances of reformulated “bitches” when criticizing it: “bitches” that tend to be reformulated are often language-specific interjections, and are rarely directly translatable. When dealing with expressions of such nature, formal equivalence is difficult to replicate. Indeed, the need for the use of sentence/clause structure change or complete reformulation does not arise from the technical limitations of subtitles but from the very nature of the translatable expressions.

The translator’s clear choice to prioritize content over style with the reformulation strategy shows the overall preference for dynamic equivalence that permeates the entire Finnish translation of *Breaking Bad*. Granted, an attempt to retain the source text’s style by translating Jesse’s triumphant interjections directly would probably produce an unnatural-sounding Finnish translation, which would not be ideal (Munday 2012: 67). The reformulation strategy – modifying the source text to meet the viewers’ linguistic needs and cultural exceptions – is very useful or even imperative for achieving adequate “sameness”, also known as the “principle of equivalent effect” (Munday 2012: 67).

4.3.5 Toning down

When a “bitch” is toned down, it refers to tonal neutralization of the word: despite having been transferred over to the target text, it is not translated directly, and it has been stripped of its offensiveness and abrasiveness. This simply means replacing “bitch” with a non-slang word that functions similarly in a sentence, for example as a noun. Oftentimes the “bitch” in such contexts is practically impossible to leave out because of its essential role in the sentence structure.

In the episode *Fly* (season 3, episode 10), Jesse and Walt are trying to catch a fly that has managed to get inside their methamphetamine laboratory. While Walt considers the insect a dangerous contaminant to the purity of the methamphetamine batch they are

making and adamantly insists the fly be removed before they may resume work, Jesse finds this activity a complete waste of time and a sign of Walt's overblown obsession with setting and following rules.

When Jesse and Walt are taking a break from the fly hunt, Jesse starts recollecting a story about an opossum that would live under his aunt's house and make distracting noises. Even though the animal was eventually caught and removed, Jesse's cancer-ridden aunt kept hearing sounds and believing that the opossum was still crawling underneath the floor. With the story, Jesse attempts to draw a parallel between his aunt's delusional obsession with the opossum and Walt's keenness to catch the fly, intending to make Walt realize that perhaps the fly hunt is futile and they can finally cease looking for it. The examples taken from this scene will be presented back to back and discussed together because they occur in the same conversation.

(22)

ST:

Jesse: "You ever... had a wild animal trapped in your house?"

Walt: "Not that I can recall, no."

Jesse: "We did. This one time, back when it was my aunt's house, back before she died of cancer. It was an opossum. A big freaky-looking bitch."

TT:

Jesse: "Onko sinulla koskaan ollut villieläintä loukussa talossasi?"

Walt: "Ei muistaakseni."

Jesse: "Meillä oli kerran tätini talossa ennen kuin hän kuoli syöpään. Se oli possumi. Iso pelottava otus."

Back-translation:

Jesse: "Have you ever had a wild animal trapped in your house?"

Walt: "Not that I can remember."

Jesse: “We once had one in my aunt’s house before she died of cancer. It was a possum. A big scary creature.”

(Season 3, episode 10: *Fly*)

Jesse’s story rambles on and he starts to digress. He wonders why the animal’s name is now “opossum”, when it was just “possum” during his childhood and adolescence, and thinks that now the animal sounds like it is of Irish heritage due to the added “o” in front of the word, as in “O’Possum”. Walter grows impatient with the rambling and hurries Jesse to finish.

(23)

ST:

Walt: “Is there a discernible point to this story? A point that you will be arriving at in the near future?”

Jesse: “It was a total bitch to get out. Took forever.”

TT:

Walt: “Onko tällä tarinalla tarkoitus? Tarkoitus, johon tulet pian?”

Jesse: ”Sitä oli vaikea saada ulos. Siihen meni ikuisuus.”

Back-translation:

Walt: ”Does this story have a point? A point that you will soon arrive at?”

Jesse: “It was difficult to get out. It took forever.”

