



# **Translating idioms: A study on Remedy Entertainment's Ahti and his idioms**

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### **Abstract**

Video game translation has been a relatively new subject amongst academics due to video games' relatively short existence of approximately 50 years. In this thesis I expand this field by focusing on a specific character with a very specific niche: Remedy Entertainment's Ahti and the idioms he uses in his dialogue. These idioms sound nonsensical since they are directly translated from Finnish idioms. My research question concerned the purpose of this kind of translational creative choice for the character.

To conduct the research for my thesis, I analyzed Evelyn Nien-Ming Ch'ien's (2008) concept of weird English and Hans Vermeer's (1978) Skopos theory to find out both the purpose of this kind of translational creative choice and how it actively appears in Ahti's dialogue throughout his appearances. To understand the character and his idioms better, one needs to understand the importance of cultural knowledge and more specifically, the Finnish culture and the common use of idioms in this language.

Direct translation is not always the best choice since many cultural nuances can and will be lost this way. However, in Ahti's case his directly translated idioms are meant to be confusing while simultaneously being humorous and mystifying for the sake of making the character more enigmatic. For this exact reason, my research concluded that direct translation for his idioms was the best choice.

**Keywords:** video game translation, localization, video games, cultural knowledge, idioms, weird English, Skopos theory

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

Since the release of *Control* (2019) by Remedy Entertainment, Ahti, a Finnish character in the aforementioned video game, has become a fan favorite. This is largely due to the idioms he uses in his dialogue. What makes these idioms stand out from the rest of the dialogue is the fact that they are directly translated idioms from Finnish to English and therefore harder to understand in English. While one can perhaps understand some of these idioms without the context of understanding Finnish or knowing the actual original idiom, most of them are sure to be lost in translation for international audiences who do not know Finnish.

Idioms by definition are a group of words whose meaning is different from the meanings of the individual words (Oxford Learner's Dictionaries, s.v. "idiom" n.). In this thesis I examine these idioms and the reasons behind the decision to utilize them in Ahti's dialogue. I do this by examining how the directly translated idioms are understood when compared to their English counterparts. I analyze the translated idioms in the light of the Skopos theory as a way to build the character through his dialogue.

Even though this type of English is not grammatically incorrect, it is still harder to understand for the exact reason that it does not make much sense in English, therefore making it weirder and rarely used English. This weird English stretches, breaks and reconstructs the language (Ch'ien 2008, 51) to fit into the dialogue. This type of dialogue is mainly meant to be humorous but also helpful over the course of the video games in which he appears. Since the original Finnish idioms do actually reveal some helpful hints when speaking to Ahti, it makes the development choice to use them even more interesting. The idioms can therefore be viewed as a functional approach to translation.

In section 2, I introduce the background of my thesis: I discuss video game translation as a field of study, after which I introduce both the video game developers behind the two video games I utilize as my source and the character Ahti appearing in these two video games. In section 3, I introduce my research materials – Ahti's idioms, the concept of weird English proposed by Evelyn Nien-Ming Ch'ien, and the Skopos theory – while also explaining cultural knowledge as the basis for translational study and how it correlates to Ahti and his idioms. In section 4, I go into further detail about the aforementioned materials and finally, I analyze the cultural relevance of Ahti's character and dialogue through his idioms. I conclude by discussing the results of my research and analysis and determine the purpose of this kind of creative translation strategy for the character.

## **2 BACKGROUND**

This section provides the background information for my thesis. I provide essential information on video game translation and introduce the primary material of my research. In 2.1, I discuss video game translation as a field of study and why it is worth researching. In 2.2, I briefly introduce Remedy Entertainment, the video game company behind the two video games I use as a source for most of my information. Finally, in 2.3, I go into detail about Ahti, the character whose dialogue is the primary material of my research.

