

Effects of pivot templates in subtitling

A case study of Terrace House: Opening New Doors

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This thesis examines the effects of pivot translation in subtitling in the Japanese reality television series Terrace House: Opening New Doors, which was translated to Finnish using an English-language pivot template. By analysing excerpts of the primary source material by means of qualitative research, the study found that the presence of a pivot template dictates what is translated and what details are important to convey. In some instances, the Finnish translator's difficulty in interpreting the English-language template which was not created primarily for translator use was detected. The pivot template also places an additional cultural layer between the source and target cultures, affecting localization choices. Finally, evidence of the audiovisual context of the source text being lost was uncovered. The study found that pivot translation contains unique challenges in addition to those encountered when working with subtitling templates in general. The conclusions drawn are in agreement with other relevant studies: pivot translation is not an ideal method of subtitle translation, but as it remains a common practice, developing solutions that enable subtitlers to produce the highest quality work possible is imperative.

Key words: subtitling, indirect translation, pivot translation, templates

Table of contents

1	Introduction	4
2	Background	6
2.1	Why use templates?	6
2.2	What makes a good template?	7
2.3	Theoretical background	8
3	Research	10
3.1	Materials	10
3.2	Method	10
3.3	Uncovering the de-facto source text	11
4	Analysis of materials	13
4.1	Loss of context	13
4.2	Mistaken interpretation	14
4.3	Template as a cultural conduit	15
4.4	Details and focus	18
5	Discussion	20
6	Conclusion	22
	References	23

1 Introduction

Templates emerged as a tool for subtitlers at the start of the digital age at the turn of the millennium. At their simplest, they are subtitle files that are pre-timed, produced either with only time stamps with no text at all, in the source language, or an intermediary language referred to as a pivot language (Nikolić 2015, 192–193). In the age of streaming, the demand for speed in the translation process is ever increasing, with the sheer volume of content put out by streaming services, as well as with the practice of releasing entire series of a programme all at one time. What is more, the availability of skilled translators in less common language pairings may not always meet the demand in this environment, and the relative ease of finding a translator who can translate from the arguably most common pivot language, English, makes it more cost-effective. These factors make the pivot template an invaluable tool for the audiovisual translation industry.

Template use has been examined in numerous studies, often from the perspective of globalisation. However, relatively few studies have focused on pivot translation, despite it being a significant phenomenon in the audiovisual translation industry of today. Subtitle translation from an intermediary language has become exceedingly common in rarer language pairs, making the development of better understanding of its effects on target texts invaluable.

In this thesis, I examine the Finnish subtitles of the Japanese reality television series *Terrace House: Opening New Doors* (henceforth *Opening New Doors*), which have quite evidently been translated using an English language template. The aim of my research is to identify the effects of the practice of pivot translation in the case of this series. This study uses a qualitative method of analysing specific examples from the source text.

This study is based on the observation by Kapsaskis (2011) that a template used in the translation process tends to take the role of the source text. Kapsaskis' study examined the use of an English-language template while translating English-language source material, but what happens in pivot translation, when the translator is unlikely to speak the source language and therefore has no access to the source dialogue? My hypothesis is that the role of the template as the source text gets further amplified. After all, when using a template, the translator has far less reason to pay attention to the audio, which could also come at the cost of the visual. Therefore, the position of subtitling as audiovisual translation is further compromised.

This thesis is structured as follows: the second section, which follows this introduction, provides an overview of the use of templates in audiovisual translation and of existing research on the topic. The third section lays the groundwork for the study: the material and method are discussed, and additionally, relevant features of the pivot template are established based on in-text clues, in order to facilitate the study itself. The primary source materials are analysed in the fourth section, and discussion of the findings follows in the fifth section, before concluding remarks in the final section.

