

# **Bridging the lapses:**

the use of translator's notes in fansubbing, a case study on Bangtan Subs

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Fansubbing, a form of fan translation, is the subtitling of audiovisual media performed by fans of that media. Products of fansubbing, fansubs, sometimes contain translator's notes (abbreviated to T/N) which are situated on the upper part of the screen and appear simultaneously with the subtitles on the bottom. A form of norm-governed translation strategy use, notes from the translator usually explain some part of the translation or offer additional information that aids the target reader's understanding.

This thesis examines the use of translator's notes in fansubs produced by the fan translation team BangtanSubs in fansubs about the K-Pop group BTS. The study aims to ascertain firstly what kinds of aspects translator's notes attempt to explain and at what frequency, and secondly what the fan translators' motivations behind using translator's notes are. A collection of translator's notes and a questionnaire filled out by fan translators are analyzed to answer these questions.

The theories of Leppihalme as refined by Bodó are utilized in creating a taxonomy by which the content of translator's notes can be categorized and analyzed. The analysis of the notes' function and frequency in occurrence informs the understanding of the questionnaire results. Translator's notes were found to explain extralinguistic aspects of the source text the most, and the reasoning behind using them lay in the translators' assumption that they were supplementing the target reader's knowledge on the subject. Additionally, a translator's note was reported to be used when the translation of a specific part of the source text would have been challenging either in terms of subtitle space or without sacrificing faithfulness to the original text.

The present study focuses comprehensively on the use of translator's notes in fansubbing, a topic still fairly under-researched. Other avenues for possible further research would be the comparisons of professional subtitles and fansubs of the same media and a detailed descriptive study on the guidelines used by organized fan translation networks.

**Key words:** fan translation, fansubbing, translator's notes, translational norms, paratext

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## 1 Introduction

Fan translation, a subtype of amateur translation, is translation practiced by fans for other fans and about the topic of interest uniting them. Theoretically, fan translation could be performed on anything where the primary language is seen as foreign to a portion of the fandom, but typical examples of the practice include fan subtitling (often shortened to fansubbing) of anime, scan translation or scanlation of manga (see e.g. O'Hagan 2009), or fansubbing of American films into European languages – barring English – or Chinese. In the case of K-Pop fansubbing, the subject of translation is the audiovisual content produced by South Korean music groups.

In addition to appearing on Korean television shows to give interviews and participate in various types of games, K-Pop groups self-produce and share a lot of audiovisual content on platforms such as YouTube and VLIVE. I became a K-Pop fan in 2016, and since only gaining a rudimentary grasp of the Korean language over the next few years, a target reader of fan translations, as well. Through my avid consumption of fansubbed content like the ones mentioned, I noticed the frequent use of translator's notes (often shortened to T/N) contained within the translations. This observation piqued my interest; for what purpose were notes from the translator so frequently used? Spurred on by this central question, I formulated the topic for this thesis.

I decided to conduct my study on fan translation about the K-Pop group BTS, for two central reasons; one, because BTS has garnered a lot of international attention over the last few years, and considering that only one of the group members speaks English fluently, the need for translations of BTS' content is still necessary and with their rising popularity in the west, increasingly so; and two, because the fan translation team BangtanSubs is both very prolific in the amount of BTS content they have translated and seemingly very consistent in their use of translator's notes in their work. BangtanSubs is also one of the oldest and most established teams for BTS translations, though this is based solely on my own experiences as a fan.

In summary, the present study examines the use of translator's notes in Korean to English fan subtitles about BTS by the fan translation team BangtanSubs. The primary research material is twofold; a collection of translator's notes and a questionnaire about note usage sent to and answered by translators belonging to BangtanSubs. My two research questions, which shall aid my descriptive analysis of the data acquired, are as follows:

1. What kinds of elements do translator's notes attempt to explain, and at what frequency?
2. What reasons do fan translator's give for using translator's notes?

The thesis begins with a theoretical framework laying out theories and definitions crucial to the study, then goes on to comprehensively introduce the research materials and the methods by which the material shall be analyzed. Following this, the obtained results will be presented and analyzed, then discussed further. Finally, the results of the study are reiterated in the conclusion section along with suggestions for possible future research into the topic.

## 2 Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework for this study is twofold: firstly, I review the study of footnotes and translator's notes in a broader sense to determine how they function as a translation strategy; secondly, I examine the field of fansubbing as a subfield of both fantranslation and audiovisual translation and how it has been researched previously. This approach rewards me with a more encompassing knowledge of the field in which my own study takes place.

### 2.1 Translator's notes

I begin this subsection with an overview of research related to translator's notes as they exist in literature translation and audiovisual translation studies, before narrowing down the scope of this study to only pertain to notes used by fan translators.

As they appear in relation to the main body of a translation, translator's notes can be categorized as paratext, which is to say as an element outside of the main body of text, similar to the title, preface, epilogue or dedication (Genette, 1997). Paratexts can be divided into peritext (contained within the work) or epitext (outside of the work). This makes translator's notes a form of peritext since they cannot exist without the main text of the translation. The nature of translator's notes as paratext has been described by Toledano-Buendía, who determined that “[translator's notes] are usually placed either at the bottom of the page or in the margins, although they can also be found appended at the end of the text, especially when the translator is also the editor of the same work” (2013, 152). Toledano-Buendía supports her analysis with Genette's theories on paratext, which contains the frugal definition of “A note is a statement of variable length (one word is enough) connected to a more or less definite segment of text and either placed opposite or keyed to this segment” (1997, 319). She also describes the function of notes in service of a translation, which I will discuss further down in this section.

In addition to their status as paratextual elements, translator's footnotes are often seen as a translation strategy that a translator utilizes during the translation process. To borrow a definition from Lörcher (1991), he describes the concept of a strategy thusly: “a translation strategy is a potentially conscious procedure for the solution of a problem which an individual is faced with when translating a text segment from one language to another” (76). One of these solutions is the use of footnotes to accompany the translation, often called translator's notes. Similar though not identical to footnotes written by an author, translator's notes contain

information that while relevant to the main body of text, is somehow considered additional and of lower importance, and hence it is assigned to a footnote. In audiovisual translation and fansubbing, these notes occur either on the top part of the screen whereas the translations themselves appear on the bottom part or in brackets within the subtitle (e.g. Schules 2014). Though translation strategies are introduced and described by various researchers, for the purposes of this study I am only interested in theories that include the use of translator's notes as one possible strategy. Additionally, it should be noted that most theories for translation strategies have been created with professional translation in mind, though this does not negate their usefulness in fan translation i.e. amateur translation.

As a jumping-off point, Chesterman (2016) divides strategies into semantic, syntactic, and pragmatic changes made by the translator in order to solve a problem. Within pragmatic strategies, he mentions a strategy that he calls visibility change, which "refers [...] to the overt intrusion or foregrounding of the translatorial presence. For instance, translator's footnotes, bracketed comments (such as explanations of puns) or added glosses explicitly draw the reader's attention to the presence of the translator" (108). Written originally in 1997, this definition bears remarkable similarity with the translator's notes examined and analyzed in the present study, and as such is the perfect place to start.

In *Textbook of Translation* (1988), Newmark lists the use of footnotes in the chapter titled *Other Translation Procedures* and describes their nature thusly "The additional information a translator may have to add to his version is normally cultural, [...] technical [...] or linguistic [...] and is dependent on the requirement of his, as opposed to the original, readership." (91). Newmark's approach to footnotes is prescriptive i.e. how they *should* be used instead of how they *are* used, and as such should be taken with a grain of salt; the present study has a distinctly descriptive approach, after all. This combined with the age of the publication presents Newmark's views as more of a historical curiosity rather than empirical fact, though in my perception some aspects of his descriptions persevere in today's practices. It stands to reason that some practices, though initially given as prescriptive instructions, could through sufficient repetition become naturally occurring translator behavior, and thus be descriptive. Conversely, the prescriptive instructions given could be based on naturally occurring translator behaviors, as well. Writing on academic footnotes and translator visibility, Newmark ends the section with the following two statements:

In the case of a scholarly work, there is no reason why the reader should not be aware of the translator's informed assistance both in the work and the comment. The artistic illusion of your non-existence is unnecessary. (93)

Despite the prescriptive approach of Newmark's work as a whole, in my opinion this sentiment rings true in fan translation, too, especially in case of the latter statement, since a fan translator's non-existence is further from an illusion than that of a scholarly one. Audiovisual translators are more visible by default, since the source text and target text appear simultaneously, and thus the viewer is aware of the translation's – and by extension the translator's – existence. The same goes for fansubbed content, but other fan translated texts, and by the same virtue, for fan translators, as well.

When we look at Pedersen's (2011) strategies for dealing with extralinguistic cultural-bound references (ECRs) in audiovisual translation, one that could be seen to represent translator's notes is that of specification, an interventional ECR transfer strategy, divided more specifically into the strategies of completion and addition. While Pedersen does not specifically mention that this strategy manifests as translator's notes, it does not negate the possibility that it could manifest as such. Separate translator's notes are quite rare in the world of professional AVT, which could explain Pedersen's omission. Addition, as the name suggests, is when a translator adds to the information when creating the target text. The source text information could be seen as lacking or otherwise unsuitable to the target text audience, and so addition is utilized to address the problem (49). Another point of interest to note is that Pedersen writes from the context of audio-visual translation and subtitling, which the present study also examines. Later in the book, as Pedersen recounts the results of his own study, he writes:

In conclusion, Specification is the least common of the baseline strategies. This may be because it is costly in terms both of effort and subtitle space [...] Specification would thus be a strategy that subtitlers resort to when [...] they have the time and space to make sure that the TT audience can access the ECR extra-diegetically. (162)

What he has found may very well be true for professional subtitling, but the issue of subtitle space is tackled in amateur subtitling via the use of translator's notes, since notes are placed on the upper part of the screen, thus freeing up more "real estate" for the translator to utilize within the subtitles on the bottom. As such, should the commonality of Pedersen's strategies in fansubtitling be investigated, I would venture to say that the strategy of specification would not end up being the least common.



In relation to translation strategies, Pedersen discusses translation norms, citing those laid out (among others) by Toury (2012) and Chesterman (2016). He places strategies in a subordinate position to norms, stating “strategies are not norms; instead norms tell translators which strategy is appropriate given the circumstances” (2011: 37). Toury’s operational norms, which govern translator behavior during the act of translation, are divided into matricial and textual-linguistic norms. Of these two, matricial norms govern the “macro-structure” (Pedersen, 2011: 35) of the translation, i.e. how the source text material is distributed in the target text and also how the text is broken up into chapters, passages and so on. Toury goes on to say, “The extent to which omissions, additions, changes of location and manipulations of segmentation are referred to in the translations themselves or in the ‘paratexts’ surrounding them (Genette 1997), may also be determined by norms” (2012: 83), which is the closest one can get to relating a norm for the practice of translator’s note usage. The same is done by Toledano-Buendía (2013) when she writes, in her study on the paratextual nature of T/Ns “Paratextual elements such as [...] translator’s notes may sometimes turn into metadiscourses containing explicit theoretical statements about translation norms and a translator’s decision-making processes. At the same time, their very existence is the result of a norm-governed decision, a norm-regulated behaviour from which norms can be inferred” (150). The topic of norms in translator note usage comes up in relation to my result analysis and as such, I will discuss norm-governed decision making, as well as Chesterman’s (2016) expectancy norm as it relates to fan translator behavior in section 2.1.2 and return to the nature of norms in the discussion section (5) of this thesis.

Since I am discussing how cultural differences affect translation, it would be remiss of me not to bring up the work of Ritva Leppihalme. She describes the issue of a cultural element, one example of which is an allusion, presenting a challenge for translation, identifying it with the term cultural bump. Initially used by Archer (1986) in reference to problems in face-to-face interactions milder than a cultural shock, Leppihalme (1997:4) extends the meaning of cultural bump into the realm of translation to signify “a situation where the reader of a [target text] has a problem understanding a source-cultural allusion”. She goes on to divide source text allusions into two categories: proper name allusions and key phrase allusions, providing translation strategies for both. Proper name allusions such as names for historical figures, events or fictional characters may sometimes be transferred between texts with little to no need for change, but key phrase allusions containing no proper name but some other kind of referent to another text (biblical and Shakespearean quotes being two of the most common kinds of key-phrase allusions) often require more sophisticated strategies. Indeed, strategies for PN allusions

presented by Leppihalme (78-79) are “to retain it, change it or omit it” whereas for KP allusions, a total of nine strategies are listed. Among these nine are for example the use of a standard translation, recreation of the allusion using a fusion of techniques, and omission of the KP allusion entirely, but also “the use of footnotes, endnotes, translator's prefaces and other explicit explanations not slipped into the text but overtly given as additional information” (84).