(Season 3, episode 10: *Fly*)

By default, the “bitches” in the source texts tick the “informality” and “vulgarity” boxes on the list of slang properties since “bitch” is a swear and taboo word. In referring to the opossum as a “bitch” instead of an “animal” or something in a similar vein, Jesse makes a conscious choice to steer away from formality and neutral expression. The word choice is “below educated language standards” (Mattiello 2009: 69), which ticks the

“vulgarity” box. This characterizes Jesse as a person who does not relish refined or formal speech, and as someone who probably does not come from a highly educated background.

On top of this, the “bitch” meets the “colourfulness” and “playfulness” properties from the hearer-oriented category, meaning that the word is used to “spice up” the sentence and establish Jesse as a person who does not care to express himself eloquently. This is the opposite of Walt who is very meticulous and refined about his words as evidenced by his frustrated yet well-articulated response to Jesse’s rambling about opossums having been made Irish. This notable difference in demeanor between Walt and Jesse is an important vehicle of characterization in the series, so it follows that omitting “bitch” from the translation or using a neutral substitute diminishes the crucial characterization gap between the protagonists.

The first observation about the target texts is that there is no direct Finnish equivalent of “bitch” in either example, but it is not a case of full omission either. In the first dialogue, “bitch” has been substituted with a completely neutral word “otus” (“creature”). The “bitch” in the Finnish translation of the later dialogue has been toned down as well, which then leaves the slang properties of informality, vulgarity, colourfulness, and playfulness completely out of the translation. Moreover, the meaning of “bitch” in this instance as “cumbersome” has been subject to the translation strategy of explication: the Finnish translation simply states that the opossum was difficult to remove from beneath the aunt’s house, when the original “bitch” perhaps implies a semblance of dislike or even hostility towards the opossum and the inconvenience of removing the animal. This implication of dislike might render the hearer-oriented property of “aggressiveness” relevant here, but since not a single of the originally intended or implied slang properties and connotations is found in the Finnish subtitles, the intended characterization is clearly not supported in these two examples.

All of this is made all the more diminishing by the fact that the “bitch” refrain is of the implicit characterization type and the viewer cannot infer the intended characterization from other aspects. For what it is worth, the spirit of the “bitch” in the second example

could have been at least partially replicated in the Finnish subtitles by adding an intensifier of any sort: for example, “sitä oli hiton vaikea saada ulos”, “it was damn difficult to get out”. In the first excerpt, “a big freaky-looking bitch” could have been translated as something like “iso pelottava riiviö” or “iso pelottava pirulainen” which translate roughly as “big scary rascal” and “big scary imp”, respectively. These solutions would have replicated some of the slang properties found in the source texts without breaching the temporal or spatial limits.

Full omission of “bitch” is not possible in either excerpt since the “bitch” functions as an essential noun in the source texts, and without which their respective sentences would be structurally incomplete and make little or no sense at all. One can argue that while the omission happens at the level of style, it happens only partially at the level of function; even though the connotations of “bitch” are not present in the neutral translation, the aspect of referring to the opossum is, expectedly, still intact. For this reason, the translation strategy used here is categorized as neutralization and toning down instead of omission.

The translation choices and differences made to the characterization can be explained with the form-content dichotomy, the relevance theory, and the technical limitations of the subtitling format. First of all, the highly contextual usages of “bitch” in these examples do not have direct equivalents in the Finnish language: one would need a consistently and immutably usable derogatory word that communicates both a sense of hostility or dislike and the property of being cumbersome or an annoyance – a challenging if not an impossible task, especially when needed to be tackled within the temporal and spatial restrictions of subtitles. There simply is not enough leeway or flexibility in the subtitling format for the translator to try to solve this form-content dilemma, for example, by attempting a complete rewrite of the utterances in a way that would work in the Finnish language. And, even if this approach was feasible, it would still ultimately steer the translation too far away from the original lines. In this light, sacrificing form for content is practically the only solution within the constraints of subtitles.