2 Background

Templates are pre-made subtitle files for the use of translators that contain pre-set timing for subtitles and often some form of the subtitles themselves. They can be in the source language, or a translation to an intermediary language referred to as a pivot language. Templates can also be blank; files that only contain time codes and no text at all (Nikolić 2015, 192–193). The pivot template, one that is translated from an intermediary language, often English, is of interest in this paper.

2.1 Why are templates used?

Dallı (2024, 3–4) argues that rather than being born out of necessity, pivot subtitling is a deliberate practice in the translation industry for streamlining and cost-effectiveness. Indeed, having fewer source languages provides ease for the allocation of work, which is valuable in today's fast paced environment where turnaround times are short. A variety of source languages also necessitates quality control personnel proficient in each of those languages to be available. Streamlining by working with English as a pivot language eliminates that need as well.

When it comes to further financial benefit, Kapsaskis (2011, 169) points out that it is not necessarily expected of template makers to have translation knowledge, and that for subtitling work where less varied skills are needed due to the presence of templates, less experienced translators are preferred. Both of these factors justify lower pay, thus making a segmented subtitling process more cost-effective.

The demands of the streaming age should also be considered. Namely, the sheer volume of content on streaming services and the practice of releasing an entire season of a TV series all at once are both undoubtedly demanding unprecedented speed. Additionally, the share of non-English language content on streaming appears to have been on the rise for some years now. From 2019 to 2021, the share of non-English content on Netflix across five major European countries increased from 25 per cent to 31 per cent (Advanced Television 2021). Netflix itself has reported that the viewing of non-English language content in the UK increased 90 per cent from 2020 to 2023 (Blenkinsopp 2023).

For smaller languages such as Finnish, one might assume that translator availability is more significant as a factor – with the volume of content in various source languages on Netflix alone, direct translation may simply not be a realistic goal.

2.2 What makes a good template?

Various suggestions for desirable features or supplementary materials for templates have been made in previous research. Artegiani and Kapsaskis (2014, 434) present suggestions for possible improvements based on their findings from studying template-based subtitle translations of *The Sopranos* in several target languages, expanding on Kapsaskis' 2011 study. Furthermore, Oziemlewska and Szarkowska (2022) conducted a survey on the features and quality of templates that subtitlers' encounter, and their working practices with them. Many of their findings align with Artegiani and Kapsaskis' suggestions.

First, Oziemlewska and Szarkowska state that full transcribed dialogue and on-screen text should be included in the template, and reduction should be left to the translator. This suggestion is supported by findings of the Oziemlewska and Szarkowska study, in which two thirds of respondents expressed that they would prefer a verbatim template (2022, 442). When it comes to the primary source material studied in this thesis, *Terrace House: Opening New Doors*, if one assumes that the English translator was working with the Japanese subtitling as a template, the full dialogue is indeed what they had at their disposal: the Japanese subtitling is a near verbatim transcription of the source dialogue, with only filler words typical to spoken language omitted. Whether intentional or simply a coincidence born from differing subtitling norms, if the Japanese subtitling was used as a template, it gives the English translation the best possible chance to succeed content-wise.

Second, Artegiani and Kapsaskis argue that subtitlers should have the ability to adjust time codes of subtitles as they wish. In the *Terrace House: Opening New Doors* subtitles, the timings of the subtitles differ in the Japanese subtitling and the English one. It is evident that the English translator was able to change the time codes. It is typical, however, that one English subtitle fills the time of two much shorter Japanese ones, which suggests that the Japanese subtitling was indeed used as a master template. Oziemlewska & Szarkowska (2022, 445) found that more than half of respondents in their study reported that when able, they adjust the time codes “often” or “always”, indicating a preference for templates that allow the timing of subtitles to be adjusted.