The ideas of Leppihalme are further extrapolated on by Bodó in her article discussing cultural challenges in translation (2009). She presents detailed definitions for the types of cultural bumps, followed by a list of strategies to aid in their translation. Culture specific translation problems are often categorized into differences between the SL and TL, those being intralinguistic differences, extralinguistic differences and paralinguistic differences (72). Each category further includes specific elements which can appear in a source text. Intralinguistic differences include idiomatic expressions, dialects, wordplay, words used in addressing someone and expletives (72-74). By comparison, extralinguistic differences entail both physical and abstract elements used in a source culture which might not exist in the target culture, such as place names and vocabulary for food and drink but also historical events and political organizations (77-78). Finally, paralinguistic differences refer to nonverbal means of communication, i.e. gestures, facial expressions and other forms of body language (72), and, though not listed by Bodó, the tone and pitch of voice (Gumperz 1982). The writings of Leppihalme as structured by Bodó are utilized as part of the methodology of the present study, in the form of categorization as to what source elements the translator's notes attempt to explain. I describe the methods in full detail in section 3.

Concerning the function of translator's notes, a few different observations have been put forth. Paloposki (2010) writes, in reference to her study on the nature of translator's notes contained within turn of the century Finnish translations, that “In addition to the footnotes explaining foreign inserts and realia, there were others, giving more general contextual information [...] on wordplay and puns” (103). Conversely, Toledano-Buendía (2013) identifies two main functions for them, namely “explanatory notes that function as a supplement to the text and have an explicative and informative function, and [...] those which act as a commentary and have a discursive or performative function”, the latter of which she identifies as discursive notes (157).

As they appear in published literature, translator's notes - or footnotes, as they are more commonly referred to - have been researched a fair amount. Their frequency in occurrence and as a feature of translator agency and visibility (Paloposki 2010), their role and function as paratext (Toledano-Buendía 2013 and Haroon 2019) and as an essential part to world literature studies (Jiang 2015) have all received interest from academia. Less attention has been given to their nature in fan translation, however. I address this point in the following section.

## 2.2 Fansubbing and fan translation networks

Pérez González (2014:308) defines fansubbing as “A form of participatory subtitling by fan networks with a particular interest in a given audiovisual genre, a specific television series, etc”. Fansubbing, short for fansubtitling, is a form of fan translation, which is to say amateur translation conducted “on the basis of [fan translators’] knowledge of the given language as well as that of particular media content or genre, spurred by their substantial interest in the topic” (O’Hagan, 2009:97). As for translator’s notes as they are used in fansubbing, Díaz Cintas and Muñoz Sánchez define them as “notes, which are usually placed at the top of the screen, [and] appear and disappear together with the subtitles that they accompany” and state that translator’s notes are a distinctive feature of fansubbing used to explain cultural referents such as place names, traditions and celebrations (2006: 46). This definition appears to still be accurate as it is corroborated by Schules: “translator comments [are] typically integrated into the upper portion of the video stream to identify cultural referents and clarify translation choices” (2014, n.p.). By my own observation, translator’s notes in fansubbing and fan translation are usually shortened to “T/N” and are then followed by whatever the note entails. This could be in close relation to the abbreviation “A/N” found in works of fan fiction, short for author’s note, but I could not find anything conclusive on the matter.

Díaz Cintas summarizes the history of fansubbing quite succinctly.

The first fansubs date from the early 1990s and their exponential rise in recent years has been made possible thanks to the availability of free subtitling and video editing software. If in the early years fansubbers’ drive was confined to the popularization of Japanese anime, the reality these days is that most audiovisual programmes, including the latest US films and most popular TV series, find their way into the fansubbing circuit (2014:637)

Over time, fansubbing has indeed expanded to include a variety of media outside of Japanese anime, such as American television programs and film (see Massidda 2015, Orrego-Carmona

2019), South American telenovelas (see Tauro 2002), German soap operas (see Hellekson 2012) and Korean dramas (see Hu 2010). This is not to say that all research on fansubbing has to do with amateur subtitling of fictional scripted media, however. In addition to the present study, there is for instance the work of Hanes (2011) examining multiple Portuguese fan translations for the viral Internet video “David After Dentist”.

Fansubbing from Korean has been studied a fair amount and with increasing frequency in recent years. To name but a few, Dwyer (2012) examined the participatory nature of the website Viki and how it encourages its users to aid in the translation of the programs it hosts in a classic example of crowdsourcing, Aisyah and Nam (2017) explored the built-in subtitling functions of the Korean celebrity platform VLIVE, while Wongseree, O’Hagan & Sasamoto (2019) and Wongseree (2018) shed light on the practices of Thai fansubbing in the reproduction and recontextualization of global media, and finally Locher (2020) analyzed fansubbed scenes from Korean dramas containing relational work moments to see how the translator commented upon them. The latter citation is of particular interest to the present study since some of the subtitles under analysis contained bracketed explanations and comments from the translator. Locher identified these bracketed comments as “meta-comments by the subtitlers” containing information on language and culture (148). The research material contained 28 of this type of comment, half of which explained Korean terms of address, eight explained changes in formality and six explained Korean metaphors or idioms. (150).

In addition to Locher’s study, translator’s notes in fansubbing have been researched by Schules (2014) and van Tonder (2015). Schules details the use of linear notes – as he refers to top-of-screen translator’s notes – in anime fansubbing while van Tonder describes the conventions of fansubbing with the distinct goal of determining what the world of professional AVT could benefit from them. Citing Schules’ work in 2012, van Tonder also uses the term linear notes instead of translator’s notes (2015: 4). Despite the terminological difference, the topic of study is the same as in the present study, confirmed especially in Schules (2014, n.p.) since he illustrates his examples with screencaps and video excerpts. The screencaps especially confirm that the research material used by Schules, the fansubbed anime, has subtitles on the bottom and the related T/Ns on the top of the screen, identical to the audiovisual material in the present study. Schules goes on to analyze the linear notes and how they relate to the subtitles they accompany and more generally, why they are a part of the translation. After providing examples of both the T/Ns and positive feedback from fans viewing the subbed episodes, he concludes

“Linear notes meet the subcultural needs of fans [...] by providing necessary context and background not only to the translation itself but also to the larger linguistic and cultural currents in which anime resides”.

While the practice is also performed by individuals, fans involved in translation and subbing often organize themselves into networks, most likely by virtue of the inclusionary and collaborative nature of fan communities. The activity and operations of two such networks have been chronicled by Massidda (2015) in relation to the Italian fansubbing of the American television show *Lost*. What can be surmised from it, among other things, is that fansubbing networks are born on the one hand from a uniting love for the media in question and on the other from the perceived need for a better translation than the one provided by professional and official sources. Díaz Cintas writes along the same lines, stating “Fansubbers or amateur subtitlers [...] tend to operate within their own *ad hoc* groups, motivated by their ultimate belief in the free distribution on the net of subtitles made by fans for the consumption of other fans” (2014:637).

Relevant to the present study, Massidda also mentions that the fansubbing groups have guidelines for their translation work and details the subtitling guidelines of the two fansubbing networks, discussing them in comparison with professional practices (2015:44-64). Massidda begins by summarizing the guidelines for professional subtitling as laid out by Carroll and Ivarsson (1998), later in the chapter she supplements them with the conventions introduced by Karamitroglou (1998). One major difference between professional and amateur subtitling is that fansubbing guidelines allow for a greater number of characters per line, 45 in comparison to the professional standard of 35. Where professional guidelines instruct to omit irrelevant elements such as false starts, repetitions, and discourse markers from the translation, fansubbers aspire “to convey ‘everything’ belonging to the original dialogues, deeming it of paramount importance to detach themselves from the mainstream practices of ‘domestication’ and the excessive conciseness of professional subtitling” (59). Influenced by fansubbers’ apparent dissatisfaction with professional subtitles (36), Massidda outlines a set of “hybrid” guidelines with instructions from both professional and amateur subtitlers. A point of interest for the present study, regarding omission and elements that purely professional subtitling would do away with, she writes “cultural references and semantic voids should always be rendered by employing loanwords (cultural-bound expressions explicitated by notes, for example)” (63). Since it is not specified what “by notes” explicitly means, I can only speculate that Massidda

had something akin to a linear or translator's note in mind, especially because the guideline concerning the spatial nature of subtitles explicitly *does* mention that subtitles should only appear on the bottom part of the screen (in a maximum of two lines) (ibid.). Massidda also recounts studies on audience reception of fansubs containing surtitles or glosses conducted through eye tracking experiments (Caffrey 2009, Orrego-Carmona 2014), and though not closely related to the present study, Caffrey in particular does bring up an interesting point in relation to the pausing of subtitled media. Two of Caffrey's subjects mention that they would prefer to pause the video they were watching if it contained many pop-up glosses (2009, 128), which is similar to my own experience of reading fansubs with translator's notes. Particularly in the case of watching a fansubbed video on YouTube, pausing the video playback to read translator's notes is both easy to do and ensures my full understanding of the translation.

As mentioned above, Pedersen (2011) brings up the topic of norms in relation to the translation decisions of subtitlers. Both Pedersen and Massidda (2015) discuss Chesterman's (2016) expectancy norm, according to which, translators (should) act in accordance with the perceived expectations of their target audience, and those expectations (should) play a part in the choices they make while translating (2016: 62). The reason for bracketing the verb 'should' in the previous sentence lies in the fact that the norm could be seen as both descriptive and prescriptive depending on the verb's inclusion. Though the present study is undoubtedly descriptive, utilizing this norm still has its merits despite the apparent conflict. As Pedersen puts it "the prescriptive norms of [professional subtitling] guidelines coincide with the behavior of subtitlers to a high degree, which shows that the norms in the guidelines affect (and/or are affected by) actual subtitling" (2011: 187). Considering this, I feel comfortable including the expectancy norm as part of my theoretical framework, insofar as I focus on it from a primarily descriptive perspective.

As just defined, the expectancy norm affects translators' decisions because they consider the expectations of the target audience while translating. This is true for fansubbers as well, who are distinctly aware of translating for a target audience of other fans, and of the expectations that audience, such as the translation being as accurate as possible, with no noticeable omissions, and that the translation supplements cultural differences to the best of the translators' ability. I return to this norm as I discuss the questionnaire answers given by fan translators in section 5 of the thesis.

### 2.3 The Korean Wave & BTS

This section relies heavily on research summarized and developments observed by Song (2020). The reason for choosing this publication over others is firstly that in addition to recounting the previous phases of the cultural phenomenon known as the Korean Wave (*Hallyu* in Korean), Song focuses particularly on the current phase, or third generation of Hallyu, which she identifies as Hallyu 3.0 and secondly, because she discusses the K-Pop group BTS – a contextual topic of the present study – as one of the leading causes of the increased popularity of South Korean (henceforth Korean) culture during Hallyu 3.0 (133).

The first generation of the Korean Wave, or Hallyu 1.0, was characterized by the consumption of Korean films and dramas – the term used in Korea for episodic series broadcast in television or online (webdrama) – in countries outside of Korea, namely in China, Japan, and Taiwan. The exact starting point and duration of this generation is debated, but Song, citing Hwang and Epstein (2016), places it from 1997 (which is when exports of Korean dramas to China increased and gained substantial popularity) to the mid-2000s (2020:128). Another distinct feature in this phase of the Korean Wave was that the fans of Korean culture, that is to say the viewing audience of dramas and films, was made up largely by middle-aged women (131). Though Korean popular music, known as K-Pop, saw some marginal success through artists such as H.O.T in China and BoA in Japan, this was not yet the era when music became a considerable cultural export for Korea.

