

# **Translation Choices on the Word Level**

And Their Effect on Understandability

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In this thesis I look at how changes in translations can affect how the text is understood by the reader. The material that I analyse is Rick Riordan's *The Lightning Thief*, and specifically Grover's lines of dialogue in chapters 11 and 12. This analysis is done between the original English version and its Finnish translation. In order to do this analysis, I have used the theory of semantic translation and looked at what happens when it is not followed, as well as other theories about equivalence and translating literature.

Based on my research, semantic translation is a type of translation that conveys meanings within a text and stays as true to the original as possible on all levels. Equivalence based on my research is defined as a similarity and comparability between the original and translated text. In addition to these I utilise theories that discuss other concepts of translation equivalence and the translation of literature.

My analysis found that when semantic translation is not followed, the translated text can be understood differently by the TL reader. Sometimes these changes help the reader understand these texts better by, for example, adding to the context of the text. Other times these changes can change the characterisation of a character, for example by making Grover seem more aggressive than he is in the original text or by continuously referring to Medusa with either words that can be seen as degrading or with pronouns that are used to refer to animals and inanimate objects. Thus, I conclude that changes in translations do change how a text is understood.

**Key words:** translation, equivalence, semantic translation, translation of dialogue, translation of children's literature, translation choices, Rick Riordan, Percy Jackson.

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## 1 Introduction

‘How translation choices on the word level can affect how the reader understands a text’ is the question this thesis aims to find an answer to. I chose to research this topic, because I wanted to discover how changes in a translation can affect the interpretation of translated text, specifically in the dialogue of children’s literature. Translation is a well-studied field, and a great number of studies have been conducted on the translation of literature and dialogue specifically, along with numerous studies on translation equivalence.

My primary source for this thesis is Rick Riordan’s book *The Lightning Thief* ([2005] 2022) and its Finnish version, *Salamavaras* (2015, 5<sup>th</sup> ed.) which was translated by Ilkka Rekiaro. In this thesis I analyse the original and translated lines of dialogue of the character “Grover” in chapters 11 and 12. I chose to research this topic because of the effect that translation choices have on how a text is understood is an important topic of study. I have collected the materials from the book myself, and I used content analysis to do this. The main idea on what equivalence should be comes from Pym (2010) who maintains that equivalence can be found between languages when the translated text and the original text can be seen as similar and comparable and thus, equivalent. Additionally I lean on Newmark’s (1981) semantic translation, which is described as trying to convey meanings within the context of a text, and what happens when semantic translation is not followed. Other theories on equivalence and translating that I use as well as introduce in depth when moving forward. I use these theories and ideas to find out how translation choices in lines of dialogue change meanings in children’s fiction, and how it can be seen in the English to Finnish translation of *The Lightning Thief*. I will do this by comparing the translations and analysing the word choices and how those choices affect meaning. I will begin this thesis by introducing the method I used for collecting my material and then move on to explain the different theories on translation equivalence and the translation of dialogue. I will then explain my primary material, from which this thesis moves on to the analysis of my material, which is followed by discussing my findings in depth. Finally, I shall conclude this thesis.

## 2 Methods and Theory

I begin this section by introducing the method used to collect the material for this thesis. Then, I will move on to discussing equivalence and its history, moving on to then introduce some other ideas on equivalence, translation and translation integrity, which I use to analyse the phenomena under study. Finally, I will take a closer look at translating dialogue and the different ideas and theories various academics have had on this topic.

In this thesis, I analyse the translation of lines of dialogue and the word choices used in said translation. The general method I have chosen to collect the lines of dialogue analysed in this thesis is textual analysis and, particularly, content analysis. In her book, Neuendorf (2017, 2) defines it as such: “[c]ontent analysis may be briefly defined as the systematic, objective, quantitative analysis of message characteristics”. This is the basis I used when I gathered the dialogue that I examine in this thesis. This way of gathering information was most useful, since it allowed me to objectively gather every single line of dialogue from the character whose lines of dialogue I analyse in this thesis.