### **2.1 Video game translation as a field of study**

Video games have been studied for almost as long as they have existed, but video game translation and video game localization have been studied far less (Virtanen 2020, 11). This field of study has increased its popularity in recent years but is still to be explored fully. Even though video game studies is a recognized academic field, there is still little research into video games from the translation studies' perspective even though the localization process is a vital aspect for the global success and growth of the video game industry (Van Oers 2014, 129). It is important to distinguish 'translation' from 'localization'. According to Virtanen, localization involves cultural adaptation and is part of the creative process of video game development whereas "translation is only one step in the localisation process" (Virtanen 2020, 8) and is usually seen only as the linguistic aspect of the industrial part of video game development. By understanding the differences between the two concepts, the translational aspect becomes easier to understand on its own. The localization process usually takes multiple people with many different specialties such as cultural and geographical knowledge and more in-depth insight into video game development whereas the translation process specifically needs a translator. The translation process is therefore a more narrowly defined aspect of video game development.

Video Game translation is getting increasing recognition in the academia, yet there is still a vast potential for research when it comes to translation strategies (Van Oers 2014, 129). The difficulty of translating video games can vary depending on the world where the video game is taking place. For instance, a video game can be based in the real world or in a completely fictional world. When a game is based in the real world, translating everything becomes easier as words and phrases are predetermined. However, the process becomes more difficult when one needs to translate entirely new concepts created for a specific video game, such as place and character names and in-game

artifacts, for example. One also needs to take into account the translation of the most common vocabulary used in video games in general: button inputs and terms used in the menus, including ‘new game’, ‘settings’ or ‘inventory’. These kinds of translations usually allow the translators to use little creativity (Van Oers 2014, 130). However, with different kinds of translation strategies, translators can use their imagination, thus creating a wider range of options for them to use when translating some of the more complex terminology used in video games (Van Oers 2014, 131). Since video games are replete with texts and dialogue, giving the translators extensive source material is essential for them to get polished and refined results. Therefore, translators need to take many different aspects into consideration when translating video games or researching video game translations.

## **2.2 Remedy Entertainment as a Finnish video game developer: *Alan Wake 2* and *Control***

Remedy Entertainment is a video game developer founded in Espoo, Finland in 1995. The company’s first game was a vehicular combat racing video game called *Death Rally* (1996), which was developed in the basement of one of the team members (Cowen 2016). The game received a generally positive response upon release. The company changed their genre to a third-person shooter in their next project, *Max Payne* (2001) which received critical and acclaim upon release (Metacritic 2024b) and prompted Remedy Entertainment to make a sequel, *Max Payne 2: The Fall of Max Payne* (2003), two years later (McLaughlin 2012).

After the success of *Max Payne 2*, Remedy Entertainment decided to create another new intellectual property, called *Alan Wake* (2010) which changed genres again, this time to an action-adventure game. Even though it did not meet sales expectations upon release, mostly because of the game being exclusive to PC due to a binding contract with Microsoft, it still quickly gained a cult following (Yin-Poole 2012). However, the game did not receive a sequel until 13 years later. After *Alan Wake*, Remedy Entertainment proceeded to create more intellectual properties, such as the action-adventure third-person shooter game, *Quantum Break* (2016) and the action-adventure game, *Control* (2019), the latter of which was also a commercial success upon release (Metacritic 2024a).

For Remedy Entertainment, *Control* was the first game in over a decade that was released on multiple platforms having previously had a contract with Microsoft which prompted them to make their video games such as *Alan Wake* and *Quantum Break*, exclusive to PC (Yin-Poole 2012). However, no longer bound by this contract by the time *Control* released, Remedy Entertainment was free to release

the game on multiple platforms. This decision improved *Control*'s distribution and the game gained more popularity because of it. The multi-platform approach continued as the company released *Alan Wake 2* (2023) four years after *Control*. This time, however, the decision was made to make the sequel a survival horror game instead of an action-adventure game as the previous title had been.

*Alan Wake 2* continued the trope *Control* had started four years earlier, which made the two game worlds connected. *Control* had many references to the first *Alan Wake* and likewise, *Alan Wake 2* also referenced the events of *Control*. The two games shared many of the same characters, one of the most prominent of which is Ahti, the janitor who was first introduced in *Control*.