The second generation of the Korean Wave, Hallyu 2.0, took place between the mid-2000s and mid-2010s (Song 2020, 130). This phase was characterized on the one hand by Korean cultural products such as film and music spreading to areas outside of Asia via the Internet, and on the other by the growing popularity of K-Pop in particular. Additionally, the era “was marked by two-way communication between artists and fans” (ibid.) facilitated by the rising popularity of social media in general, and platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter in particular. The two previous points are embodied by the rising success of Psy’s *Gangnam Style*, and how its music video was the first ever to garner one billion views on YouTube (131). Song describes the process of K-Pop production then states, “K-pop music during the second generation of the Korean Wave was produced to target international fans instead of Korean or Asian fans. This allowed K-pop music to obtain international popularity, distinct from earlier K-pop music” (132). Bearing this in mind, it is no surprise that K-Pop as a genre is defined by its hybridity,

by how it combines modernity with tradition (ibid.) and includes a diverse variety of other, established genres (R&B, rock, and EDM to name but a few) (e.g. Laurie 2016). As K-Pop grew more popular and artists shared their content through social media, the fandom interested in Korean culture diversified as well. When before Korean dramas and films had been watched primarily by middle-aged women in Eastern Asian countries, now the fans were teenagers or 20-somethings from North America, Europe, or Australia (130, citing Hu 2010).

As mentioned above, Song sees BTS as one of the instigators of the third generation of the Korean Wave. Hallyu 3.0, as it only makes sense to be called, began in the mid-2010s and is still taking place today. She further lists the trend of *mukbang*, a form of livestreamed or pre-recorded video content online, and Korean films and dramas being produced by global production companies such as Netflix as the other facilitators (133). Song gives a detailed summary on how and why BTS have achieved the level of success they currently enjoy (133-36) listing among other things the fact that, rather uniquely, the group gained popularity first in the West and outside of Korea, and only then within Korea. She also mentions that the group's song lyrics contain themes that resonate with their fans, and that although the songs are mostly in Korean, they are translated by fans into a multitude of other languages in order to spread BTS' message. Song concludes the analysis on the third generation thusly: "cultural products produced during the third generation of the Korean Wave were based on Korean interpretation of Korean culture although they were introduced in Western style for global audience" (141), in stark contrast to how K-Pop in the second generation was intentionally made to appeal to international and Western audiences to varying degrees of success, at least in the mainstream.

The professional career of BTS, which spans from June 2013 to the present day, overlaps with both Hallyu 2.0 and Hallyu 3.0. Given that fan translations about them make up half of the primary research material in the present study, I will give a brief overview on BTS before discussing some prior research related to their content.

*BTS* (방탄소년단 in Korean), usually translated into English as either *Bangtan Boys*, *Bulletproof Boy Scouts* (the literal translation) or most recently *Beyond The Scene* (Herman 2017), are a South Korean boy group made up of seven members: RM, Jin, Suga, J-Hope, Jimin, V and Jungkook. In keeping with the conventions of other South Korean bands, BTS has an identified leader member, RM, who is one of the group's main rappers along with Suga and J-Hope. The



group has four vocalists: Jin, Jimin, V and Jungkook; and three main dancers: J-Hope, Jimin and Jungkook. The roles are not strictly imposed and overlap however, as all members dance in the group's choreographies, and Jungkook for example sometimes raps and RM sings. The concept of assigned roles within a group is unique to K-Pop, however (Song 2020: 133).

Since their formation by Big Hit Music and their debut in 2013, the group has been very active on different social media sites, for instance Twitter, YouTube and VLIVE, an exclusive global live streaming service created by the Naver Corporation (see e.g. Park 2015). The group has achieved great success in both Korea and on a global scale and has received recognition by way of awards and partnerships and broken numerous records, most recently with the release of their single *Butter*, which garnered the most YouTube views in the span of 24 hours (Davis, 2021), became the fastest song to reach 100 million streams on Spotify (Rolli, 2021), and topped the Billboard Hot 100 chart, the fourth BTS song to do so in the last 9 months (Trust, 2021). Arguably, BTS is currently the most well-known K-Pop artist in the West. Since YouTube has been an active facilitator during the newest swell of the Korean Wave particularly for the spreading of Korean music (Lee & Kuwahara 2014, 102), it comes as no surprise that BTS' personal YouTube channel BANGTANTV ([youtube.com/user/BANGTANTV](https://www.youtube.com/user/BANGTANTV)) has been a key facilitator for their international success. As of June 2021, their channel has nearly 1,500 uploaded videos and 51.2 million subscribers.

Though BTS has increasingly received a lot of attention from both the journalistic and academic community, I would like to present three studies here which all have a distinct focus on (fan) translation. Firstly, Aisyah (2017) analyzed the replies left by fans under tweets posted in Korean by BTS and their company Big Hit Music and found that in addition to fans asking for translations to the tweets' content, translations were provided by other fans and that the existence of fan-based translators helped other fans overcome language barriers when it came to K-Pop related news (77). Secondly, though summarized above in relation to fansubbing, Aisyah and Nam (2017) investigated the fan translation on videos uploaded to BTS' VLIVE channel, noting that content on the channel is available in over 50 subtitled languages and that the subtitling tools built into the site make it easy for fans to provide translations for other fans (125). Finally, Aisyah et al. (2019) revisit the subject of Twitter reply translations and expand on the practices of fan translators on the platform, describing that fan translators sometimes utilize diegetic glosses in order to separate their own comments from the target text, though

some fans make the same difference by posting their own comments in new tweets separate from the translations (51).

Having now provided context on both theory and topic, I will introduce the subject and methodology of the present study extensively in the following section.

### **3 Materials & Methods**

In this section I discuss the materials I used to conduct my study and the methods with which I analyzed them. I review in detail how the materials were collected and which theories I utilized in a detailed analysis.

#### **3.1 Materials**

The research material for the present study is twofold; a collection of translator's notes contained within three videos fansubbed by BangtanSubs, and a questionnaire sent to and answered by two of BangtanSubs' translators.

BangtanSubs, known better as BTS-Trans on online platforms such as Tumblr or Twitter where they mainly translate written material, is a non-profit, organized team of fantranslators dedicated to the translating and subbing of BTS content. Their translations vary from song lyrics, blog posts and interviews to tweets and television appearances all produced by or featuring the members of the group in some way or another. The BangtanSubs team is composed of 20-30 people including translators and subtitle typesetters but also administrators and secretaries. While most of the content translated by BangtanSubs is from Korean to English, their staff also includes a few Japanese to English and Mandarin to English translators, since BTS occasionally produces content in these languages, as well. (BangtanSubs 2016, 2018)

The translator's notes used for this study were collected from three approximately hour-long videos on BangtanSubs' YouTube channel, originally uploaded on BTS's channel BANGTANTV without subtitles. Each video is an anniversary celebration event of BTS, uploaded during their annual BTS Festa event, where they release new videos, songs and other content to commemorate their debut date of June 13th, 2013. The three videos selected were released in 2015, 2016 and 2017 to celebrate BTS' second, third and fourth anniversary, respectively. While the subtitles for the video's content appear on the bottom of the screen as is the case in a professional audio-visual setting, the T/Ns are placed on the upper part of the screen at the same moment. The T/Ns are visible for 3 to 5 seconds depending on the length of the subtitle they pertain to, and they appear and disappear in concurrence with this subtitle. The notes are identical to the subtitles in both font color and size but appear in italics and within round brackets.

These videos, along with one from June 2014 and a Christmas special in 2013, are part of a series called “BTS Kkul FM 06.13”, a viewable radio style program wherein the members discuss what they have been up to and answer different kinds of questions. *Kkul* is the Korean word for honey but also an approximate homophone for the English word *cool*, and 06.13 is a reference to the group’s debut date of June 13<sup>th</sup>. In the case of the anniversary episodes, the group additionally reminisces about the year they have had and what they have accomplished, as well as what they hope to accomplish in the year to come. The reasoning for choosing these videos as the material for the present study lies behind their length, and my assumption and recollection that they, by virtue of their length, contained a larger number of T/Ns compared to BangtanSubs’ shorter works. More notes correlates quite directly with more opportunities for fruitful analysis. Furthermore, I preferred analysis of multiple notes from the same context – within the span of one video – rather than collecting individual notes from dozens of separate videos, all with their own contexts. The same reasoning applies to why T/Ns were not collected from shorter written translations, since they are usually translated social media posts or translations of lyrics, thus shorter in length.

The second component to my research material is a questionnaire. It was made up of six questions written by me and sent via email to BangtanSubs after I had contacted their secretary through Twitter. In this initial message of contact, I specified that answers from 2-3 translators would be adequate for my research. The two translators who eventually answered the questionnaire were chosen by this secretary, who later sent me a link to a Google Drive document containing their answers. I sent the questionnaire to BangtanSubs’ secretary in April 2018 and received it back approximately two weeks later. In addition to a few background questions concerning the respondents’ age and native language, the six main questions of the questionnaire are as follows:

1. How long have you translated for BangtanSubs?
2. Do you use translator’s notes (=T/Ns) while translating?
3. What kind of things in the source text/video warrant a T/N?
4. Do some aspects in the translation require more T/Ns than others? Please give an example, if you can.
5. Has your use of T/Ns changed from when you first started at BangtanSubs to now? Additionally, were you given guidelines about the use of T/Ns upon joining the group or did you come up with your own conventions for how to use them?
6. Do you think T/Ns are necessary in fan translations? (Why or why not)

In addition to the six main questions, I included a section for further comments at the end of the questionnaire, where respondents could expand on their answers if they felt so inclined. I introduce the respondents and examine their answers fully in the results and analysis section of this thesis.

### **3.2 Methods**

My collection process for the T/Ns consisted of watching through the videos and transcribing each occurring T/N, accompanied by the specific translation i.e. subtitle they pertained to in order to preserve the T/N's context and a timecode of where the T/N appeared, so if necessary I could easily find it again. I compiled the T/Ns from each video in a list into three separate documents and included the total number of T/Ns at the bottom. I then went through all three lists together and categorized the T/Ns according to which linguistic or cultural phenomenon they attempted to explain. I carried out the categorization by color-coding each T/N, using multiple colors if a particular T/N applied to more than one category. This gave me a clearer understanding of which phenomena require more notes and which fewer.

The three color-coded categories were intralinguistic, extralinguistic and paralinguistic elements, borrowed from Bodó's refined typology based on Leppihalme's theories. This initial categorization left a few translator's notes uncategorized, however, prompting me to include a fourth category that I identified as "translator meta-comments" after Locher's (2020) study. I focused on each category to identify and quantify its subcategories. For the intralinguistic category, this meant explanations for elements such as wordplay, words of address and dialect use. For extralinguistic notes, the subcategories included additional information on Korean culture, names for places and foods, and references to BTS and K-Pop in general. Finally for paralinguistic notes, the subcategories entailed different gestures and differences in speaking tone. As it was made up of 'leftover' notes, my fourth category contained no truly distinctive subcategories, apart from two instances of repetition mention. I discuss this matter as well as the nature of all my categories extensively in the results analysis section (4) of this thesis. After identifying all the subcategories, I summed them up to have a clearer picture of their frequency in occurrence within the whole collection of notes.

I compiled the questionnaire to study the subject of T/Ns more extensively and to obtain information directly from the source, i.e. the translators who use them. The latter point was key, as it provided me with concrete data on the usage of T/Ns rather than solely my own speculation

on the subject. Since the questionnaire was shared to both respondents via the same online Google document and they responded at different times, the second respondent could see the first respondent's answers before filling it out, thus avoiding the risk of receiving duplicate or identical answers to the questions. I identify it as a risk because while other questionnaires, especially those with many participants, might benefit from receiving similar or identical responses and confirming its thesis, I appreciated receiving differing answers since I only have two respondents. Having two similarly filled out questionnaires would have negated the existence of my second respondent, and the variations in their answers make the material more valuable, since more than one perspective is represented. Conversely, and at the risk of contradicting myself, having the responses of both respondents echoing the same sentiment gave more weight to the information within their answer.

After I received the filled-out questionnaires, I read through the answers with the distinct mindset of ascertaining how the answers addressed my posed research questions, followed by comparing the answers given by the two respondents to see where they differed and agreed with one another. Though phrased slightly differently from the introduction of this thesis, the questionnaire contained both of my central research questions: What kind of things in the source text/video warrant a T/N? and Do some aspects in the translation require more T/Ns than others?

In terms of how my materials relate to each other, I see the collection of T/Ns as the quantitative and the questionnaire as the qualitative part of my research. Since I collected and categorized the T/Ns first, my empirical knowledge of them will inform my analysis of the questionnaire responses. This also affected my decision to present the T/N collection results first, followed by the questionnaire; once the reader is more familiar with the role of translator's notes and how they function, the respondents' answers regarding their reasoning make more sense.

## 4 Results & Analysis

In this section I present the results yielded by the research conducted for this thesis and proceed to analyze the results using the theoretical frameworks introduced in an earlier section. I first discuss the collected T/Ns, followed by analysis of the questionnaire answers.

