

Translation of Allusions in the Animated Cartoon
The Simpsons

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Table of Contents

1.	INTRODUCTION	3
1.1	Background and aim.....	3
1.2	Material and method.....	4
1.3	Terminology	7
2.	ALLUSIONS AND TRANSLATION STRATEGIES	9
2.1	The concept of allusion	9
2.2	Allusion and humor	11
2.3	Types of allusions.....	12
2.4	Strategies for translating proper name allusions	14
2.5	Strategies for translating key phrase allusions	16
3.	<i>THE SIMPSONS</i>	18
3.1	Commercial success and syndication	18
3.2	The creation process and the authors' intent	19
3.3	Sari Luhtanen and the Finnish translation of <i>The Simpsons</i>	21
4.	SUBTITLING AS TRANSLATION	24
4.1	Constraints of the format	26
4.2	The concept of equivalence in subtitling.....	27
5.	PRESENTATION OF DATA.....	29
5.1	Verbal allusions found in the corpus	29
5.2	Use of translation strategies.....	31
5.3	Analysis of the allusions in one episode.....	33
5.3.1	Proper name allusions	33
5.3.2	Key phrase allusions	39
5.3.3	Non-verbal allusions	41
6.	DISCUSSION	43
6.1	Retaining proper name allusions in dialogue	43
6.2	Use of standard translation for key phrase allusions	46
6.3	Possible reasons for unused strategies.....	47
6.4	Omissions	48
6.5	Allusion clusters on the verbal visual channel	49
6.6	Translation of episode titles	51
6.7	Non-verbal allusions affected by subtitling.....	52
7.	CONCLUDING REMARKS	55
	REFERENCES.....	58

List of Figures and Tables

Figure 1	Breakdown of verbal allusions per episode and channel.....	30
Figure 2	Basic translation strategies used in the corpus	31
Figure 3	Strategies used for allusions on the verbal auditory channel.....	32
Figure 4	Strategies used for allusions on the verbal visual channel.....	32
Figure 5	Co-occurring visual and verbal allusions.....	42
Figure 6	Kent Brockman on <i>Eyewitness News</i>	44
Figure 7	Allusion cluster on the verbal visual channel	50
Figure 8	Subtitle showing a translation of an episode title	52
Figure 9	English and Finnish subtitles co-occurring for the first time	53
Figure 10	Overlapping subtitles	54
Table 1	Episodes of <i>The Simpsons</i> in the corpus.....	7
Table 2	Unchanged proper name allusions in <i>The Springfield Files</i>	34
Table 3	Changed proper name allusions in <i>The Springfield Files</i>	36
Table 4	Proper name allusions reduced to sense in <i>The Springfield Files</i>	37
Table 5	Omitted proper name allusions in <i>The Springfield Files</i>	38
Table 6	Key phrase allusions in <i>The Springfield Files</i>	40

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and aim

Finland, as well as the other Scandinavian countries, has a tradition of subtitling imported television programming for the benefit of the viewers (Gottlieb 2004: 9). Having watched Finnish television all my life, I have grown to consider subtitles a very natural and unobtrusive way of leaping over the communication barriers that foreign programming has presented. However, every now and then I have become aware of communication situations where the subtitler has struggled to help the viewer understand the original content. As my own language skills have improved, I have grown to understand and appreciate the work that subtitlers do for us viewers.

When the animated series *The Simpsons* appeared on Finnish TV in 1991, it immediately became my favorite show. Whereas some shows cloy the appetite they feed, *The Simpsons* made me hungry for more. I was amazed to find out that watching a re-run could be just as entertaining as watching an episode for the first time. I attribute much of my enjoyment of the show to the cultural learning curve that it inevitably is for a Finnish viewer, and to the subtitles that have been there to help me climb it.

The main purpose of this study is to analyze how translator Sari Luhtanen has rendered as subtitles the plentiful allusions found in *The Simpsons*, and to what degree she has chosen to omit the allusions from the subtitles. Specifically, I intend to find out how Luhtanen has taken advantage of the different strategies for dealing with allusions, and how she has dealt with the limitations of the target format. I will use Leppihalme's (1997) classification of the various translation strategies, and perform a quantitative analysis on the results in my corpus.