### **2.3 Ahti as a recurring character in Remedy Entertainment's shared universe**

The enigmatic Ahti is both voiced and motion captured by the Finnish actor Martti Suosalo. Ahti first appeared in *Control* as the janitor of The Oldest House (the main location in which the video game takes place) and serves as a guide and a quest giver for the majority of the game. It quickly becomes apparent, however, that Ahti is not just a regular janitor but rather a sort of supernatural being. This is evidenced by him constantly appearing in places he should not be able to be and knowing more than a mere janitor should. Ahti speaks with a heavy accent which is noticeably Finnish, at least to native Finnish speakers. Moreover, his dialogue often consists of riddles, metaphors and idioms which are often hard to interpret until you realize that they are in fact, Finnish idioms directly translated into English. These idioms are sometimes meant to serve as subtle hints to the player as to what to do next in the story of the game.

Ahti returns as a supporting character once again in *Alan Wake 2* and is once again present in many parts of the game. He continues to give advice to the player in the form of these idioms throughout this game as well even though his presence is felt more in *Control* than in *Alan Wake 2* and does feel a bit more normal in the latter. These idioms that Ahti uses will be the main focus of this thesis. How they are used in these games and how their meaning changes when they are directly translated from Finnish to English.

### 3 MATERIALS AND METHOD

In this section I introduce my gathered materials and research method. In 3.1, I present the idioms Ahti uses throughout *Control* and *Alan Wake 2* and go into detail about how they work. In 3.2, I delve into the importance of cultural knowledge in translational study. Finally, my research method is introduced in 3.3.

#### 3.1 Ahti's idioms in *Control* and *Alan Wake 2*

In this thesis, I focus on the collection of idioms that Ahti uses throughout *Control* and *Alan Wake 2* in his dialogue. Most of them are well-known Finnish idioms that have been directly translated into English to suit into Ahti's English dialogue but some of them are also from different sources, such as the Bible. Ahti uses his idioms from the very first encounter with him in *Control*. One of the first idioms he uses, "Take them behind the sauna, jumalauta." refers to the idiom used in the Finnish language, "viedä saunan taakse", to take someone behind the sauna which in turn means that the person is about to be shot and killed. This type of direct translation is usually the main point of the idioms that Ahti uses. In Finnish, they make perfect sense and are well known among Finns, but are harder to understand for non-native speakers, especially without context. For example, another idiom Ahti uses is "Burn it to a reindeer, not a moose." which is directly translated from the Finnish idiom "Polta se poroksi, älä hirveksi.". At first glance, this idiom sounds absurd, yet it cleverly plays on the Finnish word 'poro' which means both 'reindeer' and, as a pun, 'ashes'. This kind of wordplay is the essence of Ahti's dialogue. Most of these idioms are loaded with double meanings that mirror the games' overall atmosphere of ambiguity and mystery and further shrouds Ahti's character in mystery as well. Additionally, idioms such as "Take them behind the sauna, jumalauta" are culturally relevant to Finland where Ahti is supposedly from. All of his idioms are integrated into his dialogue and are a key aspect of his character. They, along with his heavy Finnish accent, are what make the character stand out.

#### 3.2 Cultural knowledge as the basis for translational study

Translating a text is not as straightforward as merely substituting words from one language into another. A good translation requires a deep understanding of linguistic structures, cultural nuances, and context to ensure that the original meaning is effectively conveyed. A direct word-for-word translation often fails to achieve equivalence in meaning, leading to confusion for the reader. This

challenge is even more pronounced in cultural translation, where interpretation goes beyond language and involves adapting ideas, values, and communication styles to align with the expectations of the target audience. Without these essential skills, translation loses its accuracy and impact (Djamarang 2018, 127).

Ahti's dialogue, while mostly English, still includes some intermittent Finnish words since Ahti as a character is a Finn himself. Finnish people often speak a variety of broken English called 'Finglish', and Ahti is meant to represent your typical Finn, whose English skill level is not the best. This can be heard in his heavy Finnish accent and in the occasional Finnish word in his dialogue. Remedy Entertainment, while being a Finnish video game company themselves, chose to include their own culture in their games through Ahti. In order to fully understand any translations, one needs to be aware of the culture of both the source and the target material. This is established by Bergantino when she says that "The ways in which cultures are perceived as one's own or someone else's also play a role in establishing what (non-) translation is. Languages and cultures are in a fluid, dynamic relationship rather than locked into nation states as separate compartments" (Bergantino 2023, 252). In this particular case, the idioms Remedy Entertainment has chosen for Ahti to use need to be fully acknowledged before they can be translated into English for Ahti's dialogue. The Finnish language is rich with riddles, metaphors and idioms that convey certain messages not deducible from those of the individual words alone but rather give implications of the true meaning when one understands the language better. This is the core essence of the Finnish idioms that Ahti uses throughout *Control* and *Alan Wake 2*. Knowing the Finnish culture is the key to understanding these idioms better, and by extension, the cultural knowledge in translational studies.