### 4.1 Translator's notes

The three videos, which stand at a combined length of 209 minutes, contain 86 translator's notes altogether. My final categorization divided this total thusly: out of the 86 T/Ns, 45 contained explanation for extralinguistic elements or realia, 26 for intralinguistic elements and 7 for paralinguistic elements. 4 T/Ns contained both intralinguistic and extralinguistic elements, leaving another 4 to form their own category in addition to Bodó's classification. Borrowing from Locher's (2020) categorization, I have elected to identify the fifth and final category as meta-comments from the subtitler. I discuss each category and possible subsequent subcategory further in my analysis of the material, presenting examples of each.

**Table 1.** Categorization of translator's notes

Category	# of occurrences
Extralinguistic	45
Intralinguistic	26
Paralinguistic	7
Meta-comments	4
<b>In total</b>	<b>86</b>

One point of interest to note here is that while the videos from 2015 and 2017 contained a similar number of T/Ns, 33 and 49 respectively, the 2016 video had only 4 T/Ns in total which is considerably less. The runtime of 2017's video is 83 minutes which explains the higher number of notes – 2015's video comparatively is 59 minutes – but 2016's video stands at 66 minutes, leading one to assume it would contain the second most T/Ns. I am left to speculate as to why this is and shall do so in section 5 of this thesis.

A few things to aid in the understanding of the examples presented in the following sections shall now be provided. Firstly, for the interest of saving precious subtitle space, BangtanSubs abbreviates the BTS members' names when identifying the speaker of each utterance. This abbreviation is done as follows: Jin = J, Suga = S, J-Hope = JH, Jimin = JM and Jungkook = JK. The names of RM and V are not abbreviated, most likely because there is no need, and they

appear as they normally would. Secondly, the videos analyzed are part of BTS' anniversary celebration series "BTS Kkul FM 06.13", but because this title is seen as too lengthy, when examples are cited, they shall be cited in the format of Kkul FM + whichever year's episode is in question, for example "Kkul FM 2017", unless an example is already efficiently identified within the text. In addition, a timecode shall appear next to each example in an effort to aid those interested in locating the example in the videos analyzed.

#### 4.1.1 Extralinguistic elements

A clear majority of the collected T/Ns contained explanations for extralinguistic elements, with a total of 45 notes. Out of this total, 22 T/Ns provided explanations for history or Korean culture, 17 for specifics to do with K-Pop or BTS, with 4 and 2 notes providing definitions for place names and foods, respectively.

(20:12) RM: Let's go on a proper trip together! / JK: Yeah, holiday! / S: Let's go MT for once!

*(T/N: MT is a Korean slang for a trip whose goal is to build a friendship and strengthen the unity among the people (usually university students and employees).)*

This exchange from 2015's video of the members planning what to do for their time off contains an initialism that has warranted an explanatory note. MT, which is not spelled out in the translator's note, stands for membership training. While the concept of classmates or colleagues going on a trip to improve morale is not unheard of outside of South Korea, fans and viewers might not be familiar with the term used by the members here.

(15:15) RM: If we do meet, we'd be (same age) friends though...

*(T/N: Koreans consider people of the same age as them as 'friends'. RM could be talking about him and [Justin Bieber], as both are born in 1994.)*

During this part of the 2017 video, the members are discussing attending the Billboard Music Awards, and meeting American artists who they admire. Because RM and Justin Bieber are born in the same year, they would be seen as friends in South Korean culture, meaning they are equals and peers to each other rather than one person being higher in the social hierarchy than the other.

(31:30) RM: You're Liu Bei! / S: It's good to have big ears!

*(T/N: Liu Bei is a warlord in the late Eastern Han dynasty who apparently had large ears.) - Kkul FM 2015*

A viewer with no knowledge of Korean history would have no way of knowing who Liu Bei is, so an explanatory note is useful.



(36:44) [about Jin's excessive eating] RM: I think it'd be a good idea for him to appear in Wednesday Gourmet Club as a pig.

*(T/N: "Wednesday Gourmet Club" is a program where the panelists introduce the history of food and restaurants.) - Kkul FM 2015*

The translator does not assume the viewer knows about all South Korean television programs, so context is provided. This T/N and a few others like it are not as vital to understanding as some others, but they do give a more complete picture than the translation alone would have.

The second largest category within extralinguistic elements was notes related to K-Pop in general or BTS specifically. These notes could be seen as relating to Korean culture similar to the previous ones, but given the topic of this study, I have elected to categorize them separately.

(28:49) [talking to Jin] V: So when Instructor Sungdeuk tells you, "Try to choreograph a dance." / or "Jin, try to choreograph one" –

*(T/N: Son Sungdeuk is BTS' choreography instructor.)*

The above T/N from 2017 is a prime example of "by fans for fans" in that even if a viewer is already familiar with BTS and considers themselves a fan, they might not be aware of their choreographer's name. This translation could in theory exist without an explanatory note if the translator trusted the viewer to understand the context, but the T/N confirms that context.

(0:59) S: Now we are preparing for our 2nd MUSTER for our ARMYs that is now three times bigger than the first generation.

*(T/N: MUSTER is BTS' official fanmeeting event.) - Kkul FM 2015*

(25:50) S: Don't we have a V App channel where we can communicate with all our ARMYs?

*(T/N: He's referring to the CH+ chatroom.)*

(29:02) *(T/N: Lyrics from 'Spring Day'.)*

(29:22) *(T/N: Lyrics from 'Spine Breaker'.)*

(40:59) *(T/N: They are singing Jimin's part of 'Tony Montana'.) - Kkul FM 2017*

These notes serve the important purpose of making the content more accessible to a casual viewer by bringing them into the know and letting them in on the joke/reference, but also growing a new fan's vocabulary with terms such as ARMY, MUSTER and V App.

The fewest number of explanations within the extralinguistic category were those relating to place names and foods. The following analysis covers these subcategories.

(5:39) S: If you buy a cake from A Twosome Place, you can find candles inside the knife.

*(T/N: Twosome Place is a Korean dessert cafe.) - Kkul FM 2015*

(19:02) S: I want us to perform in a bigger venue [...] So Seoul (Jamsil) Olympic Stadium?

*(T/N: It's one of the biggest venues in Korea. It has 35,000-100,000 seats, depending on how they arrange the stages and seats.) - Kkul FM 2015*

These two notes are prime examples of the translator providing additional information that could be contained within the translation itself, but might clutter up the respective subtitles, and so a T/N is chosen instead. Assuming the viewer is non-Korean, they cannot be expected to be intimately familiar with Korean culture and to have knowledge about the places in question.

(43:34) S: [...] The most memorable nickname [Jimin has] received from fans is “Mang-gae-dduck”

*(T/N: A type of rice cake.) - Kkul FM 2016*

(34:40) [reading letter from another member] S: “Suga. I bought tangsuyuk for myself during our Hong Kong concert, but why did you eat most of it?”

*(T/N: Tangsuyuk is a Korean/Chinese meat dish with sweet and sour sauce.) - Kkul FM 2017*

The two T/Ns above offer supplementary knowledge, completing the meaning in the translation. In the case of the T/N from 2016, the translator has elected not to include that Jimin is likened to a rice cake by fans because of his round face and cute appearance, perhaps because this is a fact most fans are already aware of.

#### **4.1.2 Intralinguistic elements**

Out of the grand total of T/Ns collected, 26 pertained to intralinguistic elements within the translation. Within this category, 12 notes contained explanations of wordplay, 11 of idioms, 5 of addressing and 3 of dialect use. I will provide examples of each type of note and discuss them in more detail in this section.

Korean as a language is very suitable for wordplay, whether that be puns or double meanings or onomatopoeic expressions, for instance. The vocabulary is largely monosyllabic and contains a lot of homonyms and homophones, making it easy to derive humor from similar sounding words.

(17:59) JH: Let's dream big! / RM: How? / JH: Let's go for a daesang!

*(T/N: Daesang is a grand prize, the biggest award.)*

(18:02) JH: Would it be faster to get a dining table?

*(T/N: Wordplay. Bapsang (dining table) rhymes with daesang.)*

(18:06) [to JH] S: You're too hyped today. / RM: You're a menace.

*(T/N: Another wordplay. Jinsang (menace) also rhymes with daesang.)*

The above example is an exchange from BTS' anniversary video from 2015. The first of the three T/Ns is actually explaining an extralinguistic element since it explains that a daesang is a hard to obtain award, a necessary context here in understanding the other two examples. The members then go on to make two jokes with words that have an identical ending to *daesang*, comments which would not make much sense through translation alone, thus requiring an explanatory note each. Though the jokes are of a similar nature, they are explained by two separate T/Ns, and as such I have elected to count them as two distinct occurrences of T/N usage. Another example of simple wordplay is when Jin, in reaction to how much the member Suga talks nowadays compared to before, calls him "Min Suda", with Min being Suga's family name.

(11:09) JK: [...] He chatters so much now, that he seems like an old lady. / J: Min Suda, Min Suda!

*(T/N: Suda means chatter.) - Kkul FM 2016*

The Korean language also contains an abundance of idiomatic expressions and proverbs, often condensed into four-character idioms, most of which are based on Chinese hanja characters (Jung, 2012). Students are commonly required to learn and memorize these proverbs, much like students in western countries would memorize Shakespeare passages and foreign language word lists.

(6:38) J: It was during the period when he was studying really hard, so it could be something like '금상첨화'. / JK: I don't think it's anything like that.

*(T/N: The 4-character idiom '금상첨화' means adding something good to another good thing. Jin was probably guessing random idioms as they are considered difficult vocabulary for students.) - Kkul FM 2017*

Jungkook is the youngest out of the group members and had graduated a few months before the filming of this video, which explains Jin's guess.

Spoken Korean is structured heavily around forms of address and levels of speech. A basic divide between levels is polite speech (used when speaking to a stranger, or someone with a higher status) and informal speech (used when talking to children or between friends/family members/equals), though special registers are in use in higher positions of government and the military, for instance. Informal speech has less involved structures and verb endings, but still

maintains certain words of address, usually replacing a person's name in an utterance. The members of BTS speak mainly in informal speech, with the younger members addressing members older than them as *hyung* (= lit. older brother, used between friends as a sign of closeness).

RM: Hyung, I really thought this meant to tighten a screw.

(T/N: 'Suffocate your heart' / 마음을 조이다 shares the same-sounding '조이다' / jo-i-da as 'tighten a screw' / 나사를 조이다.) - Kkul FM 2017

The above example is not a T/N to explain forms of address, but it demonstrates the use of *hyung*, since RM is talking to Jin who is a year older than him. The T/N itself is irrelevant, but what is interesting is how the translator does not feel a need to explain the form of address, as fans viewing the video are expected to already know what it means. Indeed, the use of *hyung* is never annotated within the fansubs under analysis.

South Korea, though a small country in terms of geographical area – when compared to say, China or Russia – contains a variety of regional dialects. The dialect used in Seoul and its surrounding areas is seen as the standard way of speaking, but regions and cities further south have their own distinct accents and dialects. Out of the seven members of BTS, five were born outside of Seoul and adopted the standard way of speaking once they moved there. On occasion however, their native dialects appear in their speech, either intentionally – speaking in a nonstandard dialect is often used for comedic effect – or on accident.

(4:00) S: Are you sure to be funny today? / JH: Today? / S: Are you confident?

(T/N: Suga spoke in a slight Daegu accent which then he quickly changed to Seoul accent.)

(31:23) JK: If you look at it right now, his ears are crazy big!

(T/N: They're laughing because JK's accent came out.)

(14:50) JH: The trending tweets are going all the way~

(T/N: He said it in a Jeol-lado accent.)

The first two examples are from 2015's video, and the third from 2017's. These types of T/Ns are likely intended to assist the viewer, as the translators are presuming that the fans watching would not be so intimately familiar with Korean dialects so as to distinguish them from the Seoul standard, which is usually the dialect used by celebrities and in Korean broadcasting.

### 4.1.3 Paralinguistic elements

Out of all T/Ns collected, seven contained explanations for paralinguistic elements. These include everything outside of language, such as gestures, tone (Gumperz, 1982), culture specific movements and facial expressions.

(51:33) S: Shall we go around and say something each? Going one round?

*(T/N: Suga literally got up and turned one round.)* -Kkul FM 2015

(17:52) V [pointing at RM's paper]: Hyung, but do you personally want to do that?