While these two suggestions from Artegiani and Kapsaskis' answer to questions pertaining to how a source language template could be improved, and it can even be surmised that the English *Opening New Doors* subtitler was working with what can be considered a good template, further consideration is needed for pivot language templates. The third and final suggestion that Artegiani and Kapsaskis offer is that templates could include background information and guidance to translators. Other research agrees: Oziemblewska and Szarkowska (2022, 443) found that 70 per cent of respondents wished for annotations to be included in templates, but only 37 per cent stated that the typical template that they work with contains them. The types of annotation that were found to be most desirable were explanations of culture specific elements (82%) and intertextual references (69%.) The study does not, however, differentiate between translation from a source-language template and pivot translation; the remaining categories – formality level/register (41%), singular/plural or formal/informal *you* (50%) and character's gender (36%) – are likely more relevant regarding pivot translation.

Dallı (2024, 3) offers suggestions specifically for improving pivot templates, first stating that there should be a separate pivot template for translator use. Furthermore, SL specific guidelines as supplementary material for translators – such as explanations of cultural elements or linguistic politeness levels that the pivot language cannot adequately express – should also be included. Additionally, Dallı (2024, 19) calls for establishing financial incentives to expand direct translation instead of reliance on pivot translation.

2.3 Theoretical background

My research is based on Kapsaskis (2011, 174–175) observation that when a template is used in the translation process, it tends to take the position of the source text of the translation. Kapsaskis' 2011 study examined the subtitles of an episode of *The Sopranos* in French and Greek, based on an English-language template, aiming to show that the very presence of a template affects the linguistic aspects of subsequent translations.

The study found that in the subtitles studied, the timing and segmentation of the translations followed those of the template, likely as restricted by the template file. Additionally, the English template did not exactly abide by the source dialogue, but instead employed standard subtitling practices, such as omission, condensation, and paraphrasing. Despite the fact that the translators also had the source dialogue at their disposal, the subtitles tended to closely follow the structures of the template instead, even at times when they were not constrained by

time and character count, leading to unnecessary omissions. Kapsaskis (2011, 174–175) draws the conclusion that templates dictate what to translate with which strategies, ultimately becoming the source text of the translation, replacing the audiovisual material.

This study uses Kapsakis' assertion that the pivot template becomes the source text of the translation as the theoretical framework. I examine the ways in which this can be observed in the Finnish subtitles of *Terrace House: Opening New Doors*, which were translated from an English-language pivot template.

3 Research Design

In this section, the primary source material of the study is introduced, and the research methods are described. Additionally, the presence of a pivot template in the translation process of the primary source material is established based on comparison of the source text and translations.

3.1 Materials

The primary source material of this study is the Japanese reality television series *Terrace House: Opening New Doors*. The series was produced from 2017 to 2019, and it is the fourth instalment in the *Terrace House* franchise. The programme is a Netflix and Fuji TV joint production. It follows a group of six young people aged 18 to 31 who are moved in to live together in a luxurious shared house. The cast members continue to work and/or attend school during their stay and are not prevented from meeting people outside the series, nor does the production interfere with their activities in any way that is visible to the viewer. The series seeks to project an illusion of documentation of ordinary daily life. This is likely why Netflix also refers to the series as a “docudrama.” Additionally, in between programme sections showing events in the titular house, inserts of a commentator team consisting of comedians and media personalities voicing their opinions on the events are shown.

The source material includes some significant features. First, while the programme does have a constructed narrative typical of reality television, scripted dialogue is absent. Instead, the dialogue consists primarily of unscripted discourse uttered by real people. Second, as the cast members are not fictional characters, there is no intentional characterisation to consider (in contrast to e.g. Dallı 2024, 12). When it comes to the commentators, there is an argument to be made that some characterisation is present. However, only one of the examples in this study contains commentator speech, and characterisation is not a point of interest in it. Second, there are relatively few elements that are traditionally considered difficult to translate and needing special attention. The research material consists of relatively simple everyday conversations.

Within the show, cast members are primarily referred to by their given names. Whenever names are mentioned in this paper, the same strategy is used. The names are spelled according to how they appear in the English and Finnish subtitles, even though they do not all align with the modified Hepburn system for romanising Japanese script used in the examples.