I do not intend to look for mistranslations or second guess her choices; if anything, I will attempt to gain an insight into how a translator can successfully deal with the

challenge of such allusively dense audiovisual material. Luhtanen's translations are held in high regard by the Finnish fan base of *The Simpsons*, including myself.

As the secondary objective of this study, I will attempt to define the specific challenges and opportunities that subtitling presents when translating allusions. While the technical features of subtitling are widely discussed in the literature of the field, I believe there are additional insights to be gained from analyzing the subtitling choices (technical and otherwise) that are found in the corpus.

Chapter two discusses the concept of allusion and the categorization of allusion types and strategies that will be used in this study. Chapter three defines *The Simpsons* as a text, and provides insights into the series' production process and the authors' intentions. The chapter also includes Sari Luhtanen's comments on the translation of *The Simpsons*. Chapter four discusses subtitling as the target format for a translator. A quantitative analysis of the data is presented in chapter five, with a discussion of the findings in chapter six. Chapter seven concludes the study.

1.2 Material and method

With 18 complete seasons of *The Simpsons* currently in existence, comprising of almost 400 individual episodes, it was obvious that I could analyze only a fraction of the existing episodes. When selecting the episodes for the corpus, I first applied the following criteria to eliminate unsuitable material:

1. The episode and its Finnish subtitles must be available for use in the study
2. The Finnish translator must be Sari Luhtanen
3. To aid in locating the allusions in the episodes, a corresponding Episode Capsule must be available in *The Simpsons Archive* (www.snpp.com)

The first criterion eliminated the very latest episodes from consideration, since they have yet to appear on Finnish television. The 16 complete seasons that have been

shown in Finland still provide over 350 episodes. There is no publicly available resource where all of these episodes can be obtained, but re-runs of the fourth, eighth and ninth seasons have been recently shown on the Finnish channels MTV3 and SubTV.

The second criterion did not eliminate much material, since all but two episodes of *The Simpsons* have been translated by Sari Luhtanen. However, this criterion further constrained the availability of the earlier seasons. While the first seven seasons are currently available on DVD with Finnish subtitles, the Finnish subtitles used on the DVDs are not by Sari Luhtanen. They are retranlations by unnamed translators; the subtitles are simply credited to the 'SDI Media Group'. It should be noted, however, that the existence of these parallel translations presents an opportunity for a contrastive study. A study of the two different translations could yield interesting insights as to the variation of translation strategies for different translators. While it may be difficult to construct suitable quality metrics for comparing the translations directly, it would be practical to empirically study viewer responses to the different translations. I will not carry out this contrastive study here, but it is nevertheless an interesting possibility for a further study.

There is also a possible benefit in not using the first season as the material for this study. In my interview with Sari Luhtanen, she also noted that her translation work during the first episodes was not done in same circumstances as her later work with *The Simpsons*. The working conditions were different due to the challenges presented by the subtitling system, the time available for the translation, and the availability of the scripts. These limitations are described in more detail in section 3.3 of this study.

The third criterion eliminated most episodes starting from season 13. Since the Episode Capsules are a collaborative effort that rely on the observations of individual contributors, I decided to prefer episodes whose Episode Capsules appear complete

enough in a cursory examination. It should be noted that the quality of the Episode Capsules was not a deciding factor in my study, since the capsules were only an additional resource to help me detect allusions in the episodes. Nevertheless, they were useful enough to warrant equal treatment for each episode in this regard. I am certain that the Episode Capsules significantly improved my corpus of allusions, both in completeness and accuracy. As shown by Leppihalme's experiments on students' responses to allusive wordplay (1996: 204-208), non-native readers such as myself are hit-and-miss when it comes to locating and correctly identifying allusive passages.

An abundance of episodes remained even after eliminating the unsuitable material. I wanted the corpus of this study to provide a representative sampling of episodes across several seasons, and provide a large enough number of allusions to allow for a quantitative analysis. To achieve this, I kept selecting and analyzing episodes until I had reached what seems to me a reasonable corpus of allusions. My selection of episodes was semi-random, since it did not seem to make much difference which episodes were selected. The starting point of each episode is very much the same; *The Simpsons* is what is called a *drama series* by De Fossard et al. (2005: 21-22). The main characters stay the same in every episode of the series, but in each episode, they are engaged in a different and complete self-contained storyline. This is significantly different from a *drama serial*, where each episode tells a part of an ongoing story that is always left incomplete at the end of the episode. Thus, with *The Simpsons*, there did not seem to be much risk of selecting highly atypical episodes.