The relevance theory is used to explain the replacement of a longer linguistic item with a shorter one (Ivarsson & Carroll 1998: 5). While this is not really the case with the “bitch” examples in question, the substitute item bearing “interpretative resemblance” to the original item is at the heart of this approach; in other words, the intention is that the translation conveys the same idea as the original despite not being a literal translation (Ivarsson & Carroll 1998: 5). This applies to the “bitch” examples in that even though the Finnish translations are far from being equivalent to the original lines to the fullest, the cores of the utterances’ content are largely the same: the possum is described as unpleasant-looking in both the source text and the target text, and the animal was hard to remove from under the aunt’s house in both accounts. On these grounds, the relevance theory would approve of the translation choices made in regard to the target text.

However, Ivarsson & Carroll importantly note that relying on interpretative resemblance does have weighty drawbacks despite its benefits: if an original item was chosen specifically to communicate characterization, sarcasm, or some other nuanced meaning, the intended effect can be lost if the interpretative resemblance is not similar enough. (Ivarsson & Carroll: 1998: 5) Consequently, to avoid interpretative resemblance falling short of conveying the intended meaning, direct translation ought to ideally be used.

As discussed earlier, Boase-Beier discerns three logical suggestions arising from the relevance theory: firstly, translation choices are relevance-dictated and what is excluded is thus irrelevant; secondly, a translator interprets the source text and communicates the intended meaning instead of just copying the superficial linguistic layer to another language; and thirdly, when style plays an important role in the text, direct translation should be used. When the way things are said matters, indirect translation serves only to communicate the content of what is written or said, and none of the stylistic layer. (Boase-Beier 2006: 44)

Now, as the “bitch” examples demonstrate, the Finnish translations suffer from the translator’s reliance on interpretative resemblance and indirect translation (which

arguably was the only feasible approach given the constraints of subtitles): the stylistic layer (namely form) of “bitch” is lost, which, according to the implications of the relevance theory, would be thus unimportant. This is not the case though, as the stylistic layer contributes intentionally to Jesse’s characterization. Moreover, by disregarding form and the importance of style in Jesse’s utterances, the translator indeed only copies what Pinkman says on a surface level and leaves a lot of additional meaning on the table, rendering Jesse’s characterization different for the Finnish viewers.

The next example is comparable with the previous example’s “it was a total bitch to get out” in that this “bitch”, too, functions as a part of an idiomatic expression. The example is from the 8th episode of season 3, *I See You*. In the scene, Walt’s brother-in-law Hank has been hospitalized after a gun fight with cartel hitmen, and Walt wants to be there with his family. This unplanned event interrupts Walt and Jesse’s cooking schedule. Jesse waits at the laboratory for Walt to come back and grows frustrated at time being wasted. He calls Walt to the hospital and suggests that he can cook by himself while Walt is away. The idea does not sit well with Walt who sternly discourages Jesse from resuming work without his supervision.

(24)

ST:

Jesse: “You know what. Whatever. I’ll just cook on my own.”

Walt: “You’ll do no such thing.”

Jesse: “Why not?”

Walt: “Well, for starters, you aren’t least bit familiar with any of the equipment.”

Jesse: “There’s got to be some sort of manual, right? I can read.”

Walt: “Jesse, touch nothing.”

Jesse: “Yo, stop treating me like I’m your assistant. I’m not your bitch to order around. We’re partners, remember?”

TT:

Jesse: "Kuule. Ihan sama. Hoidan hommat itse."

Walt: "Etkä hoida."

Jesse: "Miksi en?"

Walt: "Ensinnäkin, et tiedä mitään niistä laitteista."

Jesse: "Kai niille jokin käyttöohje on? Osaan lukea."

Walt: "Jesse, älä koske mihinkään."

Jesse: "Älä kohtele minua kuin assistenttia. En ole sinun käskyläisesi. Me olemme kumppaneita. Muistatko?"

Back translation:

Jesse: "Listen. Whatever. I'll do it myself."

Walt: "No you will not."

Jesse: "Why not?"

Walt: "First of all, you don't know anything about the equipment."

Jesse: "I'm sure there is some sort of user's manual for them? I can read."

Walt: "Jesse, do not touch anything."

Jesse: "Don't treat me like an assistant. I'm not your subordinate. We are partners. Do you remember?"