### 2.1 Equivalence: History and definition

I begin this section with a brief look at the history of equivalence and then move on to look at some general problems on equivalence, since it is important to acknowledge the issues that have been raised with defining equivalence throughout the years. After this, I provide a definition on what equivalence is and the theory used in this thesis. In order to keep the terminology I use in this thesis consistent, I will use SL when referring to the source language, and TL when referring to the target language.

Equivalence has a long history within translation studies, and since equivalence is an important idea I utilise in my thesis, it is important to provide a concise look at some of the different ideas theorists have had on it over the years. Roman Jakobson was the person who discussed the terms ‘meaning’ and ‘equivalence’ in 1959 (Munday 2016, 83). These terms were then developed even further by Eugene Nida (1964). Nida (1964, 159) discussed the concepts of formal and dynamic equivalence. According to Nida (1964, 159) formal equivalence focuses on “form and content”, and the translation between an SL and a TL should be accurate in that aspect. Dynamic equivalence, on the other hand, is described by Nida (1964, 159) as the idea that the “relationship” between SL and TL readers should be mostly the same.

Nida is not the only person to have theorised about equivalence; Catford (1965, 27) discussed textual equivalence and formal correspondence in his essay. Textual equivalence is described as any part of a TL text which can, in context, be seen as equivalent to an SL text (Catford 1965, 27). Formal correspondence, then, is described as the TL and SL categories being similar with one another, since it is “nearly always approximate” (Catford 1965, 27). Catford’s (1965, 50) definition of ‘translation equivalence’ describes it as a matching relationship, on at least some levels, between SL and TL elements.

From Catford this section now moves on to look at Newmark’s (1981) take on equivalence and specifically his ideas on communicative and semantic translation. In communicative translation the translator aims to create a similar reaction between the readers of an SL and a TL text, whereas in semantic translation the translator aims to convey the meanings intended by the author (Newmark 1981, 22).

Finally, I will take a look at Pym’s (2010) ideas on ‘natural’ and ‘directional’ equivalence. Pym (2010, 6) writes that natural equivalence happens when you can translate a piece of text within a language pair back and forth without the semantics of the text being lost. In turn, directional equivalence posits that when translating to a language and then back from it within the language pair, the result does not need to be the same as the point where one starts from (Pym 2010, 25).

The concept of equivalence has not been without its troubles, and since it has been theorised plenty of over the years, settling on just one definition is a challenge. To quote Pym (2010, 8): “[e]quivalence is a very simple idea. Unfortunately it becomes quite complex, both as a term and as a theory”. Additionally, Bassnett (2012, 95) has said that “achieving “total equivalence” and transferring meaning from one language to another is challenging”. Equivalence does not mean that a text needs to be translated word-for-word (Munday 2016, 69). Nevertheless, equivalence is still an integral part of translation.

Now that I have given a brief look at the history of equivalence and some issues that have been raised about it, it is a good time to provide a definition for equivalence as well as the major theory I use in my thesis. Pym has defined equivalence very well:

[W]hat we say in one language *can* have the same value (the same worth or function) when it is translated into another language. The relation between the source text and the translation is then one of equivalence (“equal value”), no matter whether the relation is at the level of form, function, or anything in between. Equivalence does not say that languages are the same; it just says that values can be the same. (Pym 2010, 6)

By this definition it can be said that equivalence is something that can be found between languages, where a translated text conveys what the original text has stated in a way that can be seen as similar, comparable and thus, equivalent. This can, however, be said to be more of a blanket term for all things equivalence, which is why the more precise theory on what equivalence and translation is supposed to be is, in the frames of this thesis, based on Newmark's (1981) semantic translation, which I already briefly discussed above. Semantic translation is described as something that aims to convey meanings within the context of a text (Newmark 1981, 39). It has been defined as aspiring to "recreate the precise flavour and tone of the original: the words are 'sacred' [...] because form and content are one" (Newmark 1981, 47). By staying as true to the original author's way of writing, it attempts to keep intact the 'spirit' of the original text (Newmark 1981, 47). This theory has not, however, been without criticism. Newmark (1981, 47) discussed how in semantic translation there is always some degree of "loss of meaning"; Newmark (1981, 42) also made the assumption that due to this, it would remain "inferior to its original". Whilst these concerns are valid, semantic translation is still a credible theory to use in regard to translation and equivalence.