However, there is one special type of episode that is included in every season of *The Simpsons*. This is the 'Treehouse of Horror' episode, which is the annual horror-themed Halloween special. I knew I wanted to include at least one of these episodes, since they have a structure that is different from the other episodes. They always feature three independent short stories, which are almost invariably allusions to famous movies,

novels, or events – except that they are played out in abbreviated form by the cast of *The Simpsons*. My hypothesis was that there was bound to be a difference, allusion-wise, between the standard episodes and these special episodes.

I selected the following six episodes from the material I had previously recorded from Finnish television, and from re-runs that were shown on the Finnish television channel SubTV during summer 2006:

Table 1 Episodes of *The Simpsons* in the corpus

Original episode title	Finnish title	Season	Production code
Marge Be Not Proud	Bartin lankeemus	7	3F07
Homerpalooza	Kanuunanruokaa	7	3F21
The Springfield Files	Perjantai-illan aave	8	3G01
Treehouse of Horror VIII	Kauhujen talo osa VIII	9	5F02
Mom And Pop Art	Pop-taiteilija	10	AABF15
Grift of the Magi	Lelusensaatio	11	BABF07

The combined running time of the episodes is just over two hours. Being quite familiar with *The Simpsons*, I expected that the episodes would be rife with allusions. This proved to be true, and I feel that the study of these episodes provided a reasonable corpus for analysis.

1.3 Terminology

It is important to define the words ‘text’ and ‘reader’ in the context of this study. ‘Text’ should be understood in a wider sense than in the everyday language; not just referring to the written word, but also encompassing multi-channel messages such as television programs. Gottlieb (2004: 1) even argues that even exclusively non-verbal communication may deserve to be called texts. Many of the allusions in *The Simpsons* refer to real-life people, and it would be impossible to name a single source text that the allusion evokes.

‘Reader’, on the other hand, should be understood as the interpreter of meanings in the text. I will also use the term ‘viewer’ when I am specifically concerned with the viewing of a program or film, for example when discussing the limitations of subtitling in chapter four.

The various readers of a text constitute its ‘audience’. The audience of *The Simpsons* is very heterogeneous, even in the original target culture. The varying gender, age, and nationality of the audience are very relevant factors when considering the choices made by a translator.

2. ALLUSIONS AND TRANSLATION STRATEGIES

2.1 The concept of allusion

Intertextuality as a term was coined by Julia Kristeva in 1969 and has been much expanded by other academics since then. Intertextuality proposes that any reading of a text always happens in relation to other texts that the reader has knowledge of. This intertextual knowledge pre-orientates the reader to activate the text in certain ways, 'by making certain meanings rather than others' (Fiske 1987: 108). Intertextual knowledge also affects the author of the text, who will engage in 'the conscious or unconscious use of previously created texts' (Aitken 1997: 205). Allusion is the name for the device which brings about this 'simultaneous activation of two texts' (Ben-Porat 1976, as cited in Hutcheon 2001: 43).

Allusion is commonly manifested by a 'frame'. A frame is a 'combination of words that is accepted in the language community as an example of preformed linguistic material' (Leppihalme 1997: 41). A frame can be almost anything: a proper name, a famous quote, or only a single word. This makes allusion a very economical device for an author. A very small amount of material allows the author to draw upon the meanings inherent in the reference. It is also a potentially inexact device, a wave of a hand in the approximate direction, rather than the exact coordinates on a map. If an author decides to call one of the characters in a novel a *Napoleon*, what is the reader to make of that? The reader is left to choose from the connotations that he or she is aware of. While one reader recalls a great commander and his victories, another may be reminded of a humorously pompous Frenchman.