3.2 Method

This study is a qualitative, comparative study of the Japanese source text and the English and Finnish subtitle translations of *Opening New Doors*. The research material consists of examples collected from the first three episodes of the series. Most of the examples are single subtitles, though some are sections of conversations. One longer example consists of on-screen text. The examples were selected based on their relevance to the study and categorised based on features they exhibit. Contrastive analysis of all three languages was then conducted.

The examples are written as they appear in the subtitles on Netflix, including the original Japanese. The subtitling is near verbatim to the source dialogue, with only filler words typical to spoken language omitted. The Japanese source text is romanised according to the modified Hepburn style. Romanised script was chosen in order to be able to better illustrate some points to readers who do not speak Japanese. An italicised English translation is included below the original Japanese. In Example 7, the original Japanese is omitted, as it was determined that including it would take a significant amount of space whilst adding little value to the analysis of that example.

While both the English and Finnish translations are target texts, in this thesis the term *target text*, or TT, will only be used for the Finnish translation. This choice has been made for the purpose of improving clarity, and in order to remind the reader of the hierarchical relationship of the texts from the point of view of the Finnish TT.

3.3 Uncovering the de-facto source text

To facilitate the rest of my research, it is necessary to establish conclusively that the Finnish subtitles to *Opening New Doors* have in fact been produced from an English language template, more specifically one that is most likely the same English subtitling that the viewer will see. For the purposes of this study, this is done by means of comparative analysis of sections of the source text and their English and Finnish translations. The purpose of this section is simply to provide a basis for the real focus of the study, the effects of the template, so I have purposefully chosen to present one simple and conclusive example, where the respective similarity of the translations and their simultaneous deviation from the source text are unlikely to be born from anything else but the English translation being an intermediary step in the translation process of the Finnish target text. In the example, the meaning of the English translation deviates greatly from the source dialogue:

Example 1

Jā ikimasu ka <i>Shall we go then?</i>	Shall we take the big one?	Otetaanko iso auto?
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The original utterance is something of a rhetorical question, one that Takayuki asks his fellow cast members as they are about to embark on trip to the grocery store for ingredients for their first meal together. The English translation fulfils a similar function as a rhetorical question, but the translator has essentially switched the question to a different one. It seems very unlikely that two translators could independently produce these two similar translations, when there is no obvious reason guiding a translator to deviate from the original meaning in the first place. This leaves virtually no other possibility than that the Finnish target text is a relatively direct translation of the English translation.

Another important clue is that while the timings of the Japanese and English subtitles partially deviate, the timings of the Finnish target text follow the English template. It seems possible that the translator was even working with a “locked” template – one that does not allow for time codes to be changed (see Oziemblewska & Szarkowska 2022, 435).

4 Analysis of materials

The primary research materials of the study are analysed in this section. The representative examples from the material are divided into loose categories in order to name and highlight different phenomena that appear in them. However, they often exhibit several different traits and thus could fit in multiple categories.

4.1 Loss of context

In some instances, added distance or loss of context of utterances was identified in the Finnish translation. Below, two examples are presented, the first illustrating the context of the use of a specific expression being lost, and the second demonstrating the loss of an utterance's role as a response in a conversation.

Example 3

Tadaima <i>I'm home</i>	I'm back	Minä tulin
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In Japanese, “tadaima” is an expression that is used when returning to one's place of residence. Both English and Finnish lack a set expression for announcing one's return, as there is culturally not necessarily a consistent habit of doing so in the first place. Therefore, it is a phrase that does not have a set translation in either target language, and it is up to the translator to find a solution fitting the context. In the English template, the meaning of coming back home specifically is left implicit, which carries over to the Finnish translation. The omission seems almost intentional: more natural Finnish expressions for the situation that include the word home do exist.