Newmark's (1981) idea on semantic translation is what I consider translation and equivalence to be. In this thesis I focus on analysing how translation choices can affect how a text is understood by the TL reader when the framework of semantic translation is *not* followed; what happens when the form and content of words is not respected which causes the meanings in translated texts to be different. I conduct my analysis with this idea of what happens when semantic translation is not respected. Whilst what happens when a translator does not stay true to semantic translation is the general theory of equivalence that this thesis leans on, other ideas on equivalence have been utilised as well. I will introduce these theories next.

## **2.2 Additional Equivalence Theories and Ideas**

Now that a general idea on what equivalence and semantic translation are has been presented, I move on to introduce more works and theories that I have applied in this analysis. In his text, Hartmann (2007) discusses the different theories and methods that can be used when direct equivalence cannot be achieved, and that equivalence is not a theory that can be applied uniformly in every situation. As a solution, Hartmann (2007, 17) proposes different 'translation procedures' that include "borrowing, explanatory paraphrase, or other forms of adaptation" that can be utilised when direct equivalence is unreachable. Hartmann (2007, 17) also describes translation as "active code-switching" that happens through a translator. One of

the translation choices made when a text cannot be translated in an exact way is “approximation” (Hartmann 2007, 19–20). These topics and ideas are important for my analysis, because there are times when translating dialogue with the same exact words has not been possible. Thus, these translation procedures have been used in the translation of *The Lightning Thief*, which will become evident in my thesis.

My second source comes from Malmkjær (2012), whose article discusses meaning in translation. Malmkjær (2012, 108) describes translation as having “sameness of meaning” between languages, and that translation and meaning are intertwined. This idea is also used in defining what translation is and what it is supposed to achieve, which in turn will help me when conducting the analysis. As I pointed out earlier in section 2.2, Bassnett (2012, 95) states that sometimes achieving “total equivalence” and transferring meaning” can be difficult, but it is still something that translators should aim toward. That is why I have chosen to research this topic; to find out how changes in meaning between an SL and a TL affect how a text is understood.

Another idea on equivalence I utilise in this thesis comes from Di (2003). Di (2003, 39) says that a good translation must recognise the “systemic differences between languages”. In order to illustrate these differences, Di (2003, 41) uses English and Chinese as an example, stating that a word for word translation between the languages would not work. Additionally, Di (2003, 42) discusses ‘creative translation’ and how sometimes a translator must make a choice to alter the text in order to keep the meaning of the text as true to the original as possible. These ideas are important for my analysis, since these kinds of systemic differences also exist between English and Finnish and are a part of why translation to the letter is not always possible. Additionally, this theory is useful when I analyse whether all of the translation choices that were made were indeed necessary. Di (2003, 89) also discusses translation and equivalence by claiming that the translator cannot be too focused on the word level of the translation because context is important in translations as well, and that the translator cannot translate however they please since the translation should aim to be similar to the original. This to me is a perfect example of why balance must be found with translation.