### 3.3 Method

I focus on the English counterparts of Ahti's idioms and how the direct translations differ from them. I collected a total of 36 idioms from *Control* and *Alan Wake 2* by playing both video games and taking notes on Ahti's idioms whenever he included them in his dialogue. I will not analyze all of them but will rather illustrate a few selected ones and go into more detail about their properties and show how some of the directly translated versions in Ahti's dialogue can be understood better than the English counterparts.

I also inspect how Evelyn Nien-Ming Ch'ien's (2008) concept of weird English is present in Ahti's dialogue and idioms. Weird English refers to how linguistic innovation often stems from a

combination of necessity, rebellion, and artistry, showcasing the richness of hybrid identities. Ch'ien discusses how instead of seeing English as a rigid or monolithic system, it can be viewed as a tool one can reshape, reflecting one's experiences of migration, colonization, or multilingual life (Ch'ien 2008, 51). I examine this concept by referring to the purpose of Ahti's idioms and how they are transmitted to the player by specifically having Ahti speak them aloud.

Finally, I examine the Skopos theory and how it correlates to Ahti's dialogue. The Skopos theory, developed by German linguist Hans Vermeer in the late 20th century, is a functionalist approach to translation. The term "Skopos" comes from the Greek word meaning "purpose" or "aim". According to this theory, the primary focus of translation should not necessarily be a word-for-word equivalence but rather the purpose or function of the target text in its specific context. Translators should adapt their strategies based on what the translation is meant to achieve (Mahmoud 2023, 1241). My research method focuses on this theory, and I examine how it is applied to Ahti and how his dialogue and idioms provide the base for his character building.

## 4 TRANSLATING IDIOMS

In the following sections 4.1–4.3, I discuss the idioms present in both *Control* and *Alan Wake 2* in more depth. In 4.1, I present the selected idioms that have proper English counterparts and examine their meanings. In 4.2, I explain the meaning of ‘weird English’ and show how it is represented in the aforementioned video games. In 4.3, I examine the Skopos theory and how it can be used to approach Ahti’s dialogue and idioms.

### 4.1 English counterparts of Ahti’s idioms

Even though Ahti’s idioms in *Control* and *Alan Wake 2* are mostly directly translated from Finnish idioms, most of them do not have proper English counterparts and are therefore harder for non-native Finnish speakers to understand. However, some of these idioms actually do have English counterparts and can therefore be understood better when one compares the directly translated idioms in the dialogue to the English counterparts of those said idioms. Such is the case with idioms such as

“Not so much evil that not a bit of good as well.” which is directly translated from the Finnish idiom “Ei niin paha ettei jotain hyvääkin”. The closest English counterpart for this idiom would be, “Every cloud has a silver lining”, which means that some good can be found in everything and everyone.

Another idiom with an English counterpart is “But in the end, stand the thanks” which is directly translated from the Finnish idiom, “mutta lopussa kiitos seisoo”. The closest English counterpart for this idiom would be “All’s well that ends well” which means that even though something may seem hard or bad, if it ends well, then it will be okay and be fine.

The next example I exhibit is “Rain is coming down like from the ass of Esteri.” This idiom is directly translated from the Finnish idiom “Sataa kuin Esterin perseestä”. This means that rain is coming down too hard. The closest English counterpart for this idiom would be “It is raining cats and dogs”.

Lastly, one of the idioms that Ahti uses is taken straight from the Book of Proverbs (Proverb 9:10) found in the Bible “Fearing the master is the root of wisdom”. This idiom is unique in the aspect that the line of dialogue above is already a clear reference to the Bible on its own and can be understood perfectly well. For comparison, the actual line in the English translation of the Book of Proverbs is “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom”. Therefore, it is the actual line in the Book of Proverbs that is more similar to the Finnish translation “Herran pelko on viisauden alku”.