(Season 3, episode 8: *I See You*)

The base form of the idiomatic expression used in the source text is "to be somebody's bitch" and has clearly negative connotations. Being someone's "bitch" implies inferiority, weakness, subordination and submission, namely a more or less involuntary position where the person as the "bitch" has no leverage or say in the matters concerning them. In addition to informality and vulgarity, this usage of "bitch" fulfills the slang properties of strong impression, offensiveness, aggressiveness and playfulness. In stating that he is not Walt's "bitch" who takes orders blindly from him,

Jesse communicates resolution, self-confidence and maybe even irritation through a choice of words that comes across as strikingly clear. This displays defiance in a way that is intended to shut down the conversational partner without concern for politeness, so the “bitch” is offensive and definitely signals aggression as well. It is unlikely that Jesse uses the phrase to “spice up” his language, so the colourfulness property is not pertinent. However, the playfulness property is on display by the recurring nature of Jesse’s trademark refrain being perpetuated once again for the viewers’ entertainment.

The Finnish translation “en ole sinun käskyläisesi” lacks all the slang properties because the bitch has been toned down to the neutral noun “käskyläinen” (“subordinate”). It is standard language instead of slang, so Jesse’s characterization as an informal and vulgar speaker is changed drastically. Admittedly, the “your bitch” structure is retained in the subtitles in the form of “sinun käskyläisesi”, which, despite having been toned down, does emphasize some degree of defiance and opposition to Walt’s expectation that he is the one giving commands and Jesse obeys them without a question. However, the Finnish translation does not have the stronger negative connotations that the original phrase “being someone’s bitch” conveys. This lessens the intensity of Jesse’s defiant reply by a great deal, and brings about a different characterization of Jesse.

The reason the “bitch” in this example is toned down instead of for example being translated directly is very likely that the “bitch” appears as a part of a more or less idiomatic expression, and idiomatic language is challenging – and often even counterproductive – to try to translate without making adjustments to the likes of grammar or vocabulary when transferring it over to another language (Munday 2012: 67). As discussed earlier in the sentence/clause structure change category, the goal of such an approach is to achieve naturalness of expression (Munday 2012: 67). Granted, this method would be largely preferable and unproblematic if the precise original wording was not a crucial contributor to Jesse’s characterization. However, the use of the toning down strategy does explain why “bitch” is turned into a non-slang noun.

Temporal and spatial restrictions of subtitles probably play a role in the choice of the toning down strategy in this instance. Jesse’s line “I’m not your bitch to order around”

is said amid a rather fast-paced dialogue, and the camera cuts quickly back and forth between Walt at the hospital and Jesse in the laboratory. This puts pressure on the subtitles to appear in synchronicity with the cuts. If the subtitles overstay their “slot”, the rhythm of the dialogue in the subtitles does not match visual rhythm of the dialogue on screen (whom the viewers see speaking). Because of this, the subtitles cannot be exceedingly long; the viewers need to be able to read them comfortably, and also to process and comprehend what they have read with adequate ease. Therefore the subtitles cannot be packed with information or unnecessarily complex sentence structures such as subordinate clauses.

In the target text, time and space are saved by combining the segments “I’m not your bitch” and “to order around” into “en ole sinun käskyläisesi” which communicates both segments in a more concise form. The word “käskyläisesi” (“your subordinate”) implies the qualities of inferiority and subordination of being someone’s bitch, and the role of someone who takes orders. Had the dialogue taken place in a novel or some other format that is not restricted by temporal and spatial factors to the degree subtitles are, Jesse’s line could have been translated more “fully” as something along the lines of “en ole sinun perseennuolijasi, jota voit pomotella miten huvittaa” (“I’m not your ass-licker that you can boss around however you please”). A translation of this nature would render the slang properties rather faithfully and also convey Jesse’s strong defiance, but in this subtitling context such a solution is impractical. Condensation of the original message is imperative, and the respect for synchronicity and the viewers’ ease of reading are higher priorities than full stylistic faithfulness to the source text.