### **2.3 Translation and dialogue**

Now I move on to examining ideas that specifically have to do with the translation of dialogue. Barslund (2012, 146) discusses the discourse on whether or not a translated text is deemed to be as good as the original, or if something gets “lost in translation”. Since in this thesis I lean on Newmark’s (1981, 47) semantic translation and he stated that there is always

some loss of meaning, Barslund's discussion on this topic is relevant in both translation studies and also in my thesis. Barslund (2012, 150) comes to the conclusion that "[p]rose translation [...] is subjective and open to interpretation, like the novel itself". In summary, this text argues that there is no one answer to the question of translation and its quality, and that it is dependent on both the context of the text and the reader's own interpretation of it. Barslund's ideas on the integrity of translation carries a significant weight in my research as the text that I analyse is prose, and because this analysis is focused on the changes in translation between an SL and a TL text and their effect.

Something that often affects the unity between an original text and its translation are the changes made when the target audience is children, and this is discussed in Lathey's (2012) article. Lathey (2012, 199) makes note that it is important for translators to consider their target audience, since translations for children's books differ from those directed toward older readers. Lathey (2012, 202) discusses the adaptations that are made in literature aimed toward children, stating that these changes are made due to a belief that children do not have the same amount of knowledge as older readers, and that they are less capable of understanding concepts they are not yet familiar with. Examining the translation choices and changes that go into translating children's literature is crucial as I am conducting my analysis on a children's book.

Translating literature often includes the translation of dialogue, which is specifically what I am researching in this thesis. Cadera (2012, 36) writes about dialogue, stating that a fictive text aims toward the naturalness of spoken word. This rings true in the case of the dialogue in *The Lightning Thief*. Cadera (2012, 43) maintains that everything in a translation should be translated in a way that stays as true to the original as possible, from the smallest units like commas to the larger units in the text. Adding to this, Cadera (2012, 43) also states that translations of prose must stay true to the original in both form and content, and a neglect in regard to form will affect how the reader of the translated text views it. This is an interesting claim, and sometimes the form of a text is not respected in the texts that I analyse, which is why knowledge of this is valuable. Cadera (2012, 46) does, however, state that staying true to both form and content is not always possible, and uses translations between Spanish and German as an example due to them being languages with syntactic differences. Finally, Cadera (2012, 47) states that "[t]he attribution of words, gestures and thoughts to one character or another can vary the original characterization of them". As I examine how translations can change the intended meaning of the text, this is useful in the context of this thesis.

### 3 Materials

My material for this thesis is Rick Riordan's book *The Lightning Thief*, which was originally published in 2005. I have chosen to analyse the original and translated version of Grover's lines of dialogue and the word choices in them in chapters 11 and 12. Since I wanted to keep the analysis concise and contained, I settled on analysing just these two chapters. I chose these chapters specifically since I knew beforehand that there were multiple events happening in a very fast pace in these chapters and due to this, I evaluated that they would be a good point of analysis. Additionally, I specifically look at Grover's lines of dialogue since I knew before starting this thesis that as a character he discusses a wide array of topics in the book, which made his lines of dialogue an interesting point of analysis. Finally, I settled on lines of dialogue specifically for the reason that they provide a small enough pool of material whilst also using a wide variety of language. Overall, this is an interesting point of analysis, since the choices the translator makes can have varying effects on the reader, as I will examine in the analysis section of this thesis.

Before I dive deeper into the analysis of this book, I will provide a brief overview of the book and especially Grover, since it is his lines of dialogue and the word choices within them that this thesis focuses on. Riordan's ([2005] 2022) book tells the story of Percy Jackson, a twelve-year-old boy who finds out he is a demigod, and that his father is Poseidon, the ancient Greek god of the seas. This leads him to go on many adventures with his friends Annabeth, who is the demigod child of Athena, and Grover, who is a satyr. Satyrs are half human, half goat, which is why Grover has small horns on his head, and his legs are those of a goat. Satyrs are connected to "[t]he great god Pan!" (Riordan [2005] 2022, 189), who is "The God of Wild Places" (ibid.). In the book, even though someone a long time ago claimed that Pan was dead, Grover states that satyrs do not believe that and instead "[i]n every generation, the bravest satyr pledge their lives to finding Pan". (Riordan [2005] 2022, 189). Grover is dedicated to be the one who finds Pan. Grover is also shown to be a gentle and caring person, who is willing to go above and beyond for his friends.