These are just a couple of examples of the idioms Ahti uses throughout the two games. There is a clear correlation with some of the real English idioms, but some do not have a clear English counterpart even though most of them can be understood by explaining the meaning behind the original Finnish idioms. Sometimes the directly translated idiom can actually make more sense than the English idiom it is derived from: “time is long for those who wait” is an idiom Ahti uses which is directly translated from the Finnish idiom, “odottavan aika on pitkä.” The corresponding English idiom would be “A watched pot never boils”, which in its essence does convey the same message as the literal translation, even though the literal translation does convey the slow passing of time better than the actual English idiom. The general principle behind these idioms is, after all, to convey a message to the main character and by extension, to the players themselves but Ahti chooses to do so in this cryptic manner which in turn is what makes the character so compelling.

## 4.2 Weird English represented

Since Ahti does not do much of anything in either *Control* or *Alan Wake 2* aside from talking to the player, it is therefore the weird dialogue that stays with the player afterwards and shapes the character. Were Ahti’s dialogue to be just normal interactions with the player with regular advice on how to continue forwards, the character would not be nearly as compelling and would therefore be just a regular NPC (non-playable character). However, when a character is given a trope or a niche, such as Ahti’s idioms, they become easier to remember even if their trope/niche is not easily understood, which has been the point of the character; to be memorable.

This is where Evelyn Nien-Ming Ch’ien’s (2008) weird English comes into play. Ch’ien’s analysis makes a strong case for embracing weird English as a force for cultural evolution and creative expression. However, she does emphasize that this weird English demands to be spoken out loud (Ch’ien 2008, 51). Speaking weird English out loud often means embracing a rhythm and flow that is different from standard English pronunciation. When read aloud, weird English amplifies the personal and cultural connections embedded in the text. Listeners might experience the blend of languages, dialects, and expressions as an auditory tapestry that challenges expectations of “proper” English while conveying deeper emotional or cultural nuances. Essentially, to bring weird English to life in spoken form, one would approach it with authenticity, leaning into the peculiarities, the non-standard pronunciations, and the unexpected rhythms, and savoring the fresh perspectives it offers.

In Ahti's case, his weird English is based on two different languages as his dialogue often includes Finnish words as well on top of the idioms themselves which are already directly translated from Finnish. This makes his dialogue sound weirder to anyone who is not a native Finnish speaker. Ahti's regular dialogue already gives him more variety when compared to other characters in the two video games because of his weirder English but is then even further expanded upon with his idioms. This weird English is therefore unique to him as it does not follow the usual rules of the English language but rather stretches, breaks and reconstructs it to fit into his dialogue, as is the basis for Ch'ien's concept of weird English. This type of English needs to be spoken aloud for it to work as intended as is explained by Ch'ien (2008, 51). Were Ahti's dialogue just words on paper, it would not give the intended effect of sounding weird to the player. Therefore, it is essential that his character is heard, and not only read.

This type of language use opens up a multitude of opportunities for creative writing as one is no longer bound by the standard rules of the language in use. However, this type of writing can easily get criticized for its more experimental language use. Ch'ien writes that "[...] experimental work is often criticized for being unintelligible or too zany to be held to the same standards as orthodox writing (Ch'ien 2008, 51). She says that weird English gets criticized for being harder to understand even though that is precisely the point. In Ahti's case, his more unintelligible dialogue is what gives him his niche and therefore makes the character compelling. If Ahti's dialogue only consisted of standard English and some standard English idioms, he would not be nearly as memorable. Therefore, it can be argued that the rules of more "normal" language would restrict the possibilities of making compelling characters through their dialogue. Ch'ien endorses this idea by saying that "The criticism of orthodox writing is that it limits expressiveness and the capacity to describe settings and experiences that are outside the realm of the orthodox" (Ch'ien 2008, 51). When applying this to Ahti's weirder English, one can determine that the point of his dialogue is to be memorable and leave the player thinking what they have just heard.