This could indicate that translators face pressure to abide by the template over context and the audiovisual material itself (Oziemblewska & Szarkowska anything on this?). However, while the premise of *Terrace House* is that the cast members live at the titular house full time (some staying up to a year), there is still the argument to be made that it is after all a TV set and not anyone's home as such. This could explain the translator's hesitation to “add” the word home to the Finnish translation. They, after all, cannot be expected to acknowledge that there was anything more to the source language utterance than what is explicit in the English template.

The following Example 4 presents another disconnect between the context of an utterance and the final translation:

Example 4

Shion ga nebō shitan desu yo. - Ē, yabai jan. <i>Shion overslept</i> - <i>That's not good</i>	Shion missed his alarm. - That's not good.	Shion nukkui pommiin. - Harmi
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In “That’s not good”, the template presents an expression whose meaning can be quite situational, varying from “not ideal” to “very bad”. “Ē, yabai jan” could be described in the same terms – a closer translation that still fits in its context could scarcely be produced. The English translation is as close as can be, so its relationship to the ST is not of particular interest. Its relationship to the Finnish TT, however, is.

The meaning in the English template and in the subsequent Finnish translation is arguably similar, but when examined as responses in a conversation, the differences emerge. While in the original utterance it is clear that Mizuki does not find Yuudai’s tale of Shion sleeping through his alarm riveting and does not appear particularly concerned, and “harmi” may be a perfectly appropriate description for the passing inconvenience Shion might have experienced, as a response in the conversation, it comes off unnecessarily cold and disinterested. It appears that while the meaning is translated, the context of the utterance as a response in a conversation has been lost. A similar phenomenon can be observed in Example 6.

4.2 Mistaken interpretation

In some cases, the Finnish translator has misinterpreted the meaning of the template, leading to mistranslations. In the preceding conversation, the commentators have been discussing the cast members Shion and Mizuki and speculating that they might get along well. One of the commentators then changes the topic of conversation to the whole cast, which is presented in the following Example 5.

Example 5

<p>Nani ka de mo ima made yori mo uchi de minna de sugosu jikan ōsō desu ne.</p> <p><i>Doesn't it seem that compared to before, there would be more time spent with everyone at home</i></p>	<p>It seems they'd spend more time at home than any other season.</p>	<p>He viettäisivät enemmän aikaa kotona kuin kukaan muilla kausilla.</p>
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In the source text, this change is explicit with the use of the word *minna*, “everyone”. The English translation, however, simply uses the third person plural *they* and does not mark the topic change in any way. As a result, the Finnish translator seems to have interpreted that the topic of conversation is still Shion and Mizuki and not the whole cast, which is made explicit in the translation.

In another example, due to a mistranslation, the Finnish subtitling leaves the impression that instead of a finished conversation, something is left unsaid:

Example 6

<p>Kūki wa yomenai yo ne. - Un. Sugoku, totemo. <i>He doesn't read the room [lit. the air], right?</i> - Yeah. Really, very [much so]</p>	<p>Because he doesn't read the mood? - No, not at all.</p>	<p>Koska hän ei ymmärrä tunnelmaa? - Ei ole kyse siitä.</p>
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The translator has interpreted the response “no, not at all” in the template as disagreement instead of the agreement that it is. While coupled with Example 5 due to its nature as a mistranslation, it is arguable that “no, not at all” is quite understandable here as an agreeing response in context. Thus, this example is in some ways more akin to Example 4, which presents a similar breakdown in flow of conversation. Example 6 is where the conversation seen by the viewer ends, which is likely why any discrepancy went unnoticed.

4.3 Template as a cultural conduit

Dallı (2024, 17) identified evidence of an Anglo-American cultural layer in the Turkish subtitles of the Netflix original dystopian thriller drama series *Squid Game*, translated from Korean using an English pivot template. A similar phenomenon can be observed in the *Opening New Doors* translation.