The milder tone of the equivalent of “bitch” in the target text is prone to creating some perceived discrepancy among the viewers since they are likely to expect the refrain to make an appearance in the subtitles. The original phrase is more vulgar and powerful in tone, which may also add to the feeling of discrepancy. The feedback effect may help in bridging the gap between the source text and the target text in this regard.

In the final example, Gus Fring’s enforcer and right hand man Mike has taken Jesse on a mission with him. They are tasked with keeping an eye on a house belonging to two

meth users who have dubiously come into possession of their methamphetamine, and the two are to find out whether there is something going on behind their and their employer's backs.

(25)

ST:

Mike: "A little birdie told me there's some guys in there that have three pounds of our product which they're selling. And which they sure as hell didn't get from us."

Jesse: "So... what's the plan?"

Mike: "I just told you. We sit here and watch that house until one of our entrepreneurs pops his head out, then we ask a few questions and get our property back."

Jesse: "Why don't you just go break the door down, pistol whip those bitches and show 'em who's boss?"

ST:

Mike: "Pikkulinnut kertoivat, että siellä on tyyppejä, joilla on reilu kilo kamaa myytävänä. Eivätkä he saaneet sitä meiltä."

Jesse: "Mikä suunnitelmamme on?"

Mike: "Kerroin sen juuri. Istutaan tässä ja vaihdetaan taloa, kunnes yksi yrittäjästä näyttää naamansa. Sitten kysymme kysymyksiä ja hankimme omaisuutemme takaisin."

Jesse: "Miksemme vain hajota etuovea, piekse heitä ja näytä, kuka määrää?"

Back translation:

Mike: "Little birds told that there are guys who have a bit over kilogram of dope for sale. And they did not get it from us."

Jesse: "What is our plan?"

Mike: "I just told it. We sit here and watch the house until one of the entrepreneurs shows his face. Then we will ask questions and get our property back."

Jesse: “Why don’t we just break the front door, beat them up and show who calls the shots?”

(Season 4, episode 6: *Cornered*)

The “bitch” is inherently informal and vulgar. Jesse’s use of the word in this particular context communicates hostility towards the people who have stolen their methamphetamine. In this case, “bitch” may also be used as a means of introducing colourfulness to the line in the form of relaxed deviation from linguistic standards and neutral tone. The playfulness slang property is achieved as well, since the recurrence of “bitch” perpetuates Jesse’s habitual use of his trademark refrain.

As for the target text, not only is “bitch” toned down to a mere personal pronoun, but the verb is changed as well: the expression “to pistol whip” in the original line is changed to “piestä” (“to beat up”) which, while not completely formal language, is not particularly informal either. Jesse’s full line “Why don’t you just go break the door down, pistol whip those bitches and show ‘em who’s boss?” is imbued with slang-ness and informality, but those features are essentially fully missing from the translation. “To pistol whip those bitches” is a thug-like expression and strongly indicative of Jesse’s socioeconomic background, lifestyle and linguistic tendencies. The translation characterizes Jesse as a notably more formal, restrained and well-mannered person than the source text; his language use is less markedly less vivid and colourful, and the humour created by the playfulness aspect – the recurrence of “bitch” in Jesse’s vocabulary – is missing, too.

The absence of slang properties is not due to spatial or temporal limitations because translating the source text for example as “piekse niitä ämmiä” or “piekse niitä pellejä” (“beat up those bitches” and “beat up those clowns”, respectively) would not have infringed on the technical limitations of subtitling. Neither suggestion is significantly longer than “piekse heitä”, but they would have retained the pertinent slang properties to a higher degree. The translator could have used some other verb in translating “to pistol whip” in order to include some marked speech elements in the target text, namely “mukiloida” for example; while meaning the same as “to beat up” or “to kick

(someone's) ass" like the translator's choice "piestä" does, "mukiloida" would have conveyed a somewhat more slang-like tone, especially if paired with "ämmä" or "pelle": "Miksemme vain hajota etuovea, mukiloi niitä ämmiä ja näytä, kuka määrää?" A translation of this kind would correspond more faithfully to the source text's style without being too long or otherwise impractical from a subtitling standpoint. Moreover, Jesse's line is not part of a fast-paced conversation so synchronicity is not a dictating factor in determining the choice of translation strategy in this instance.