It is also possible for a frame to lose its original allusive power and become a stereotypical expression or an idiom (Leppihalme 1997:50). This connection to the original context may be lost due to popularity of the expression, or due to the original

context being forgotten. Making clear distinctions between allusive frames and idioms is not easy, especially with frames that are clearly in neither category. In the course of this study, I had to make choices with some frames that I considered allusive: are they still allusions, or have they already become standard expressions? For example, Homer has the following line in the sub-episode *The Homega Man* in *Treehouse of Horror VIII* (allusion and its translation in **bold**):

Original dialogue	Finnish subtitle
So! Who wants to steal some Ferraris ?	Kuka haluaa pöllumään Ferrareja ?

Ferrari, of course, is a car brand that is universally known for its fast sports cars. In this case, it could almost be considered an idiomatic expression for any sports car, were it not for the fact that there is another allusion involved in this case: the evoked text *The Omega Man* involves stealing Ferraris. I decided to include this frame as an allusion in the corpus.

Allusions can also exist on the macro-level, encompassing the entire text rather than individual frames (micro-level). For example, a text can be a complete parody of another text (Leppihalme 1997: 40). Such macro-level allusions are present in the corpus of this study; the episode *Treehouse of Horror VIII* clearly contains two of them. The first one is to the science fiction movie *The Omega Man* (1971), which itself was based on Richard Matheson's novel *I Am Legend*. The second one is to the science fiction movie *The Fly* (1986). The plot of both movies is played out very haphazardly by the cast of *The Simpsons*, and numerous micro-level allusions are present to support the macro-level allusion.

I have chosen to exclude macro-level allusions as such from the scope of this study. I have included all the micro-level allusions which are used to create the macro-level allusion, but I have treated them as separate allusions. A typology of translation

strategies for macro-level allusions would be useful if one was to evaluate their translation using quantitative methods. Nevertheless, I do feel that the translator can benefit greatly from detecting the existence of macro-level allusions in the text. The many hard choices that must be done when subtitling can be helped by knowledge of the macro-level.

2.2 Allusion and humor

Allusion is a commonly used device in humorous texts. It provides a convenient way to remind the reader of people and events in other texts, and invites the reader to see the current scene or situation in the light of this additional information (Berger 1997: 7). While the author cannot force the reader to make a certain interpretation, it is of course possible to select the allusions in such a way that the reader is very likely to make a particular connection. This, however, requires some knowledge of the target audience. For example, English-speaking cultures enjoy a wide circulation of Hollywood movies, and famous characters from Hollywood blockbusters are familiar to many readers in those cultures. Berger notes that one of the problems in enjoying a comedy from a different culture is that the reader might not 'get' the allusions, and ends up missing a great deal of the humor. Leppihalme agrees that a cultural barrier can prevent the understanding of an allusion, unless the receivers are sufficiently biculturalized (1997: 4).

Another aspect of the enjoyment provided by allusion is the intellectual joy that the reader may feel at recognizing the allusion (Leppihalme 1997: 40). I believe that for culturally competent readers, this joy may often become the dominant source of delight when encountering a text from a different culture. Nash (1985: 75) makes the following point about the function of allusions, which I believe is very relevant to the function of allusions in *The Simpsons*:

They are a kind of test, proving the credentials of the initiated, baffling the outsider. In effect, they are a device of power, enabling the speaker to control a situation and authoritatively turn it to his own advantage.

Chapter three provides further insight into the creation of *The Simpsons* with regard to this function of allusions.

2.3 Types of allusions

This study borrows its core terminology from Leppihalme's 1997 study. For the purposes of this study, the term 'allusion' refers to (1997: 3):

[...] a variety of uses of preformed linguistic material (Meyer, 1968) in either its original or a modified form, and of proper names, to convey often implicit meaning [...]

I will treat the allusions similarly to Leppihalme (1997 3-4, 10). Allusions will be considered mainly as translation problems to be solved, and not as a literary phenomenon. I will not attempt to create or use a complex typology of different allusions, as the usefulness of such a typology for a translation study such as this one is doubtful (Leppihalme 1997: 10). Instead, I will concentrate on the translator's use of the possible translation strategies. When analyzing the corpus, I will also use Leppihalme's division of allusions into proper name and key phrase allusions.