## 4 Analysis

I will now move on to the analysis of the lines of dialogue and the words choices used in them and their translation in chapters eleven and twelve in *The Lightning Thief*. I conduct this analysis between the original book which was written in English, and its Finnish translation. I examine seven lines of dialogue and the words in them, all of which were said by the character Grover, and then I will analyse them by using the theories and ideas I discussed above: Newmark's semantic translation, Hartmann's translation procedures, Malmkjær's meaning and translation, Di's creative translation and difference between languages, Barslund's ideas on prose translation, Lathey's ideas on translating literature for children and Cadera's ideas on translating dialogue. I will also analyse them from a personal perspective. Since I am analysing the original and translation simultaneously, I will use the format (Riordan 2005, o168/t167). The 'o' stands for the original page, and the 't' stands for the translated page, since the paging does not align across the books. I will also only use the year 2005 in running text to keep it clear, but here I acknowledge that the English edition I used was published in 2002 and the Finnish translation was published in 2015.

### 4.1 Translation choices that provide more context to the TL reader

This section starts off by looking at a small change in between a translation choice between the SL and TL on the word level, when Grover is talking about “[t]in cans...” which has been translated to “[k]olatölkit...” (Riordan 2005, o169/t168). “Kolätölkit” literally translates to “cola cans”. The difference between these two words is in no way remarkable, but it does raise the question as to why the Finnish translation has chosen to specify that it specifically is a cola can, when the original text did not.

This could in part be due to the translator's idea on what is understandable to the children who read in the language the text is being translated to. Lathey (2012, 202) discusses this by writing that children are often not seen as being capable of understanding things to the same level as adults. With this knowledge I claim that the translation of “tin cans” to “kolätölkit” has been made in order to make the text more easily understandable for children. This choice could also have been made to make it sound more natural. This idea that “fictive dialogue attempts to be closer to oral speech” (Cadera 2012, 36) can further explain this choice to go from “tin cans” to “kolätölkit”, because the literal translation of “tin cans” would be “peltitölkit”, which sounds too official for what is supposed to be spoken language. Thus, whilst this translation does not stay identical to the original like it should according to

Newmark (1981, 47), it serves a purpose of making this easier to understand for children who are the target audience of the book.

Another instance where the translator has made a decision to slightly modify the translated version is when Grover is talking about “reed pipes”, which has been translated to “panhuilu” (Riordan 2005, o170/t169). The direct translation for reed pipes would be “ruokopilli”. However, “panhuilu” translates to a “pan pipes”, which makes sense in the context of this book. When I introduced this book in my materials section, I briefly mention that Grover is a satyr who wants to embark on a journey to find the god Pan. Translating the reed pipe to a “panhuilu” pays homage to Grover’s background as a satyr and reminds the reader of the satyr’s connection to Pan. Satyrs also know ‘find path’ songs that they can play on their pipes (Riordan 2005, 170), which can also be connected to their search of Pan.

In this case, an exact equivalent was available but the translator chose not to use it. Instead he chose to use a slightly different word, which provides the reader with additional context. Barslund’s (2012, 150) ideas on the variability of interpretations in the translation of literature align well with this. If “reed pipes” were translated as “ruokopilli” the interpretation and meaning of the translation would have been slightly different to the reader of the translated text. Instead, the translation now provides more context to the reader. Di’s (2003, 89) thoughts can also be applied to this, as he writes that “[t]he art of literary translation [...] is the art of vivifying the author’s creative imagination in a new language”. In making this small adjustment to the translation, he indeed managed to vivify the text and make Grover’s connection to Pan even stronger.