The toning down strategy tends to result in changes comparable to the sentence/clause restructuring strategy. "Bitch" is stylistically omitted, and the focus of the translation is on conveying the intended message of the source text. A true omission is not practically possible since it would break the grammar and syntax of the sentence; some equivalent of "bitch" needs to be present in the subtitles since a noun or pronoun is needed for the utterance to make sense. As for the effects of toning down, the strategy removes all the slang properties from the translation and therefore does not replicate Jesse's original characterization at all. In the toned down examples, one of the notable functions of "bitch" is to make Jesse's speech more colourful and playful. "Bitch" is used as a noun, so it is a deliberate choice on Jesse's part to replace a neutral noun or pronoun with a slang word that has particular connotations. An example of this loss of connotation is in example (25) where "those bitches" is translated simply as "heitä" ("them"). In addition to Jesse perpetuating his trademark habit, the original choice of saying "bitch" is motivated by Jesse's attitude towards the meth addicts who have stolen their product. Jesse referring to them as "bitches" shows hostility and a sense of superiority, even arrogance. The Finnish translation "heitä" lacks these connotations and thus does not support the original characterization. Moreover, the very act of using a phrase like "pistol whip those bitches" is highly indicative of the speaker's language register, personality and background. This is a strong tool of indirect characterization, yet it is completely neutralized in the Finnish subtitles. As a result, the intended characterization is nullified. This is characteristic of the effects that the toning down strategy has on Jesse's characterization.

5 CONCLUSION

The aim of the thesis was to find out whether translation strategies affect the characterization of Jesse Pinkman in the Finnish subtitles of the television series *Breaking Bad*. The study focused on Jesse's refrain "bitch" because the refrain is used as a versatile tool of characterization in the series. "Bitch" demonstrates the difficulty of translating texts where style plays a crucial role. The research question was whether Jesse's characterization is changed in the Finnish subtitles because of the translation strategies used, and can the technical limitations of subtitling be used to explain the choice of strategy. I hypothesized on the basis of my BA thesis' results that Jesse's indirect characterization is likely to be different in the Finnish subtitles because the translation of "bitch" in *Breaking Bad* is highly varied and stylistically inconsistent.

In *Breaking Bad*, "bitch" functions not only as an insult but also as a vehicle of humour. Furthermore, the refrain implies Jesse's personality, background, and linguistic traits. In this light, translating "bitch" faithfully is essential to retaining Jesse's original characterization in the Finnish subtitles. This faithfulness is challenging, though, because translating "bitch" directly is not always a preferable option from the point of view of producing natural-sounding translations. Therefore, the translator has to decide whether they preserve the original characterization by prioritizing the style of the source text over its content, or they favour the naturalness of the translation by prioritizing the content over style. This issue arises from "bitch" being used and functioning differently in English than its direct Finnish equivalents "ämmä" or "narttu" do in Finnish. Consequently, direct translation of "bitch" is practically impossible in many cases yet necessary for stylistic faithfulness.

The study material consisted of 18 instances of "bitch" uttered by Jesse in *Breaking Bad* throughout the series. The "bitches" were chosen so that the study sample represented each translation strategy category. There were three examples of direct translation, three examples of hyponym, five examples of omission, three examples of sentence/clause structure change, and four examples of toning down. The results of my BA thesis, namely the observation and categorization of the trends in translating "bitch" in

Breaking Bad, were given to provide a broader framework for the study and to illustrate how the translation strategies were employed in relation to each other. This sample highlighting trends consisted of 35 “bitches”.

I used a comparative approach in the analysis. The method was to identify the slang properties displayed by “bitch” in the source text using Mattiello’s list of slang properties and compare them with the target text to see whether the properties were replicated in the subtitles and to what extent. The context of each example, the audiovisual dimension and the over-arching portrayal of Jesse were also factored into defining Jesse’s characterization that the Finnish subtitles were to ideally replicate without considerable deviations. Whether the intended characterization was changed or not, the reasons for the outcome were speculated on by drawing upon the technical limitations of subtitles, the inherent simplicity or complexity of a given example, and the translator’s disregard for the source text’s stylistic choices for a number of reasons including reliance on for example interpretative resemblance and the feedback effect.