In a proper name (PN) allusion, the frame that carries the allusive meaning is a proper name. The corpus of this study includes numerous examples, typically names people (real-life and fictional), titles of fictional works, and names of organizations:

Residents are advised to stay inside unless you wear sunscreen or are very, very hairy. Experts recommend a class 9, or **Robin Williams**, level of hair coverage.

Why do you think I took you to all those *Police Academy* movies?

For fun? Well, I didn't hear anybody laughing! Did you?!

He releases the hounds on every charity that comes to his door -

Feed the Children, Save the Whales, even Release the Hounds.

When analyzing the corpus, I have treated as allusions all proper names that have a referent in real life or in other texts. This means that I have not included the names of characters in *The Simpsons*, but I have included names from other fictional works, and of real life people. While the original authors may well have assumed that their primary audience is well versed in, for example, the names of all American presidents (the names of presidents being a recurring theme in *The Simpsons*), a president such as William Henry Harrison soon becomes what Leppihalme calls a 'culture bump' (Leppihalme 1997: 3-5) for a foreign viewer. A culture bump occurs when an allusion fails to convey a coherent meaning to a target language (TL) reader, and instead leaves the reader puzzled and uncomfortable. It is of course possible that a reader misses the existence of an allusion entirely, and will not be confused by the translation. In these cases the culture bump is still present in the translation, but the reader has avoided stumbling on it.

Key phrase (KP) allusions can be defined as encompassing all other allusions, those which do not contain a proper name. Even though this definition casts a rather wide net, KP allusions are notably less numerous than PN allusions in the corpus. Nevertheless, they are still present, for example as references to song lyrics and well known literary works:

That's fine for you, Marge, but I used to **rock 'n' roll all night and party every day.**

This needs more **eye of newt.**

...and as for old Mr. Burns, he was **visited by three ghosts during the night** and agreed to fund the school with some money he found in his tuxedo pants.

Since almost any word or phrase can be allusive, it is very hard to identify all KP allusions in a text. This means that in my analysis of the corpus I have probably missed some frames that other readers would consider allusive. Fortunately, the previously mentioned Episode Capsules have highlighted many allusive phrases that I might have otherwise missed.

Leppihalme provides a typology of potential translation strategies for PN and KP allusions (1997: 78-84). I will take advantage of Leppihalme's typology of strategies when analyzing the allusions in the corpus. Leppihalme's classification of the translation strategies is summarized in sections 2.4 and 2.5.

2.4 Strategies for translating proper name allusions

According to Leppihalme (1997: 78-79), a translator has three basic strategies when encountering a PN allusion. The translator can keep the name unchanged, change it to a different name, or omit the name altogether. The exact method of implementing the basic strategy creates the following variations: (paraphrased from Leppihalme 1997: 79):

1. Retain name
 - (1a) Retain unchanged, or in conventional TL form
 - (1b) Retain unchanged with added guidance
 - (1c) Retain unchanged with detailed explanation
2. Replace name
 - (2a) Replace with different source language (SL) name
 - (2b) Replace with different target language (TL) name

3. Omit name

(3a) Reduce to sense/meaning of the name

(3b) Omit name and allusion completely

Retaining the name is not as straightforward as one might initially think. Many names have conventional established forms in the target language due to their historical or biblical origin, which has to be accounted for even if the name is to be preserved as unchanged as possible (strategy 1a) (Leppihalme 1997: 79).

Most of the strategies require the translator to make a call on the likely referent of the allusion, and its implied meaning (strategies 1b, 1c, 2a, 2b, and 3a). Only the strategy of complete omission (3b) can be used without knowledge of the referent, or accidentally even without awareness that an allusion is present.

As Leppihalme describes (1997: 105-106), the order of strategies from 1a to 3b roughly follows Levý's minimax idea of using minimum effort for maximum benefit. Retaining a PN unchanged requires minimum effort, while having a high chance of success if the PN can be expected to be relatively familiar to the audience. When dealing with a PN that is likely to be unknown to the audience, the translator has the option of choosing a strategy that requires more effort, but has the possibility of helping the less bicultural readers.