Example 7 shows on-screen text that is overlaid on footage showing Yuudai cooking breakfast for the cast members, detailing his educational history. In the English translation and Finnish TT, the information is selectively condensed into a total of four lines of subtitles each.

Example 7

<i>Wants to be a chef</i> <i>Arai Yūdai (19)</i> <i>From Maebashi city, Gunma</i> <i>'17 Gunma prefectural East</i> <i>Takasaki upper-secondary</i> <i>school¹ graduate</i> <i>'17 Musashino culinary school</i> <i>enrolment – dropped out</i>	Yuudai Arai – aspiring chef Maebashi, Gunma '17 graduated high school '17 attended culinary school	Yuudai Arai, 19 Haluaa kokiksi Valmistui high schoolista ja kävi kokkikoulua 2017
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In the Finnish translation, rather than use the Finnish lukio for the Japanese kōtō gakkō, the English word high school is used. This effectively implants an element of American localisation to the Finnish translation and adds distance between the source text and the Finnish viewer, when in fact the Japanese school system is structured similarly to the Finnish one, with nine years of mandatory comprehensive education followed by a three-year upper secondary school that is optional.

In Example 8, another example pertaining to an added cultural layer, also in form of differences in school systems, a different strategy is used. In this example, the Finnish translator has similarly recognised that the American middle school does not have a Finnish equivalent and has therefore chosen a generalising translation strategy, which somewhat muddles the meaning.

Example 8

Chūgaku ichinensei tte kanji. <i>[he's] like a first-year middle</i> <i>school student</i>	Like he's in middle school	Kuin hän olisi koululainen
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In both examples, the Finnish translator has identified the realia in the source text and the lack of a precise Finnish equivalent – the source text effectively being the English template. With

¹ The Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) uses the terms high school and upper-secondary school interchangeably in their English-language material (MEXT n.d.). Upper secondary school is used here, because that is what is used on MEXT's overview of the Japanese education system, as well as to better mark the difference from the American system.

this hypothesis, the realia that is being translated is no longer the respective Japanese terms, but *high school* and *middle school* (without mention of a specified grade), and it is the American school system, not the Japanese, that is being localised for the Finnish viewer.

Interestingly, while the role of the template as the de-facto source text is clear in this example, in this case it has led to explicitation rather than generalisation of meaning. It is assumed that the viewer is somewhat familiar with the American high school and recognises that it does not have an exact equivalent in the Finnish school system. Therefore, to keep the meaning as specific as possible, high school is left untranslated.

A third example that can be classified as cultural interference comes from a scene where cast members Takayuki and Yuudai are having a heart-to-heart in the living room and then move on to continue their conversation in the bath.

Example 9

Furo hairō <i>Let's go in the bath</i>	Let's go to the hot tub	Mennään poreammeeseen
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The English subtitler has taken a localising approach in switching bath for hot tub in the translation. Perhaps they judged that the notion of two grown men taking a bath together would be excessively odd to the Anglo-American viewer. “Hot tub” does evoke a distinctly different prototypical image from the stone tiled bath with a wooden rim and a small wooden waterfall seen on screen in the next scene, but it is sufficiently unspecific as a term to still be a believable translation.

The Finnish TT however introduces a more specific term with *poreamme*. On many occasions, this could be a perfectly good translation for *hot tub*, but in the case of this example, it is inaccurate and creates a disconnect between the subtitles and what is seen on screen. The choice seems specifically informed by the pivot template. What is more, it is yet more evidence of the template taking precedence over the visual element.

In translations made directly from Japanese to Finnish, it is often evident that the intended target audience is people who are specifically interested in Japan and Japanese culture, so there is a tendency to preserve ST cultural elements. In pivot translation, the preservation of those elements, or lack thereof, is mainly dependent on the template. Even considering that the Finnish *Opening New Doors* translation may have been produced with a broader audience

in mind, it is possible that due to cultural factors, translating *furo* as *bath* could have been easier to accept for a Finnish audience than for an Anglo-American one.