I started the background section by presenting *Breaking Bad*’s premise, giving a summary of the series’ plot, and introducing the key characters. Then I moved on to elaborating on Jesse as a fictional personality, his narrative role in the series as a character and as a source comedy, and as a language user. I used dialogue examples from the series to illustrate how Jesse’s register and manner of speaking characterize his personality and work as indicators of background. Finally, I closed the background section by detailing on the significance and role of Jesse’s “bitch” refrain in *Breaking Bad* as it is more than just another expletive that can be omitted without consequences.

In chapter 3, I introduced the theoretical framework. In 3.1, I explained what characterization means, what kinds of characterization exist, and how characterization can be produced. In 3.2 I defined “bitch” in linguistic terms and established it as a slang word. Furthermore, I discussed the role of marked speech in contributing to characterization. I continued by explaining what slang is and introducing its distinct features and uses. I then presented Mattiello’s list of descriptive slang properties and explained how they will be applied in the discussion. Next I proceeded to define

audiovisual translation and subtitling, and introduced general subtitling principles and guidelines and translation strategies. Then I discussed the translation of non-neutral language and swear words, the benefits and drawbacks of the feedback effect, different types of equivalence, the content vs style dichotomy, and what the relevance theory suggests for solving translational issues. Lastly, I covered the space and time related technical restrictions of subtitling along with synchronization.

I started the discussion chapter by presenting the table about the distribution of the translation strategies used in translating “bitch”. This served as an overview of the findings and the study material. The table showed distinctive trends: when “bitches” functioned as insults, they were most likely to be translated directly; and when the refrain functioned as a padding expression, it was most likely omitted. Interestingly, omission was the second most prominent translation strategy among insulting “bitches” of the study sample, which was quite surprising. The table indicated rather clearly that maintaining the style of the source text was not a priority in translating Jesse’s lines, and changes in characterization are likely to be expected.

The discussion was conducted by analyzing 18 “bitch” examples which were arranged into five categories according to the way they were treated in the Finnish translation. There were five categories: direct translation, hyponym, omission, sentence/clause structure change, and toning down, and they included both insulting and padding “bitches”. Both typical and more exceptional applications of the translation strategies and their effects on Jesse’s characterization were discussed with the help of the theoretical material, Mattiello’s list of descriptive slang properties being the primary tool of analysis.

As described earlier, the analysis was carried out by first identifying Mattiello’s slang properties in the source text “bitch” and analyzing how the “bitch” in question possibly portrayed other characterization elements arising from overall dialogue and the scene. Then I looked into the corresponding Finnish subtitles to see whether they displayed similar or at least comparable properties, and if the “bitch” was omitted or changed drastically, whether there were compensatory elements of marked speech present to

make up for the exclusion of “bitch”. I attempted to explain the changes made to Jesse’s characterization primarily with the technical limitations of subtitles, the simplicity or complexity of the source text, and the translator’s reliance on complementary elements like the feedback effect.

To summarize the overall results: the choice of translation strategy affects Jesse’s characterization. Despite the fact that some of the strategies retain the original characterization, others change it completely. These findings confirm the hypothesis that the varied use of translation strategies on “bitch” results in a changed characterization of Jesse. Next I will go through the five translation strategies analyzed and summarize how each of them affects Jesse’s characterization in the Finnish subtitles.

Direct translation largely retains the original characterization despite the strategy resulting in somewhat varied translation. This is because “bitch” can be translated directly as either “ämmä” or “narttu”, and they are both used interchangeably in the Finnish subtitles. This does violate the original style of Jesse’s “bitch” usage, namely the immutability of the refrain. The reason why direct translation is often applied to insulting “bitches” is probably the straightforwardness and simplicity of the way insulting “bitches” are used: they are very short utterances, they have a direct Finnish equivalent, and they often appear in an isolated position in the sentence at the beginning or at the end. Because of these factors, insulting “bitches” do not require much space or time on screen, and they do not necessitate any syntactic modifications.