*(T/N: Referring to what he saw RM write.)* - Kkul FM 2017

(22:56) [champagne gesturing]

*(T/N: They're imitating the sound of popping champagne.)* - Kkul FM 2017

All the notes above contain explanation to a movement or action made by one or more of the members. Similar to some of the earlier T/Ns, these notes are not necessarily essential to a viewer's understanding of the situation, but provide additional explanation nonetheless. In the case of the first note, it does give the information that in the Korean language, the phrase for 'going one round' and 'turning one round' is the same. In the case of the third example, it is of interest to notice that although a translator's note appears, there is no subtitle accompanying it. The members simply gesture and make sounds akin to opening champagne bottles, imagining their celebration, and the note confirms that this is what they are doing.

(1:21:01) S: For me..."Can he actually do it? Is it really possible? Wow, seriously..." / RM: So is it possible?

*(T/N: They are talking about whether Suga can pull off his performance.)*

- Kkul FM 2017

While this note does not seem to contain anything paralinguistic on the face of it, it does attempt to explain the comments spoken by Suga and RM based on the tone they are using. The questioning tone they use says more than the words spoken, making this an instance of paralinguistics.

(17:42) [after JH danced lewdly for Up&Down] JK: You're a pervert!

*(T/N: He said it in a funny way, pronouncing J as Z, to exaggerate the pervertedness.)*

- Kkul FM. 2015

(52:48) V: "Does it taste good?" / JH: I always say: What does it taste like?

*(T/N: V is imitating J-Hope.)* - Kkul FM 2017

(1 :07 :52) JM : When we do things like that where we write sincere letters to each other, I go up to Suga hyung and say “What?” a lot of times.

*(T/N: As if he can't believe that Suga is being sincere.) – Kkul FM 2017*

Above are three additional examples of T/Ns explaining a member's tone, most likely necessary so as not to lose some of the meaning in their utterances.

#### 4.1.4 Intralinguistic and extralinguistic elements

A small portion of the T/Ns collected contained an explanation that was both intralinguistic and extralinguistic in nature and thus could not be included solely in one of the two categories. Hence, I will analyze them separately on their own.

(17:52) J:[...] so that I can eat a lot of good food in Korea. / RM: “Mukbang” program!

*(T/N: Mukbangs are broadcasts where you stream yourself eating various food.)*

-Kkul FM 2015

(48:14) S: In conclusion, I went to eat lamb skewers alone that time. / JH: Hon-yang, you're hon-yang.

*(T/N: 'Hon / 혼' is short for the Korean phrase 'Eating alone / 혼자 먹는' and 'yang / 양' is short for the word 'Lamb skewers / 양꼬치'.)*

-Kkul FM 2017

The first note explains the concept of mukbang in addition to including the word itself, presenting it as a piece of vocabulary rather than having it be translated into English. A direct translation would be possible, but probably unnecessary since an equivalent concept does not exist in anglophonic society. Mukbang is an abbreviation of the words 먹는 (mukneun) and 방송 (bangsong) and literally translates as ‘eating broadcast’ (Song 2020: 136). Focusing on the foreign word itself, the T/N would be categorized as intralinguistic, but the cultural aspect qualifies it to be extralinguistic as well. The second note offers a similar example, since having a meal by oneself has recently become a trend in South Korea. Previously a very communal activity, the stigma of eating or drinking alone is slowly being removed with the rise of single-person households and the level of income (for instance Kim 2019).

(17:28) J: Let's do it in order of age. / V: Yeah, in order of age. / J: Elder before younger. / RM: Elder before younger? (Up and down)

(17:32) JK: Up, down! / RM&JK: Up, up, down!

*(T/N: They are singing EXID's “Up&Down” as “elder and younger (위/아래)” and “Up and down (위/아래)” are the same in Korean.) -Kkul FM 2015*

EXID is a South Korean girl group. The note here gives the viewer information about a song they might not be familiar with and explains why the members would parallel these two topics with one another, so it is extralinguistic in nature. The additional translation of the idiom gives the T/N its intralinguistic value.

(13:27) V: “Hyung, let’s be brothers.”

*(T/N: He refers to having John Legend acknowledge him as someone closer than a friend, more like a close younger sibling.) -Kkul FM 2017*

The members are discussing the Billboard Awards again here, and who of their own celebrity influences they might encounter. Since V was born in 1995, this makes John Legend older than him and in South Korean culture he would be V’s hyung – provided they had a close personal relationship. It should be acknowledged that the line above is said in jest, most likely because Koreans rarely expect non-Koreans to even be aware or to adhere to the Korean age hierarchy.

#### 4.1.5 Metacomments from the subtitler

A total of four T/Ns did not fit within the three – or four, if we view the combined category as its own – previous categories at all, and thus I’ve elected to contain them here, within their own category. Most of these notes pertain to the translator’s agency and are more akin to messages from the translator to the viewer, with little or nothing to do with the translation they appear with. Therefore, they can be seen as paratextual, something that is not vital to the understanding of the text (in this case the translation), but, in the words of Genette as he writes in the introduction for *Paratexts : thresholds of interpretation*, as being “at the service of a better reception for the text and a more pertinent reading of it” (Genette, 1997:2). Indeed, these notes serve the viewer differently than the previous ones, since they are comparable to the translator speaking directly to them.

(25:34) JK: I don’t know who this is referring to but-- / JH: “Don’t know who this is--”

*(T/N: He’s repeating after JK.) - Kkul FM 2015*

(52:07) JK: I liked it. / V: You’ve eaten a lot! / JM: “It was good.”

*(T/N: Jimin is repeating Jungkook’s answer.) - Kkul FM 2017*

These examples contain two instances of repetition. I have elected to categorize them here as opposed to intralinguistic elements because although their content pertains to language, the material being translated is not particularly challenging to translate due to the repetition. Rather, the translator is mentioning the repetition in the T/Ns to inform the viewer of its existence, assuming that the viewer does not understand Korean to be able to notice it themselves. This is

particularly true of the second example, where the Korean utterance “좋았어요” can be, depending on the context, be translated as both “I liked it” and “It was good”. Though a viewer might understand Korean enough to notice the repetition, they might not be aware of the multiple meanings.

(5:33) JM: I didn't know this because I haven't been to bakeries in a while...but I found out the candles are inside this. I never knew.

*(T/N: They're actually matches but Jimin said it wrong.) - Kkul FM 2015*

(34:42) RM: His taste is enchanting... and primitive (natural.) / V: I think his taste is towards that type of thing!

*(T/N: He used the word “enchanting (노/쇼/작)”, which does not collocate with (sexual) taste, but he seemed to use the word as a euphemism for “kinky/erotic”.) - Kkul FM 2015*

In the case of the first note, the translator is correcting a mistake made by the member. In the second T/N, although the translator seems to be merely speculating on RM's reason for using this specific word, they provide at least a potential explanation for his word choice rather than leaving it completely unannotated.

## 4.2 Questionnaire

As stated previously, I received a filled questionnaire from two of BangtanSubs' translators, who I will refer to as Translator 1 and Translator 2 (henceforth T1 and T2) T1 answered the questionnaire first, followed by T2, whose answers contain multiple mentions of T1's answers, as T2 could see how T1 had replied to the questions and could therefore complement them in their own answers. Before I analyze the answered questions in detail, there is reason to mention that the field for additional comments at the end of the questionnaire received no answers from either of the respondents. This may be because neither felt the need to add to their answers, or, alternatively, because the field appeared on its own page in the online Google document, creating the possibility that the respondents simply did not notice it. Should this study be repeated, and the researcher should absolutely require additional comments to questionnaire answers, this part of the material collection process would need to be revised.

Prior to the open-ended questions, I included some demographic data for the respondents to provide (age, nationality, and first/native language). The respondents are quite similar in age, with T1 being 23 and T2 20 years of age. T1 is from Singapore and speaks English and Mandarin Chinese as their first languages, while T2 is from South Korea and is a Korean-



English bilingual. Further in their answers T1 informs that they have studied Korean as a third language, which means out of the two respondents, one translates into their native language while the other does not.

The first proper question inquired when the respondents had joined BangtanSubs, with T1 and T2 reporting to have joined in June 2013 and June 2017, respectively. This means T1 was a part of the team when it was just beginning to take form, while T2 joined when it was already very established. In response to question 2 “Do you use T/Ns while translating?”, both respondents reported using translator’s notes, and when asked to provide reasons why in the third question, they answered similarly.

**T1:** When a text or video has a phrase/word that cannot be conveyed into English literally, we would add a T/N to help the viewer better understand the entire situation.

**T2:** What [A] said. I also find that some words need explaining, even if a direct translation to English exists, simply because that isn’t the only meaning the word has in Korean. Subtexts, implied references, inside jokes, etc.

These answers bring to light a slight difference in the respondents’ approach to using T/Ns, most likely brought on by their differing relationships with the Korean language – T1’s as a third language learner vs. T2’s native competency. For instance, T1 might be more conscious about the grammatical structure of Korean, whereas T2 could be better equipped to understand the idiosyncrasies and use of slang in the language.

Question 4 inquired whether some aspects of a translation necessitate a T/N more frequently than another. The respondents were also asked to provide examples, which they did, with T1 mentioning the challenge in translating and annotating the member Jin’s “dad jokes” and T2 stating that translations of the group’s lyrics often require the use of T/Ns. T2 goes on to say, in reference to a set of song lyrics and their translation, that “This is a good example of a T/N that isn’t necessarily because there isn’t a literal translation, but that is needed in order for the fans to understand what BTS meant by using that particular set of words.” T2 concludes their answer with “Of course, we can’t really be 100% sure that this was what [BTS] intended”, self-awarely admitting that as accurate as the translation may be, some aspects of the source material may still get lost in the process.

The fifth question of the questionnaire concerned the use of T/Ns within BangtanSubs during their years of operation, and whether the translators are given any guidelines on how to annotate

their translations. Respondent T1 begins their answer by stating that the conventions have changed since the team's inception, noting that

Earlier on during their debut days [...] many of their jokes were freshly cracked, or even nicknaming each other was all its firsts. There wasn't a need to T/N since it was not in reference to anything before then. [...] Fast forward 4 years, we now find ourselves adding T/Ns especially for anecdotes that happened earlier on, to fill in the gap newer fans might experience.

Given that respondent T1 has been a part of BangtanSubs since 2013, their comparison between how the team operated then and now is probably very accurate. Furthermore, T1 additionally states that

At the start there weren't any guidelines of sorts as the team was so small. Now we try and keep a document with T/Ns of phrases/jokes we notice BTS bringing up often to have standardisation [*sic*]. There is also a guide for new staff who join us on translating and use of T/Ns.

These two statements, the fact that the team keep a running list of common T/Ns and that there exists a beginner's guide for new translators joining the team, provides an interesting look into the inner workings of BangtanSubs. Most likely, their several years of operating and growing numbers have enabled – and required – them to standardize and streamline certain components in their translation processes.

For their own part, respondent T2 confirms T1's answers by stating that “there are some standardized translations that we have for all translations” and then goes on to say

“[S]ince I'm Korean myself, I often provide extra explanations for cultural references or words that aren't usually used in casual conversation”

Respondent T1 corroborates this point with

“[L]uckily as the team grew we have numerous native Koreans to help feed us in on certain viral trends in Korea that we might be unaware of and mentioned in [BTS'] content”

Based on these statements it can be extrapolated that native Korean team members are a vitally important part of BangtanSubs' final product and its quality. Because no matter how knowledgeable the non-Korean translators might be where BTS is concerned, there is no superseding the innate cultural knowledge one has as a native Korean living in South Korea.

Finally, the last question of the questionnaire asked whether the respondents thought the use of T/Ns necessary within the realm of fan translation. Both respondents answered affirmatively, with similar explanations as to why.

**T1:** As someone who learnt Korean as a 3rd language, it is evident that there are many instances where a word or phrase in one language, will not be conveyed perfectly in another language. To bridge such lapses, it is best to add T/Ns to try and help the viewer understand it better.

**T2:** Since there is such a big cultural difference between Korea and western countries, I'm afraid that there are a lot of mistranslations out there. That's actually why I joined [BangtanSubs] - I wanted to provide accurate translations and explanations for non Korean fans

These answers serve to confirm my own assumptions regarding the use of T/Ns; that they exist to supplement and complete meanings in cases where the translation alone cannot. I will discuss the relation between the results and my research questions comprehensively in the next section.