### **4.3 The Skopos theory**

The Skopos theory is a framework for understanding the translation process. It emphasizes that the primary goal of translation is determined by its intended purpose (Du 2012, 2189). In Ahti's case, the primary principle behind his translated idioms is to make the character more complex. Applying the Skopos theory to Ahti offers an intriguing lens for understanding how translation and cultural adaptation can shape the portrayal of a character. Ahti is deeply rooted in Finnish culture and his

character is portrayed with a blend of humor, mystique, and cultural specificity due to large part because of his use of idioms and heavy Finnish accent. Therefore, the developers decided to bring out his personality through his dialogue and directly translated idioms rather than any other source. More specifically, the directly translated idioms are the key element here. The purpose of these idioms being mostly nonsensical is to bring out the mysticality and quiriness of Ahti's character. Had the developers decided to make the character cite just regular English idioms, the character would not be nearly as memorable. Therefore, it is the exact purpose of the idioms to tell the player that this character is someone the developers want players to remember and keep an eye out for.

## 5 ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

This section provides the full extent of the findings of my analysis. I discuss my findings with a particular emphasis on Ahti as a culturally relevant character and the purpose of his idioms through the Skopos theory as discussed in section 4.3. I also examine how well the directly translated versions can be understood in comparison to their English counterparts, as expressed in section 4.1 and finally, how Ch'ien's weird English can be seen in Ahti's dialogue as discussed in section 4.2.

Direct translation has its challenges since even though the meaning behind the words in the source text is understood in the source language (Finnish in Ahti's case), the meaning can change drastically when directly translated into the target language (English in Ahti's case). Direct translation can also undermine the source text's cultural basis as the target culture might not have the same idiom in their language. In the case of idioms, the context in which an idiom is used is essential. Direct translation without understanding the context can lead to miscommunication. Additionally, idioms are often colloquial and might not be suitable in formal communication when directly translated. However, In Ahti's case, the purpose of his directly translated idioms is to confuse (non-Finnish speaker) players and not make sense. By having made Ahti stereotypically Finnish, the game developers have offered the players a glimpse into the Finnish culture and the intricate system of the Finnish language for those who are not already familiar with it. It has also been Remedy Entertainment's purpose to make Ahti a comedic character with his idioms. By directly translating well known Finnish idioms, the character's dialogue becomes more amusing and humorous and thus making him more memorable.

The Skopos theory allows flexibility in translation, accommodating cultural and contextual differences. By prioritizing the purpose of the translation, the Skopos theory ensures that the target text effectively communicates the intended message to the target audience (Mahmoud 2023, 1243). In Ahti's case, this means that the primary purpose of translating Ahti's Finnish idioms to English is to maintain his quirky and humorous personality while making it accessible to a global audience. This means that the translation should capture the essence of his character and the cultural context of his idioms. Since Ahti's dialogue is part of a video game, the translation should align with the interactive and immersive nature of the medium. This involves creating translations that are both engaging and fit the video game's tone and setting but are also easily understood by non-native Finnish speakers. Suppose Ahti uses a Finnish idiom which message is hard to understand: The direct translation can adapt it to an idiom or expression that still preserves the intended humorous tone and meaning of the idiom in the target language even though it does not explain the meaning any more than the original

Finnish idiom does. For example, one of Ahti's idioms is: "Etiäpäin, sanoi mummo lumessa", which directly translates to "Onwards, said the granny in the snow", which in turn is the actual piece of dialogue. This idiom means that one needs to keep going despite the faced challenges. While this is a common idiom in Finland and is usually understood by natives, it might sound odd to non-native Finnish speakers. By directly translating the original Finnish idiom, the intended humorous and mystifying tone of Ahti's dialogue persists as is fitting for his character. Therefore, the translator's actions should be driven by the intended function of Ahti's dialogue. This means preserving the humor and cultural references while ensuring that the target audience can understand and appreciate them. Maintaining a balance between staying true to the source material and ensuring that the target text serves its purpose is crucial.