The hyponym strategy does not generally change Jesse’s intended characterization. However, when changes occur, they change the nuances of Jesse’s communication and exclude the “interpersonal-ness” of “bitch”: in the source text usage, “bitch” can be interpreted as being targeted at someone or something, but translating it as an interjection-like swearword removes that interpersonal element and malice. Similarly to direct translation, spatial or temporal restrictions of subtitles do not explain the use of hyponyms. Instead, emphasis on domestication seems to be the factor dictating the choice of this strategy, which is understandable in cases where “bitch” is used in a way

what is not directly translatable as such in Finnish, and some other swearword is a more natural choice in the context of the utterance.

Omission, as one might expect, changes Jesse's characterization significantly and almost by definition. The change is most prominent in instances where "bitch" is used as an insult. The reason why omission has such a diminishing impact on Jesse's characterization is that the strategy removes all the original slang properties and presents Jesse as a formal and significantly more polite speaker, and consequently as a notably different personality. His reactions to whatever has prompted him to say "bitch" are greatly diluted in the Finnish subtitles. Omission does not appear to be employed because of the technical limitations of subtitling, but the general tendency of omitting interpersonal elements and interjections, and the translator's preference for domestication.

Sentence/clause structure change is similar to omission in that it, too, ignores the style of the source text and focuses on translating the content of Jesse's lines. "Bitches" reformulated in this fashion tend to overlap with omission in regard to the effects produced, as omitting "bitch" is often part of restructuring and reformulating the source text. Consequently, Jesse comes across as a more formal speaker because the new register he is given in the subtitles is devoid of slang and colloquial features altogether. Reformulated "bitch" instances are not long or complex, so the technical limitations of subtitling do not explain the choice of this strategy. Rather, the use of sentence/clause structure change seems to arise from the need for domestication. The reformulated "bitch" instances are expressions that do not translate into Finnish without syntactic modifications. The bottom issue is that American English and Finnish interjections, especially colloquial and slang-like ones, are markedly different in terms of lexicon, syntax and grammar. This requires the translator to disregard the original stylistic layer and find a natural target language expression for the content of the source text, and rely on dynamic equivalence. The sentence/clause structure change strategy helps in crafting a translation that works naturally in the target language and produces the same effect as the source text. However, the stylistic elements need to be sacrificed for this.

Similar to the two previous strategies, toning down impacts Jesse's characterization significantly. Replacing "bitch" with a neutral word removes the original slang properties altogether. Consequently, toning down does not replicate the source text characterization. By having Jesse speak formally and neutrally, the target text completely changes the indirect cues through which the viewers are able to interpret and read Jesse's personality and background. The resulting characterization does not set Jesse apart from the other characters, which is opposite to what the source text continuously strives for. This is problematic because Jesse's language register is a crucial part of his character and the humour in the series. The toning down strategy was used in the examples discussed likely because of the role of "bitch" in the sentence. Since "bitch" functions as a syntactically and grammatically necessary constituent, omission would break the grammar and syntax. Therefore, "bitch" must be retained in some shape or form. Here the reliance on dynamic equivalence comes into play again, as the content of "bitch" is translated but the style is disregarded.

This thesis was concerned only with the translation of Jesse's catchphrase "bitch", which can be seen as a limitation of the study. This narrowed down scope offered a focused point of view and ease of research, but a broader approach could yield more information and different avenues of study. Moreover, the five translation strategies discussed and the two "bitch" categories of insult and padding expression could have been divided up further to conduct a more nuanced discussion. Categorizing "bitch" either as an insult or a padding expression was a clear method of categorization arising from the material, but there are "bitches" whose function could be classified with more nuances. The sample size of 35 "bitches" could also be broadened to include all the "bitches" Jesse says in order to craft a complete table of the distribution of the translation strategies used.

As a suggestion for further study, Jesse's entire register could be taken into consideration for comparable research as there are many slang features and expressions in Jesse's lines throughout the series. His full linguistic profile could be used to study ways of reconciling style and content which are conventionally seen as two conflicting sides.

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