## 5 Discussion

This section examines the results yielded by my research and positions them directly with the research questions posed in the introduction.

Regarding the first research question, what elements do the T/Ns attempt to explain and at what frequency, the answer can be found in the collection of T/Ns. Out of a total of 86 notes, the clear majority – 45 notes or approximately 52% - were classified as explaining extralinguistic elements within the translation. This shows that elements in the text that require the most explanation according to the fan translator pertain not to language, but to the foreign culture by an overwhelming frequency. This is not to say language explaining T/Ns were left in the periphery, indeed they represent the second largest category in terms of notes collected – 26 and approximately 30% of the total. Combined with notes which explain both intralinguistic and extralinguistic elements (4), this gives us a total of 75 T/Ns, meaning that the majority of notes – approximately 87% – pertained to Korean culture, BTS, and the Korean language. This speaks, at least in some part, of the fan translator's thought process. Where the translation is not seen to be able to stand on its own, a note is added to provide context for the viewer.

Less frequent were notes pertaining to paralinguistic elements – 7 in total – and 4 notes acting as meta-comments, or 8% and 4% of the total, respectively. The reason for this infrequency is not exactly clear in the data, but were I to venture a guess, I would say that based on the present study at least, paralinguistic differences are less prevalent in this genre of audiovisual media, the genre being self-produced K-Pop videos. Another possible reason could be that although more paralinguistic differences were observed, the translator elected to dismiss them. In other words, the matter is inconclusive and would require further research. From experience I can say that depending on the length or the topic of the source text, some BangtanSubs translations do not contain the aforementioned types of notes at all, or indeed T/Ns of any type. As such, the ratios presented here should not be taken as anything definitive. What the study does show, at least in my opinion, is that if more paralinguistic differences between the source and target language were present, few T/Ns on the topic suggests that the translator did not deem it necessary to explain them.

Returning to a curiosity brought up in the result analysis section of this thesis (section 4), there remains the question as to why one of the three subtitled videos analyzed for this study only

contained four T/Ns despite its similar runtime to the other two. The subtitled episode from 2016 was uploaded on June 26<sup>th</sup>, fifteen days after the original upload on June 11<sup>th</sup>. As a comparison, the 2017 episode was uploaded by BangtanSubs on June 17<sup>th</sup>, only five days after the initial upload by BTS on June 12<sup>th</sup>. The apparent decrease in translation and subtitling time by BangtanSubs may be due to BTS' growing popularity and thus the increased expectations of fans, but also by virtue of BangtanSubs gaining more translators in the year between episodes. There are several possible reasons as to why the episode from 2016 only contains 4 T/Ns while the other two contain dozens. It might be that the translators in charge of the translation were not in the habit of extensively using T/Ns; or that as new translators they failed to read through the guidelines; or that the guidelines did not yet exist; or even that the translation, after efficient scrutiny, did not warrant more than four T/Ns. A 'correct' answer, as much as there is one, would be difficult to impossible for me to arrive at on my own. As such, I have deemed it unnecessary to pursue from the perspective of the present study. Despite the limitation just discussed, in my opinion the 2016 video defends its position within the research materials for two reasons; it is identical in genre to the other videos under analysis and a representation of BangtanSubs' work and in terms of chronology, it is right in the middle since out of the three subbed videos, it is the second. Leaving it out of study entirely would raise the question as to why, and ultimately I think its inclusion in the study does more good than harm, and certainly more good than its exclusion would have.

Though my results on the content and function of T/Ns mirror those of previous studies, direct comparisons are difficult to produce since prior research lacks emphasis on quantitative data. To give an example of this, while Paloposki (2010) has provided numerical data as to the frequency of translator's notes when it comes to specific translators or target languages, and has also described the content of notes, no information has been given as to how frequently certain contents feature in the notes. Similarly, Toledano-Buendía (2013) assigns functional roles to T/Ns and Schules (2014) gives examples of their explicative content, but neither observes the rate at which the different types of explanations are provided. In essence, the first half of my first research question has been addressed previously while the other has not. I can only speculate as to why this is, a reason that springs to mind immediately is the time-consuming nature of such analysis, another possible cause for its omission could also be that the works cited here have different foci from my own study. In any case, though the frequency in occurrence as recorded in my own results shows definite preference for one category over

another, it is impossible to make any sweeping declarations before similar research is conducted by others.

As for my secondary research question regarding the motivations behind using translator's notes, an answer can be extrapolated from the questionnaire responses. Both translators reported that they use T/Ns to further specify their translations and to provide additional information for the viewer. They assume that the viewer might not have knowledge relating to either the intricacies of the Korean language, Korean culture at large or BTS in specific. Consideration is also afforded for newer fans, who are assumed not to be familiar with BTS' earlier works or references to inside jokes. Unlike with professional audio-visual translation, fansubbing is provided by fans for fans, and as such, elements that would need to be translated by way of an equivalent target culture reference can be preserved. For example, a professional translator might name a historical figure more widely known instead of Liu Bei or omit lyrics or other specific references to BTS from their translation, fearing they might alienate parts of the audience. A fan translator has no such worries, since target recipients are more aware of the product being a translation and additionally expect it to be as accurate as possible, containing information about BTS and Korean culture. By using T/Ns, fan translators attempt to supplement the audience's knowledge; to what degree they succeed is difficult to say and would require further research into the reception of the translations, for instance by conducting a survey for fan translation and fansub recipients.

When asked to give examples on what parts of a translation warrant more translator's notes over others, the respondents mentioned puns and lyrics. Considering this, it makes sense that 17 translator's notes – approximately 20% of the total – provided contextual information on BTS (including multiple notes on lyrics) and/or K-Pop in general. BTS appear in the media and most of their conversations include mentions of either themselves, their fans, or other aspects of their industry. Additionally, given the properties of Korean as a language combined with the group members' affinity for puns, it similarly makes sense that 12 notes – approximately 14% of all notes – provided explanation for wordplay, particularly puns. Explanation of wordplay was also the largest subcategory within the 26 intralinguistic notes.

The questionnaire respondents also reported to BangtanSubs having a directory of standard translations and of T/Ns accompanying common jokes or references used by BTS. This, in addition to the existence of a beginner's guide for new translators, speaks I think to the

organized nature of BangtanSubs, honed and improved during their years of operation. Massidda (2015) presents two sets of guidelines from two Italian fansubbing teams, but since I do not have access to BangtanSubs' guidelines, it is not possible for me to make any in-depth comparisons between the three beyond the shallow observation that the guidelines exist. This, too, would be a viable topic for future study. What I can comment on is the fact that BangtanSubs' guidelines, especially in the context of being given to new translators, represent a set of prescriptive instructions on how translators on the team are expected to act. However, since recipient T1 provides the knowledge that the guidelines have evolved over the years and indeed did not exist at all during the team's infancy, it seems safe to assume that the guidelines are based on actual translator behavior. From this it can be extrapolated then that fan translator behavior is norm-governed, though to what extent, and indeed by which norms, is harder to determine without further research. One which I believe does play a part is the norm of expectancy, since fan translators consistently consider the expectations of their target readers.

When considering these expectations, most translators would probably take into account the target culture of their readers. In the case of fan translation, this is a task not so simply performed. BangtanSubs' translators know that their target readers are not sufficiently skilled in Korean – otherwise why would they need subtitles? – and that their readers understand English well enough to benefit from their translations, but not much else. BTS is a group with a widely international fanbase, spanning over 100 countries worldwide ([www.btsarmycensus.com/results](http://www.btsarmycensus.com/results)) and as such the translator is faced with the challenge of how much they can presume their target reader to know. In fan translation then, the target culture in a way does not exist, or in another way is the culture of the fandom, though of course an individual cannot fully abandon their own culture in favor of a fandom's. This type of reasoning is evident, at least in part, in how two translator's notes in the data collected contained explanation for *western* culture instead of Korean: these two being 1) a note clarifying that J-Hope is singing a song by Justin Bieber and 2) a note explaining that V's utterance of "I'll be back" is a famous line from the film Terminator. There can be no clearer indication than the notes just described that when translating, the translator was not thinking only of the expectations of a fan residing in North America, but for the international fan at large. In this case, not only is knowledge about Korea or BTS not assumed, but neither is knowledge about western popular culture. In a similar vein, looking at both my primary materials in tandem, since a fan translator cannot presume their target reader's existing competencies, it means that not all T/Ns are equal when it comes to their explanatory function. A fan might know all of

BTS' lyrics by heart for instance, but not be aware of Jamsil Stadium and its impressive capacity as a concert venue; in the case of another fan, the opposite might be true. In my assessment, the translators of BangtanSubs would rather 'cast a wide net' with their notes than run the risk of not explaining something and leaving a portion of their audience in the dark.

By the notion of the observation recorded above, translator's notes are a prime example of fan translator agency on the one hand, and translator visibility on the other. The use of translator's notes is a strategic decision from the translator to solve a challenge presented during the translation process. It is a choice, an active choice at that, by the translator. In literary translation, the use of notes has varied and diminished over the years, as they draw distinct attention to the translators themselves, a practice which is not always preferred by either the translator or for instance their publisher (Paloposki 2010:89). In the case of fantranslation however, because the recipients of the target text are more aware of it being a translation, the translator's visibility is greater by default. This allows for the use of T/Ns without the "stigma" of drawing attention to oneself.

To cite Toledano-Buendía, "a translator's aspiration is to bring the target reader closer to the source text" (2013:157). In this I think T/Ns as used by fan translators succeed very well. Rather than eliminate unusual references that some fans might not understand, they bring the reader in on the reference via a T/N.



## 6 Conclusion

The study examined firstly the content and function of translator's notes as used by fan translators, and secondly the motivation behind using them. The research data in service of answering these questions was twofold: first, a collection of translator's notes from fansubtitled audiovisual material, and second, a questionnaire on translator's note usage answered by two fan translators. Though a well understood practice within professional literary translation, this study shed new light on translator's notes' usefulness in amateur translation, fansubbing in particular. Similar to their use before, translator's notes in fansubbing were found to be used to supplement source text information in the target text, often in cases where the target audience was expected not to be informed on the subject.

Aided by typology theorized by Leppihalme (1997) and refined by Bodó (2009), I analyzed the collected translator's notes and divided them into categories based on their content, i.e. what type of source text elements they attempted to clarify. Upon categorization, it was found that the research data contained a majority of notes explaining extralinguistic elements, with intralinguistic elements not far behind. In other words, notes on the aspects of Korean culture and the intricacies of the Korean language represented a lion's share of the collected material.

Answers to the questionnaire clarified the motivations behind fan translator behavior, which was connected in this study to the norm of expectancy (Chesterman 2016). Translator's notes were observed to be a translation strategy applied to further the translation's usefulness for target readers. Fan translators, by their own admission, expected their target readers to require additional explanation on Korean wordplay as well as details related to Korean culture and K-Pop fandom culture, among other things. Their answers also revealed that organized fan translation is practiced via the help of guidelines and a list of standardized translations. Closer inspection of these guidelines, perhaps while comparing them with instructions in professional subtitling, may yield interesting results in further research. Another possible avenue for future research could be seeing whether translator's notes used in subtitled anime have similar explanations at a similar frequency to my own results, or whether another category reigns supreme. One thing that can be surmised without the need for future research, however, is that translator's notes in fan translation deserve more undivided attention from academia.

All in all, this thesis has closely examined the phenomenon of translator's notes in fansubbing. Though the twofold approach in research materials and the thorough analysis of said materials has given a comprehensive look into the practice, at least in the author's humble opinion, she also feels that the conducted study has but scratched the surface in what can still be achieved, both in the field of amateur translation studies and audiovisual translation studies.

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[Link to video on YouTube](#)

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[Link to video on YouTube](#)

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## Finnish summary

Tutkielma käsittelee fanikäännöksissä, tässä tapauksessa fanitekstityksissä, esiintyviä kääntäjän huomautuksia. Tutkimusaineistona käytetään tutkijan keräämiä huomautuksia kolmesta fanitekstityksestä videosta sekä kahden fanikäntäjän kyselyvastauksia. Käännösaineisto käsittelee eteläkorealaista BTS-yhtyettä, ja kyselyyn vastanneet kääntäjät kuuluvat BangtanSubs -nimiseen BTS:än sisältöjä kääntävään fanikäännöstiimiin. Tutkimusaiheen valinta perustuu toisaalta BTS:än kasvavaan suosioon länsimaissa ja toisaalta BangtanSubsin näennäiseen johtoasemaan käännöstiimien keskuudessa.