The last bit of dialogue I analyse in this section discusses a dog that has previously been referred to as a “thing”. To this Grover responds “[t]his *thing* [...] is our ticket west” which was translated to “[t]ämä *piski* [...] on meidän matkalippumme länteen” (Riordan 2005, o195/t191, italics as in original). The difference in this piece of dialogue happens between the words “thing” and “piski”. Referring to a dog as a thing gives the impression that the dog is an inanimate object, and something that the speaker does not particularly care for. The Finnish word “piski” translates to “mutt” (Sanakirja.fi, n.d.), and the Finnish word, whilst still derogatory and unfavourable, is still very clearly a word that is used to refer to a dog. It is interesting to notice the translation when referring to a dog uses a word that clearly indicates that it is indeed a dog, when the original version has used an objectifying word.

This can be examined with Hartmann’s (2007, 17) ideas on “translation procedures” that can be used when word-for-word equivalence cannot be achieved. One of these procedures is approximation, which I discussed earlier (Hartmann 2007, 19–20), and this is a

very clear case of it, since translating “thing” directly into Finnish would not work in this context. “Piski” is also a word that is more commonly used in spoken language, which follows Cadera’s (2012, 36) theory of “recreating an everyday conversational style” in fictive dialogue. By using the word “piski” the translator according to Newmark (1981, 47) did not manage to keep the form of the word ‘sacred’, and in doing so the meaning of the original and translated text are slightly different. Since translating “thing” to refer to a dog would not only have been extremely difficult, it also would not have sounded natural in dialogue that is supposed to mimic the way real people talk, and therefore this translation choice was both according to my sources and also in my personal opinion the correct choice.

#### **4.2 Translation choices that have an unfavourable impact in the TL**

I begin this section by looking at a line of dialogue at the beginning of chapter 11. After being attacked, Grover refers to their attackers as “Three Kindly Ones”, which has been translated to “Kolme Hyvistä” (Riordan 2005, o168/t167). The “Kindly Ones” are furies from Greek mythology, and in this book they are antagonists. They are referred to as “Kindly Ones” due to real names being described as holding power (Riordan [2005] 2022, 64). The translated name for these is “Kolme Hyvistä”, which I would translate to mean “Three Good Guys”. Whilst the difference is not glaringly obvious, there is still a difference between referring to antagonists as “Kindly Ones” rather than “Good Guys”. “Kindly Ones” gives an impression of calling someone this out of politeness, like you would ask someone to ‘kindly pass the salt’. “Good Guys” on the other hand paints a picture of someone who is genuinely good, and it is not a word you would use to describe an antagonist. This raises a question of why this was done.

According to Hartmann (2007, 19–20), this translation choice could have been made with the idea of “approximation” in mind, since there is not a direct equivalent wording for the “Kindly Ones” in Finnish. Di (2003, 42) also agrees with Hartmann’s idea by talking about “creative translation” and how sometimes changes need to be made in translation for the message to be received. For this translation the importance has not been on giving an exact translation, rather than adjusting the meaning in order to be able to translate it. In this case however, the translated version changes the image the reader gets of these characters and lessens their role as an antagonist. Thus, it does not stay true to the ‘spirit’ of the original text (Newmark 1981, 47).

Something worth pointing out is the change that happens in the translation of personal pronouns. At one point, Grover says “Percy, don’t listen to her!”, which has been translated to

“Percy, älä kuuntele sitä” (Riordan 2005, o183/t181). The translator has chosen to translate the personal pronoun “her” to “sitä”, which in English means “it”. Whilst Finnish does not have gendered personal pronouns, the personal pronoun “hän” would have been a closer translation to “her”, since “hän” is used to refer to people, whilst “se” (which is the base form of “sitä”) is used to refer to animals and inanimate objects. When this is said, they are talking about Medusa, who is trying to hurt them. The translator may have chosen to use a pronoun usually reserved for animals and objects in order to make her seem less human-like, as she was trying to harm the main characters.