Translating cultural elements from a culture that a subtitler working from a pivot template has no special knowledge of poses its own challenge. While a subtitler doing a direct translation does not necessarily know every cultural reference either, they usually have at least some background knowledge that they can use, as well as knowledge of potentially arising issues that could need special attention in translation. As speakers of the source language, they are also better equipped to research what they do not know. In pivot translation however, the subtitler has no choice but to adhere to the localisation choices of the template maker.

4.4 Details and focus

In some examples, the pivot template evidently dictates which details are or are not important. This shows in specific elements being focused on in the TT despite them being unimportant in the SL source text, as well as in a two-step reduction of information, where condensation and omission are present in both the template and one step further in the TT.

Example 10

Koko de joshikai dekiru yo <i>We can have a girls' gathering here</i>	We can have a girl party here	Voimme pitää täällä tyttöjen bileet
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The word *joshi-kai* is a combination of the words *joshi* “girl” and *-kai* “meeting” or “gathering.” The expression does not inherently contain the meaning of *party* but it could certainly refer to such an occasion. The English subtitler’s use of the word *party*, instead of a set expression such as *girls' night* carries over to the Finnish translation. The Finnish translator has no access to the nuance of the original Japanese source and can only use what the English translation entails. The Finnish TT puts focus on *party*, despite it being a concept that is not present in the Japanese ST.

Example 11 is a rather plain and practical example of two layers of simplification, where the disappearance of specific elements can be clearly pointed out.

Example 11

Oyakodon <i>Chicken and egg [lit. parent-and-child] rice bowl</i>	Chicken and rice bowl	Kanaa ja riisiä
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Oyako-don is a Japanese dish consisting of chicken and sliced onions cooked in a sweet soy-based sauce. A beaten egg is then added and the resulting kind of omelette is placed on a bowl of rice. The English subtitler has identified that the viewer might not be familiar with the dish, and has translated it in a way that explains its contents. However, the translation has been simplified by removing *egg*. The Finnish translation adds another layer of simplification by removing *bowl*. There is no obvious reason to remove these details, other than subtitlers' tendency to apply standard subtitling strategies of omission and condensation to their work regardless of whether the same strategies were already applied at a previous stage (Kapsaskis 2011, 171).

Example 7 discussed above is another one that provides an illustrative example of the two layers of simplification present in the translation process. The Japanese source text is quite detailed, including not only the name of Yuudai's hometown of Maebashi in Gunma prefecture, but also the names of the specific schools he has attended. The English translation omits the names of the schools but keeps Maebashi. In the Finnish translation, all names are omitted. The example exhibits a similar two-step decrease of information as Example 11 above.

5 Discussion

The English *Opening New Doors* subtitling functions well as a subtitle translation, but issues arise from some of its shortcomings as a template. For instance, the use of standard subtitling practices, such as condensation, omission and paraphrasing, influences subsequent translations. This is clearly illustrated in Example 5. It seems quite unlikely that the English subtitler misheard or misunderstood the source language utterance – not only is it specific in its reference to the whole cast, but it is also clearly structured as introducing a new topic. It is significantly more likely that they simply chose the most concise expression without considering subsequent translations. The Finnish subtitler has inadvertently been put in a position where they have had to make their best guess as to what is being referenced. This guesswork could have been avoided if the template had been purposefully produced to be as specific as possible. Based on the findings of this study, Dallı's (2024, 3) assertion that for successful pivot translation, providing a separate pivot template for translator use would be ideal seems more than reasonable.

Kapsaskis' statement that templates indicate *what* to translate (2011, 174) may have been made in a study examining the effects of a source-language template, but based on the results of this study, it is even more true in pivot translation, where a subtitler who does not understand the source dialogue has little else other than the template to rely on. This manifests in different ways in almost every example used in this study, be it guessing the reference in Example 5, focusing on the word “party” in Example 10 or translating realia in Examples 7 and 8. That said, pivot translation is not immune to the same effects that appear in direct translation either, which can be seen in Example 9. This is indicative that pivot templates are accompanied by the same challenges as SL templates, *and* their own unique challenges.