Tutkimusta ohjaavat analyysin keskiössä olevat kaksi tutkimuskysymystä: Mitä asioita kääntäjän huomautukset yrittävät selventää ja millä esiintymistiheydellä? ja Mitä syitä fanikäntäjät antavat kääntäjän huomautusten käytölle?

Tutkielman tieteellinen tausta rakentuu aikaisemmasta tutkimuksesta liittyen kääntäjän huomautuksiin, käännösstrategioihin, käännösnormeihin ja fanikäntämiseen. Kääntäjän huomautuksia voi kuvailla paratekstinä, eli tekstin ulkopuolisina elementteinä. Tämä määritelmä perustuu siihen, että käännöksen voi tietyissä tapauksissa ymmärtää täydellisesti huomautukset lukemattakin. Kääntäjän huomautuksien yksi funktio onkin lisätiedon antaminen jostain käännöksen kohdasta, liittyen esimerkiksi johonkin lähdekulttuurin yksityiskohtaan, joka kohdeyleisön olisi ilman huomautusta vaikea ymmärtää. Jos kohdelukija onkin perusteellisemmin tietoinen lähdekulttuurista, ei kääntäjän huomautuksen lukemiselle ole tarvetta.

Toinen tapa kääntäjän huomautusten käsittämiseen on käännösstrategiana. Lörcher (1991) määrittää käännösstrategian potentiaalisesti tietoisena ratkaisumenettelyä käännösprosessin aikana kohdattuun käännösongelmaan. Käännetyssä kirjallisuudessa kääntäjän huomautukset ovat usein alaviitteinä sivun alareunassa tai luvun lopussa, riippuen kääntäjän preferenssistä ja/tai viitteiden määrästä. Av-kääntämisessä sekä myös fanitekstityksissä kääntäjän huomautukset ovat usein ruudun yläreunassa, mahdollisesti myös suluissa, siinä missä itse käännös on ruudun alalaidassa. Tutkielman viitekehys keskittyy pelkästään sellaisiin strategiateorioihin, joissa huomautuksen käyttäminen mainitaan yhtenä ratkaisuna. Pyrin näin säilyttämään tutkimuksen fokuksen selkeänä.

Newmarkin määritelmä, vaikkakin preskriptiivinen, on tutkielman kannalta tavattu hyödylliseksi. Newmarkin mukaan kääntäjän huomautukset sisältävät kulttuurillista, teknistä tai kielellistä lisätietoa, jonka kääntäjä näkee omalle kohdelukijastolleen tarpeelliseksi. Chesterman jakaa käännösstrategiat kääntäjän tekemiin semanttisiin, syntaktisiin ja pragmaattisiin muutoksiin. Yksi pragmaattisista strategioista on nimeltään näkyvyysmuutos (visibility change), jonka esimerkkeinä Chesterman mainitsee muun muassa suluissa esiintyvät huomautukset ja glossit, jotka antavat lukijalle lisätietoa kiinnittäen samalla eksplisiittistä huomiota kääntäjän läsnäoloon.

Pedersen (2011) mainitsee av-kääntämisen tutkimuksen näkökulmasta spesifikaatiostrategian, joka jakautuu tiedon lisäykseen (addition) ja täydennykseen (completion) kääntämisessä. Näistä kahdesta strategiasta lisäys voisi kuvata kääntäjän huomautuksia, vaikkei Pedersen sitä erityisesti esimerkkinä listaakaan. Tämä voi toisaalta johtua siitä, ettei ammattimaisissa av-käännöksissä yleensä esiinny käännöksen ulkoisia huomautuksia, erityisesti ruudun yläosassa. Pedersen keskustelee kirjassaan myös käännösnormeista, viitaten erityisesti Touryn ja Chestermanin normeihin. Tämän tutkielman näkökulmasta tärkeitä ovat ensisijaisesti Chestermanin odotusnormit (expentancy norms).

Kääntäjän huomautus käännösstrategiana tulee esille myös Leppihalmeen teoriassa kulttuuritöyssyistä (cultural bumps). Kun hän käsittelee strategioita avainfraasiallusioiden (key phrase allusions) kääntämiseen, Leppihalme mainitsee kääntäjän huomautuksen yhtenä mahdollisena strategiana. Bodó on myöhemmin ammentanut Leppihalmeen ajatuksia kulttuurielementtien kääntämisstrategioissa, ja myös Bodó tekee maininnan huomautusten käytöstä. Bodó esittelee myös listan strategioita kulttuurispeifeille elementeille kääntämisessä, jakaen ne eroihin lähde- ja kohdekielen välillä. Näitä eroja ovat intralingvistiset eli kielensisäiset erot, ekstralingvistiset eli kielenulkoiset erot sekä paralingvistiset eli ei-verbaaliset erot. Hyödynnän tätä luokittelua toisen tutkimusaineistoni käsittelyssä sekä tulosanalyysissä.

Kääntäjän huomautusten pääfunktioita ovat mm. käännöksen tietyn osan, esimerkiksi lähdekulttuuriviittauksen, avaaminen lisätiedoin silloin, kun käännöksen itsessään ei siihen syystä tai toisesta pysty; kielellisten seikkojen, kuten sanaleikkien, selittäminen; sekä kohdelukijan yleinen opastaminen. Kääntäjän huomautuksia on tutkinut esimerkiksi Paloposki (2010), Toledano-Buendía (2013) sekä Haroon (2019).

Fanitekstittäminen tai fanisubbaus on fanikäntämisen alalaji, joka tarkoittaa fanien eli amatöörikääntäjien harjoittamaa audiovisuaalisen median tekstittämistä. Fanisubbauksessa kääntäjän huomautukset ovat yleensä ruudun yläreunassa siinä missä tekstitykset sijoittuvat alaruudulle. Huomautukset ilmestyvät samaan aikaan selitettävän tekstityksen kanssa ja ovat usein myös suluissa, mutta eivät aina, ja niiden selittävä funktio on samanlainen, kuin kaunokirjallisissa kääntäjän alaviitteissä. Fanisubbaus viittasi terminä ennen vain japanilaisen animen tekstityskonventioihin, mutta merkitys on vuosien saatossa laajentunut esimerkiksi amerikkalaisten elokuvien tekstittämiseen.

Lähtökieleltään koreankielistä fanisubbausta käsittelevät tutkimukset käsittävät paljon eri näkökulmia, mm. miten sivustot kuten Viki ja VLIVE hyödyntävät joukkoistamisen keinoja sisäänrakennetuilla matalan kynnyksen tekstitystyökaluillaan (Dwyer 2012 ja Aisyah & Nam 2017), miten thaimaalainen fanisubbaaminen kontekstualisoi globaalia mediaa (Wongseree 2018) ja miten korealaisen sarjan fanitekstitykset käsittelevät ja selventävät Etelä-Korean (tästä eteenpäin Korean) puhuttelu- ja hierarkiakäytäntöjä (Locher 2020). Viimeisenä mainittu on tutkielman kannalta hyödyllinen, sillä Locherin aineistossa on myös tekstityksiä, jotka sisältävät suluissa kommentteja kääntäjältä selittäen muun muassa puhuttelusanoja ja idiomaattisia ilmauksia. Kääntäjän huomautuksia fanisubbauksessa ovat tutkineet myös Schules (2014) ja van Tonder (2015), joista ensiksi mainittu tutkii animekäännöksissä yläruudulla esiintyviä tekstitystä selventäviä lineaarisia huomautuksia ja viimeksi mainittu käsittelee fanitekstitetyn elokuvan kautta fanisubbaamisen käytäntöjä määrittääkseen, mitä ammattimainen av-kääntäminen voisi niistä hyötyä.

Kuten faniyhteisöt yleisesti, myös fanikäntäjillä on usein tapana järjestäytyä omaksi ryhmäkseen, joka työstää käännöksiä yhteistyönä. Tällaisia fanikäännösryhmiä on yksityiskohtaisesti tutkinut esim. Massidda (2015), jonka havaintojen mukaan fanikäännösverkostot syntyvät tyytymättömyydestä virallisia tekstityksiä kohtaan ja halusta tarjota muille faneille lähtötekstiin nähden mahdollisimman uskollisia tekstityksiä. Massidda kertoo teoksessaan fanisubbausryhmien käyttämistä käännös- ja tekstitysohjeista ja -standardeista, vertaillen niitä ammattimaisiin standardeihin. Fanikäännösverkostojen toimintaan liittyy oleellisesti Chestermanin (2016) odotusnormi. Fanikäntäjän täytyy olla kääntäessään tietoinen kohdelukijoiden odotuksista ja osittain olettaa lukijoiden ennakkotiedon tasoa pystyäkseen päättämään, mitkä käännöksen osat vaativat lisäselvennystä kääntäjän

huomautuksella. Oletukset odotuksista määrittävät siis kääntäjän toimintaa ja käännösprosessin aikana tehtyjä päätöksiä.

Korean aalto (Hallyu) on nimitys korealaisten kulttuurituotteiden kuten elokuvien, tv-sarjojen ja musiikin suosiolle maan ulkopuolella. Alkujaan Korean naapurimaihin ja myöhemmin länsimaisin levinnyt ilmiö elää tällä hetkellä tutkijoiden mukaan kolmatta vaihettaan (Hallyu 3.0), jota luonnehtii fanien aktiivisuus sosiaalisen median kautta ja erityisesti some-alustojen faneille mahdollistama kommunikaatiokyky ihailtujen näyttelijöiden ja musiikkiartistien kanssa (Song 2020). Ilmiötä edustaa hyvin seitsemänjäseninen BTS, joka on tällä hetkellä tunnetuin korealainen popyhtye länsimaissa. Tutkielman aineisto perustuu osittain BTS:ään liittyvien fanitekstitysten kääntäjän huomautuksiin, joten yhtyeestä on hyvä antaa joitain taustatietoja.

Kuten jo mainittiin, yhtyeessä on seitsemän jäsentä: RM, Jin, Suga, J-Hope, Jimin, V ja Jungkook (nimet ikäjärjestyksessä). BTS aloitti uransa kesäkuussa 2013 ja heitä edustaa Big Hit Music. Yhtye on alusta saakka ollut aktiivinen Twitterissä ja YouTubessa ja heillä on alustoilla yhteensä n. 100 miljoonaa seuraajaa (tarkistettu marraskuussa 2021). Tutkimusta liittyen sekä Korean aaltoon että BTS:iin on paljon, mutta haluan mainita erityisesti muutaman, jotka käsittelevät yhtyettä fanikäntämisen näkökulmasta. Kahdessa eri tutkimuksessa (Aisyah 2017, Aisyah et al. 2019) on tutkittu BTS:in (koreankielisten) twiittien alle lähetettyjä fanien käännöspyyntöjä sekä muiden fanien vastaustwiittejä, jotka sisältävät käännöksiä. Tutkimuksista uudempi tekee maininnan, että Twitterissä kääntävistä faneista osa erottaa omat kommenttinsa käännöksestä sulkeilla twiitin sisällä, mutta että osa ratkaisee tämän erotteluongelman kirjoittamalla omat kommenttinsa erilliseen twiittiin. Kolmas tutkimuksista (Asiyah ja Nam, 2017) käsittelee VLIVE-nimistä livestreamsivustoa, jossa fanit voivat helposti kääntää BTS:in lataamia videoita sivustoon rakennetun tekstitystyökalun avulla. BTS:in VLIVE kanavalla on tutkimuksen mukaan saatavilla tekstityksiä yli 50 eri kielellä, mikä korostaa jälleen yhtyeen fanikunnan kansainvälistä monipuolisuutta.

Tutkielman tutkimusaineisto muodostuu kahdesta osasta: kokoelma kääntäjän huomautuksia kolmesta BangtanSubsin tekstittämästä videosta, sekä kahden BangtanSubsin fanikäntäjän täyttämä kysely liittyen kääntäjän huomautusten käyttöön.