However, as much as this kind of change makes sense, as Cadera (2012, 43) states in her article: “translators and editors should show an interest in how fictive dialogue is presented” and that everything “is due to the author’s intention and should be respected in the translation as far as possible” (ibid.). So even though this change may not seem big, it does change the readers perception of Medusa. In the original, even though she is an antagonist, Medusa is still seen as a human, whilst the Finnish version in this case makes her seem less human, and more like a monster that can be objectified and stripped from her human-like features. In this case the “sameness of meaning across languages” (Malmkjær 2012, 108) does not come true. It is important to point out, however, that using “se” to refer to people is common in spoken Finnish, which is in accordance with Cadera’s (2012, 36) idea of dialogue aiming to be closer to spoken word; but where then should the line be drawn between aiming for a natural sounding spoken dialogue, and making the dialogue less natural but in turn keeping Medusa’s humanness intact. In my opinion Medusa’s humanness should take priority in this case.

Another case where the personal pronoun has been changed is when Grover exclaims “I’ll get her!”, which has been translated to “Minä pistän sen muijan lakoon!” (Riordan 2005, o181/t179). There are a couple of things that the translator has changed here. The Finnish line of dialogue roughly translates to “I’ll put that woman/chick down”. In the original, Medusa is once again referred to as “her”. However, unlike previously with the usage of the Finnish equivalent of “it”, the personal pronoun has now been replaced with “muija”. “Muija” in Finnish is a word for “woman”, its connotations can vary depending on the region in Finland. In its most neutral sense, it literally translates to woman, which I assume was the intention of the translator. However, the word “muija” may also hold a slightly more negative meaning, similar to calling someone a “broad” or “bitch” instead of just “woman” (Sanakirja.fi. n.d.). So now, even though Medusa’s humanness is intact, she is still referred to with a word that can be seen as degrading in the translation. So in the lines of dialogue that are analysed in this

thesis, Medusa is referred to with either degrading words or pronouns often used to refer to animals or inanimate objects. The use of the word “muija” was also unnecessary, because the original dialogue continued to use a personal pronoun to refer to Medusa, which could have also been used in the translation. Aside from the change in the personal pronoun, the rest of the sentence also seems more aggressive. The original “I’ll get her” is less forceful than the Finnish “I’ll put that woman/chick down”. This translation makes Grover’s character seem aggressive, which he is not in the original version.

This can be analysed through the idea of attributing different characteristics to characters. Cadera (2012, 47) points out in her text that “[t]he attribution of words, gestures and thoughts to one character or another can vary the original characterization of them”. This rings true in this case, seeing as the small change in the translated dialogue has an effect on Grover’s characterisation. This translation also does not respect the original tone of the text like it should according to Newmark (1981, 47). Instead the tone of Grover’s character changes to be more aggressive in the translation. The depiction of violence in the original and its translation are also different. The level of violence seems to be almost heightened in the translated version. It is interesting to see that instead of removing the violence altogether, here the opposite has happened. Lathey’s (2012, 202) point regarding adaptations to children’s texts due to the assumption that children cannot understand everything the same way adults can, brings forth an interesting point; based on this it could be thought that Finnish children are familiar with the concept of “putting someone down”, and thus more familiar with violence than children from the United States, which is where the book was originally published. I do assume, however, that this was not the intention of the translator and that this is a slightly farfetched idea, but based on my sources it is at least a concept worth considering.

A case of lessening the significance of something can also be found in this dialogue. Grover states that “[y]ou two are giving me a migraine [...]”, and that has been translated to “[m]inä saan teistä päänsäryn [...]” (Riordan 2005, 185/t183). The word migraine has been translated into “päänsäryn”, even though the direct translation would have been “migreenin”. So even though there was a direct translation available, the translator chose to use a milder word instead, as “päänsärky”, which is the base form of the word, means “headache” in English. Whilst both a migraine and a headache usually include pain in your head, there is a clear difference between a “regular” headache and a migraine, and it is interesting to see that here the translator has chosen to use a milder word for it.