The Skopos theory states that the translation should be purpose driven (Du 2012, 2189). Therefore, the intention of the translator determines the method of translation. By that logic, the direct translations of the idioms Ahti uses are meant to achieve comical reactions from the players since the idioms themselves sound nonsensical when directly translated. However, this is precisely the point of Ahti's character. The developers have decided to bring out his persona and his cryptic side through his dialogue which is mostly created through the idioms he uses, which in turn are purposefully translated directly from Finnish idioms to make little to no sense to the player, therefore utilizing the Skopos theory.

Ch'ien's (2008) concept of weird English delves into how the boundaries of the language should be pushed in order to craft more diverse results. One such way is to embed elements from other languages, resulting in accents, intonations, and pacing that mirror those languages' unique qualities. Such is the case with Ahti. Since he speaks English with a heavy Finnish accent and that most of his dialogue consists of directly translated idioms, it becomes clear that these idioms are the main focus of this character. This collision of languages mirrors Ch'ien's weird English aesthetic, where the language's traditional rules are upended to create new layers of meaning. In Ahti's case, his idioms are not meant to follow neat English logic. Instead, they transport the player into an experience of linguistic hybridity, where the unpolished, unfiltered translations capture not only the literal meaning but also the mood, humor, and nuance of Finnish culture. Ahti's dialogue is riddled with such translations that for example, take Finnish curse words and render them directly into English. This practice does more than deliver quirky one-liners; it actively challenges the dominant form of English by asserting the value of minority linguistic expressions which in its essence is the core idea in Ch'ien's analysis. Moreover, by embedding these culturally loaded expressions into the narrative of

a supernatural action game, Remedy Entertainment creates an atmosphere that is both otherworldly and deeply rooted in its creator's heritage. The weird English of Ahti is not merely a novelty; it's a deliberate narrative device that enriches the storytelling with cultural specificity and playful subversion. Ahti's dialogue invites players to re-evaluate how language functions in our cultural and digital lives, suggesting that deviations from standard English can be as expressive and vital as any traditional form.

## 6 CONCLUSION

With this research, I set out to unravel a mix of cultural specificity, linguistic strategy, and narrative innovation, all viewed through the prism of Ahti's character and dialogue. Through my analysis I demonstrated that the direct translation of Finnish idioms, while presenting inherent challenges in terms of semantic and contextual shifts, is not an unfortunate oversight; rather, it is a purposeful and ingenious design choice that amplifies Ahti's persona. By engaging with the Skopos theory, the research underlines how translation should be guided by its intended function, ensuring that the target audience experiences the full humorous and cultural depth intended by the original expression. Although literal translations of idioms may seem to strip them of their nuanced cultural flavor, in Ahti's dialogue, this very approach becomes a conduit for humor. A deliberate means to disorient and amuse players who may be unaccustomed to the intricacies of Finnish idioms. In this light, direct translation is not a handicap but a strategic narrative tool that transforms potential communication barriers into engaging encounters.

Central to this research is the application of the Skopos theory, which advocates for a purpose-driven translation process. The deliberate retention of seemingly odd or nonsensical idiomatic expressions preserves the character's eccentric charm and affirms the idea that translation is as much about evoking emotion and atmosphere as it is about transferring linguistic content. Complementing this, my analysis also explored Ch'ien's concept of weird English. A perspective that revels in the playful subversion and hybridization of language norms. Ahti's dialogue, with its blend of Finnish idioms and unconventional English phrasing, embodies this ideal. The resulting linguistic hybridity challenges conventional expectations of language, as is the point of Ch'ien's weird English (Ch'ien 2008, 51).

Ultimately, my research underscores the transformative potential of purpose-driven translation in digital narratives. It suggests that embracing the quirks inherent in direct translation can enrich a character's identity and create deeper, more meaningful interactions with a global audience. As digital storytelling continues to evolve, the insights gleaned from Ahti's case serve as a reminder that effective translation is not merely a mechanical process but an art form that can shape cultural dialogue and redefine narrative engagement in increasingly diverse and interconnected digital landscapes.

There is much more to be researched on the subject of not only direct translations but idioms as a whole. By focusing on a certain character from a certain video game franchise that uses directly translated idioms, one can better analyze the complexity of this translational practice from a more focused perspective and therefore deduct that this type of translation has its own niche in the world of linguistics.

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