BangtanSubs on BTS:än sisältöjä kääntävä fanikäännösverkosto, joka on ollut toiminnassa toukokuusta 2013 lähtien ([www.bangtansubs.com/](http://www.bangtansubs.com/)). Verkoston kielipari on ensisijaisesti korea-englanti, mutta se kääntää englantiin myös mm. japanista ja kiinasta, sillä BTS julkaisee ajoittain sisältöä myös näillä kielillä. Tutkielman kannalta keskeistä sisältöä on BTS:in uranaloituksen eli debyytin vuosipäivää juhlistavat videot vuosilta 2015, 2016 ja 2017. Noin tunninpituiset jaksot on alun perin ladattu BTS:in omalle YouTube kanavalle (ilman tekstityksiä) ja myöhemmin BangtanSubsin kanavalle tekstityksineen ja kääntäjän huomautuksineen. Videot matkivat tyylillään kuvatun radio-ohjelman formaattia, jossa yksi jäsenistä on ohjelman ”juontaja” ja loput jäsenistä hänen vieraitaan. Tämä konsepti hylätään kuitenkin kaikissa jaksoissa melko nopeasti, ja lopun ajasta BTS haastattelee vapaamuotoisesti toisiaan ja kertoo vuoden aikana saavuttamia asioita, asettaen lopuksi tavoitteita tulevalle vuodelle. Videoissa esiintyvät kääntäjän huomautukset ovat fontiltaan ja väriltään tekstityksiin verrattuna samanlaisia, mutta huomautukset on lisäksi kursivoitu ja kirjoitettu sulkuihin ruudun yläosaan.

Tutkimusaineiston toinen osa on kahden BangtanSubsin kääntäjän täyttämä kysely kääntäjän huomautusten käytöstä. Kyselyssä on kuusi pääkysymystä sekä alussa muutama taustoituskysymys ja lopussa kohta mahdollisille lisäkommenteille. Olin ensin yhteydessä käännöstiimin sihteerin, jonka kautta kysely jaettiin kääntäjille Google Driven kautta. Vastaajista toinen pystyi näkemään ensimmäisen vastaukset ja siten täydentämään niitä luomatta liikaa päällekkäisyyksiä, ja näin erot vastaajien vastauksissa korostuivat omaksi edukseen.

Kokosin kääntäjän huomautukset analyysiä varten katsomalla kolme BangtanSubsin tekstittämää videota ja transkriboimalla jokaisen huomautuksen sekä tekstityksen johon huomautus liittyi yhteen tiedostoon. Lisäsin jokaisen kohdalle myös aikakoodin ja merkitsin minkä vuoden jaksosta se oli, jotta pystyisin tarvittaessa löytämään huomautukset videoista helposti uudelleen. Kokoamisvaiheen jälkeen kävin huomautukset läpi tarkasti ja kategorisoin ne edellä mainitun luokittelun mukaan kielensisäisiin, kielenulkoisiin ja ei-verbaalisiin kielielementteihin. Päädyin myös hieman laajentamaan luokittelua, sillä osa keräämistäni huomautuksista ei sopinut yhteenkään Bodón läpikäymistä kategorioista. Värikoodasin huomautukset luokittelun aikana ja analysoin niitä edelleen määrittääkseni, mitä mahdollisia alakategorioita huomautukset edustivat, esim. jos huomautus sisälsi kielensisäisen eron selityksen, kielensisäisiin elementteihin kuuluvat mm. puhuttelusanat ja sanaleikit.

Kyselyn tarkoitus oli hankkia tietoa kääntäjän huomautusten käytöstä juuri niiltä, jotka niitä käyttävät, tämän tutkielman tapauksessa fanikäntäjiltä. Vastaanotettuani täytetyt kyselyt jaoin kahden vastaajan vastaukset erillisiin tiedostoihin pystyäkseni analysoimaan ja vertailemaan vastauksia paremmin. Ottaen huomioon että kysely sisälsi, vaikkakin hieman eri tavalla muotoiltuna, molemmat tutkielman tutkimuskysymyksistä, olin hyvin kiinnostunut kyselyvastaajien mielipiteistä. Kyselyn pääkysymyksinä toimivatkin ”Minkälaiset lähtötekstin elementit vaativat kääntäjän huomautuksen?” ja ”Vaativatko käännöksen tietyt osat enemmän kääntäjän huomautuksia, kuin toiset?”.

Kääntäjän huomautusten kokoelma edustaa tutkimusaineiston kvantitatiivista ja kääntäjien kyselyvastaukset edustavat sen kvalitatiivista osaa. Huomautuskokoelman analysointi mahdollistaa kyselyvastausten perinpohjaisemman tarkastelun, ja siksi tutkimustulokset esitetään myös tässä järjestyksessä.

Kolmen videon yhteispituus on 209 minuuttia, ja videot sisälsivät yhteensä 86 kääntäjän huomautusta. Huomautuksista 45 selitti käännöksessä kielenulkoisia eli ekstralingvistisiä elementtejä, 26 intralingvistisiä ja 7 paralingvistisiä. Neljä huomautusta selitti sekä ekstra- että intralingvistisiä tekstinpiirteitä samaan aikaan, jolloin jäljelle jäi toiset neljä kääntäjän huomautusta muodostamaan oman kategoriansa. Viimeisen kategorian huomautukset eivät sopineet mihinkään edellä luetelluista, joten päätin laajentaa luokittelua yhdellä lisäkategorialla varmistaakseni, että kaikki huomautukset sisältyivät luokitteluun.

Ekstralingvistiset huomautukset selittivät mm. käännöksessä mainittuja korealaisia paikkoja, ruokien ja tv-ohjelmien nimiä. Huomattava osa ekstralingvistisistä huomautuksista (tarkalleen 17 huomautusta) antoi lisätietoa BTS:iin tai yleisemmin K-Poppiin liittyvistä seikoista. Tutkielman aiheen huomioon ottaen päätin sisällyttää nämä huomautukset luokitteluun omana alakategorianaan.

Aineiston intralingvistiset huomautukset selittivät käännöksen kielensisäisiä erikoisuuksia, mm. sanaleikkejä, idiomeja sekä puhuttelusanojen käyttöä. Paralingvistiset huomautukset puolestaan selittivät pääosin jäsenten eleitä ja äänensävyä. Luokittelun viides kategoria, jonka nimesin Locherilta (2020) lainattuna fanikäntäjän metakommenteiksi, käsitti kaksi

huomautusta joissa kääntäjä ilmoittaa katsojalle puheentoistosta, yhden jossa kääntäjä korjaa yhden jäsenen tekemän virheen ja yhden, jossa kääntäjä spekuloi toisen jäsenen sanavalintaa.

Kyselyn täyttäneet fanikäntäjät vastasivat yleisesti melko samalla tavalla ja molemmat raportoivat käyttävänsä kääntäjän huomautuksia käänöksissään. Kysymys 3 pyysi vastaajia kertomaan syitä huomautusten käytölle:

Kääntäjä 1: Kun tekstissä tai videossa on fraasi/sana jota ei voi kirjaimellisesti ilmasta englanniksi, me lisäämme kääntäjän huomautuksen auttaaksemme katsojaa ymmärtämään koko tilanteen paremmin.

Kääntäjä 2: Mitä [1] sanoi. Jotkut sanat vaativat mielestäni myös selitystä, vaikka suora englanninkielinen käänös olisikin olemassa, koska suora käänös ei aina ole sanan ainoa merkitys korean kielessä. Subtekstit, epäsuorat viittaukset, sisäpiirinviitit jne. (vastaukset tutkijan kääntämiä)

Pieni ero kääntäjien vastauksissa selittyy tutkijan mielestä osin sillä, että kääntäjä 1 on opiskellut koreaa vieraana kielenä siinä missä kääntäjä 2 puhuu sitä äidinkielenään.

Kysely pyysi myös vastaajia antamaan esimerkkejä niistä käänöksen osista, jotka vaativat huomautuksia useammin, kuin muut. Kääntäjä 1 mainitsi BTS:n jäsenten kertomat usein sanaleikkejä sisältävät viitit, kääntäjä 2 puolestaan yhtyeen sanoitukset, jotka sisältävät paljon viittauksia Korean historiaan ja kulttuuriin, yhdellä lyriikalla on myös tulkinnasta riippuen useita merkityksiä. Kääntäjä 2 kertoi kyselyvastauksessaan myös, että hän toivoo kääntäjän huomautusten tuovan kohdelukijan lähemmäksi BTS:iä ja lisäävän yhtyeen musiikin arvostusta.

BangtanSubsilla on vuosien saatossa kyselyvastausten mukaan kehittynyt ohjeet tiimin uusille kääntäjille sekä lista standardisoiduista käänöksistä ja kääntäjän huomautuksista. Kääntäjät eivät kerro ohjekäytännöistä tämän tarkemmin, mutta on mielenkiintoista kuulla, että tiimin toiminta on näinkin organisoitua. Kyselyn viimeinen kysymys tiedusteli, miksi kääntäjät pitävät huomautusten käyttöä tarpeellisena fanikäntämisessä. Kääntäjät olivat taas melko samoilla linjoilla ja kertoivat, että kääntäjän huomautusten käyttö on yksi tapa kaventaa eroja lähtö- ja kohdekielen mutta yhtäältä lähtö- ja kohdekulttuurin välillä ja pitäen samalla käänöksen lähdetekstille uskollisena.

Huomautuskokoelman analyysin pohjalta voidaan sanoa, että kääntäjän huomautukset selventävät käännöksessä eniten kielenulkoisia elementtejä kuten viittauksia korealaiseen kulttuuriin ja K-Poppiin sekä paikkojen ja ruokien nimiä. Toiseksi eniten huomautukset selittivät kielensisäisiä elementtejä kuten sanaleikkejä, idiomaattisia ilmauksia ja puhuttelusanoja. Vähemmän kääntäjän huomautuksia vaativat paralingvistiset elementit.

Vaikka tulokset huomautusten sisällöstä peilaavat aikaisempaa tutkimusta (Paloposki 2010, Toledano-Buendía 2013 ja Schules 2014), samankaltaisuuksia esiintymistiheyden tapauksessa on vaikeaa osoittaa, sillä aikaisempi tutkimus ei sitä erittele. On myös sanottava, että vaikka tutkielman tulosten mukaan kielenulkoiset elementit vaativat suhteessa eniten kääntäjän huomautuksia, yleistäviä johtopäätöksiä on aineiston koon vuoksi vaikea tai jopa mahdoton tehdä ennen kuin esiintymistiheyttä tutkitaan tulevaisuudessa lisää.

Kahden fanikäntäjän täyttämä kysely vahvistaa tutkijan oletuksen, että kääntäjän huomautuksia käytetään selventämään käännöksen tiettyjä osia lähtökulttuuria vähemmän tuntevalle kohdelukijalle. Kääntäjät pyrkivät siis huomautuksien käytöllä täydentämään lukijan tietämystä omien oletuksiensa perusteella. Kääntäjien raportoima tieto liittyen BangtanSubsin käännös- ja kääntäjän huomautusohjeisiin on lisäksi käytännön esimerkki siitä, että fanikäntäjien toiminta on normien ohjaamaa.

Tutkielma tarkasteli kääntäjän huomautusten sisältöä ja funktiota sekä fanikäntäjien motivaatioita huomautusten käyttöön. Tutkimusaineisto koostui kolmesta fanitekstitetystä videosta kerätyistä kääntäjän huomautuksista ja kahden fanikäntäjän täyttämästä kyselystä. Kerätyjä huomautuksia analysoitiin Leppihalmeen ja Bodón typologian avulla ja huomautukset luokiteltiin kategorioihin niiden sisällön perusteella. Huomautuskokoelmasta tehtyjä havaintoja syvennettiin edelleen kyselyvastausten kautta.

Tutkielma osoitti, että fanikäntäjät käyttävät kääntäjän huomautuksia selittääkseen kohdeyleisölle käännöksen vaikeaselkoisia osia varsinkin silloin, kun suora käännös ei sisällytä lähtötekstin koko merkitystä. Tutkimustulokset osoittivat myös, että tämän kyseisen aineiston kohdalla eniten kääntäjän huomautuksia vaativat ekstralingvistiset elementit, ja että selitykset intralingvistisille elementeille olivat myös yleisiä. Kääntäjän huomautusten käyttö on käännöstrategiana matriisnormien (Toury 2012) ja odotusnormien (Chesterman 2016) ohjaamaa kääntäjäkäytöstä. Fanikäntäjät pyrkivät huomautuksilla tuomaan kohdelukijan



läheimmäs lähtökulttuuria sekä tekemään käännöksestä mahdollisimman tarkan ja lähdetekstille uskollisen.

Tulevaisuudessa olisi mielenkiintoista nähdä tutkimusta fanikäännösryhmien ohjeistuksesta ja käännösstandardeista, samoin sisällöltään erilaisten kääntäjän huomautusten esiintymistiheydestä esimerkiksi animen fanitekstityksissä.