There could be many reasons for why this translation choice was made. This might be considered the kind of “adaptation of children’s texts” Lathey (2012, 202) discussed, which

revolved around the idea of children not possessing the same amount of knowledge that adults do. Similarly, as discussed earlier, Hartmann (2007, 19–20) talks about “approximation” which means using an expression that is similar to the one used in original the text, though this is usually used when an exact translation is not available. Whilst in this case there was a direct translation available, the translator chose to use approximation to change the word to something that is more easily understood by children, which follows Lathey’s ideas on adapting text for children. I claim that a headache is more easily understood than a migraine by younger readers, since headaches are a more general and simple term.

## 5 Discussion

Above I have analysed a small number of lines of dialogue from *The Lighting Thief*. It is important to note that I did not use the entire book but instead chose to concentrate my analysis on one character's lines of dialogue within two chapters of the book. Furthermore, most of the dialogue in these chapters was translated in a way that based on my research I would consider equivalent. However, there were still some differences that affected the meaning of the text in its translated form.

Sometimes changes in translations can change the meaning of dialogue, and occasionally it is useful in making the text easier to understand in a different language, or give the reader more information than the original does. There were some instances where this happened in my analysis. The first was with the translation of the "tin cans", in which instead of using a very broad term, the translator gave them a word that is more easily recognisable. The next time was with the translation of "reed pipes", where the translation provided additional insight and reminded the reader of Grover's background. The last example of this was when the dialogue referred to a dog as a "thing", but it was translated with a word that is commonly used for dogs, again providing more insight to the reader. All of these are examples in which the translator's choice, whilst it has changed the meaning of the original text, it has been to make it more understandable to the reader of the translated text.

However, sometimes changes in word choices can change the meaning in a more negative light. This happened when the "Three Kindly Ones" were translated as "Good Guys", which does not make them seem like the antagonists that they are. Similarly, Medusa's agency as a person and a woman was made less by using the Finnish equivalent of the pronoun "it" to refer to her, and also using a word for a woman that in some parts of Finland can hold a more negative connotation instead of choosing a more neutral word for it. Grover's characterisation also slightly changes in the translation, when his translated dialogue makes him seem more aggressive than he actually is. On a final note, the choice to translate "migraine" to "headache", whilst more easily understandable to a younger audience, does lessen the seriousness that a migraine usually has. In these cases, the translator's choices that were made in the translation process changed the meanings of these dialogues in a more negative manner, which for example in Grover's case changed his characterisation.

As I have examined above, I can with certainty state that within the frames of this research, the translator's decisions have an impact on how the text is received. Sometimes this helps the reader to better understand the text that they are reading, and sometimes in the worst

case it changes a character's personality to something it was not in the original text. However, since this research was done on a very small selection, more research on this topic needs to be done.

## 6 Conclusion

In this thesis I have looked at what equivalence and semantic translation are and determined that when semantic translation is not followed, it has consequences in regard to meaning in the translated text. I then discussed equivalence theories that have specifically been in regard to the translation of literature and oftentimes fictive literature, and then examined the different theories that can be used in the translation of fictive dialogue; from this it was determined that it has its sights on being close to spoken language, and how sometimes texts are translated differently to adapt them for children. My research also found that it is important for translations to try to stay as true to the original on the level of form as it can.

I then analysed my materials with the help of these theories and ideas with the intention to find out how meanings in the translation of lines of dialogue has changed in situations where total equivalence has not been found and the frames of semantic translation were not followed. I discovered that sometimes the meaning changes that happened due to translation choices enhanced the understandability of some texts, whilst sometimes it made the characters something they were not, like lessening the antagonists' role or changing a character's personality.

Overall, this examination of how meanings change due to translators' choices in a translation has shown that it is important for translators to try to stay true to the original text, and when that is not possible it is important to try to find alternative ways of bringing the meaning across without changing the original meaning of the text in a hurtful way. However, my thesis takes only a small look into this subject matter with a very small scope of research, thus more research into this topic is needed.

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