The findings of this study should not be considered as questionable choices of one individual translator. Dallı (2024, 5) points out that any number of translators might work on the same series. This could well be true of the Finnish *Opening New Doors* translation as well, as no translator names appear in either the ending or closing credits. Kapsaskis (2011, 175) argues that as the audiovisual element diminishes, the role and professional identity of the audiovisual translator are degraded. With outsourcing and fragmented roles, the translator is increasingly invisible.

One might inquire how motivating it is for a translator to listen to dialogue they do not understand, and by extension pay attention to the accompanying visual element. This would heighten the role of the template and understandably contribute to the sense of distance between the translation and its SL context observed in this study. However, based on the results of this study, speculation is all that can be offered. As a suggestion for further research, a study similar to Oziemblewska & Szarkowska (2022) focusing on pivot translation could provide interesting insight.

Issues with context could also be exacerbated by the nature of the research material, where dialogue is spontaneous and not crafted to serve a narrative purpose. While decisions have been made in production on which conversations are included in the programme and which are omitted, the nature of each section of dialogue is still different from a film script that was written for a narrative purpose from the start. Namely, there is no consideration for reiterating context or important points.

While this study mainly highlighted shifts of meaning as a result of pivot translation, several instances of effects of the different syntactic structures of the three languages showing in the translation were also identified. Japanese, English and Finnish all tend to structure information differently, and the same must be true of many other trios of languages encountered in the pivot translation sphere. Future research could investigate whether this is something that demands attention.

As a closing note, the Finnish *Opening New Doors* translation is not one isolated poor-quality translation, nor is it a poor-quality translation at all. However, it contains inaccuracies, cultural interference and odd translation choices arising from the use on an English-language pivot template. The findings of this study are in line with other similar case studies such as Kapsaskis (2011), Kapsaskis and Artegiani (2014) and Dallı (2024).

6 Conclusion

This thesis set out to investigate the Finnish subtitling of the reality television series *Terrace House: Opening New Doors*, which was created using an English-language template. The hypothesis was that a subtitling template tends to take the role of the ST of the translation, based on the theory presented by Kapsaskis (2011). In addition to Kapsaskis' theory, it was hypothesized that in pivot translation, the role of the pivot template as the source text is further emphasized.

The results of the study affirmed the hypothesis. The study found evidence of increased omission and simplification in the Finnish target text due to subtitling strategies being applied on both stages of the translation, instances of translators' difficulty in interpreting the template, sometimes due to said omissions, and localisation choices in the pivot template affecting the target text with somewhat inaccurate results. Kapsaskis (2011, 174-175) states that in when templates are used, they determine what to translate, and what translation strategies should be used. Kapsaskis makes this statement on source language templates instead of pivot templates, so it could still be argued that in that situation, the premier source text is the audiovisual material, and the template is supplemental to it. In pivot translation, however, the template unavoidably becomes the premier source text and the audiovisual material in turn supplemental. This has a profound impact on pivot translation's nature as audiovisual translation.

With the impact pivot translation has on the very nature of subtitling, the conclusions drawn by Dallı (2024, 19) and Oziemlewska and Szarkowska (2022, 451) that the practice should be avoided altogether in favour of direct translation appear perfectly reasonable and worth striving towards. However, as pivot translation remains a ubiquitous practice that probably cannot simply be done away with, improvements in pivot translation practices should also be developed. The Oziemlewska and Szarkowska study surveyed translators on their working practices with templates, however the study did not differentiate between the use of source language templates and pivot translation. A similar study based on a survey, focusing on pivot translation could provide insight into the realities of working with pivot templates and uncover specific opportunities for improvement.

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