The exception to the minimax ordering is strategy 1c, that is, producing an overt explanation to go along with the translation. Leppihalme places the strategy at the least efficient end of the continuum, just before the strategy of omission. I do not expect this strategy to enjoy wide use in the corpus. Producing an overt explanation of an allusion is likely to be taxing on the two resources that subtitlers rarely have enough of: time and subtitle space. Furthermore, the exercise may prove futile in producing enjoyment for the reader, since '...explanation inevitably destroys the joke; things that are allusively funny lose their humorous charm when classification sets in' (Nash 1985: 77).

2.5 Strategies for translating key phrase allusions

The translation strategies that Leppihalme offers for translating KP allusions are as follows (1997: 84):

- A. Use standard translation, if available
- B. Literal translation (minimum change): translate without regard to connotations and context
- C. Add extra-allusive guidance to the text, including the use of typographical means to signal preformed material
- D. Provide additional information via footnotes, endnotes, or other explicit explanations that are not included in the text
- E. Introduce textual features that indicate the presence of borrowed words (marked wording or syntax)
- F. Replace with a preformed TL item
- G. Rephrase the allusion with an overt expression of its meaning (dispensing with the KP itself)
- H. Re-create the allusion by creatively constructing a passage that reproduces its effects
- I. Omit the allusion completely

Clearly, the translator's interpretation of the allusion is critical when implementing these strategies. It is possible that producing a literal translation will retain the allusive qualities of a KP, but without actually recognizing the referent the translator is not able to use most of these strategies.

While discussing the potential strategies for the translation of KP allusions, Leppihalme also identifies two seldom used strategies that the translator has at his/her disposal. One is 'throwing up of one's hands in desperation' and replacing an untranslatable passage with a message that explicitly states the situation (1997: 84). This admission of defeat is indeed a rare occurrence, and was not seen in the corpus of this study. Leppihalme notes that this strategy was used in the Finnish subtitles of an

episode of *The Benny Hill Show*. I recall seeing that particular episode myself; the untranslated passage was a rather long and rapid monologue delivered by Benny Hill dressed as a girl. As part of the wordplay, Benny Hill had replaced all masculine words by a feminine equivalent: ‘asking’ became ‘asqueen’, and so forth. The translator considered it best to not provide any translation, and simply display a subtitle declaring the passage untranslatable.

The other strategy is to not translate the text at all, but to leave the SL words in the target text (TT). Since subtitled programs almost always make the SL words available, for the subtitler this option amounts to remaining silent (and not providing a helping subtitle) while verbal content appears in the program. This was actually not a rare occurrence in the corpus, but was found in all episodes.

3. *THE SIMPSONS*

The Simpsons chronicles the escapades of a recognizably American family, in a fictional American town called Springfield. Outwardly, the Simpson family follows the traditional norm: they are a middle-class white family with a typical family structure of two heterosexual adults, three kids, a cat and a dog. Unlike the warm and loving ideal portrayed by such famous television families as the Bradys (in *The Brady Bunch*) and the Huxtables (in *The Cosby Show*), the Simpson family often comes across as somewhat dysfunctional (Brown et al, 2006: 3-4). The creator of the series, Matt Groening, readily acknowledges the debt that the series owes to the pioneers of cartoon family sitcoms, *The Flintstones* and *The Jetsons*. These shows dabbled in the kind of adult cartoon satire that would be more thoroughly expressed in *The Simpsons* (Mullen 2004: 63-66).

In addition to the main characters of Homer (father), Marge (mother), Bart (son), Lisa (daughter) , and little Maggie (the baby), *The Simpsons* also has numerous minor characters who provide the infinite variety that keeps the show going year after year. Most of the minor characters are a reference to a real or fictional character (Basner 2000), with added flourishes drawn from established stereotypes. Almost all of the characters have given rise to episodes where associated themes have been explored. Be it Vietnam veterans, corrupt politicians, senior citizens, or Christians, *The Simpsons* has it covered.

3.1 Commercial success and syndication

The Simpsons did not start out with a show on their own. Homer Simpson *et al* were first sighted in 1987 on short animated sketches before commercial breaks on the *Tracey Ullman Show*, a weekly variety show on the American FOX network (Miani

2004: 2). After three seasons, *The Simpsons* was spun off into a separate series of half-hour episodes in 1990. The series was a runaway success, and the continuing prime time longevity of the show is a testimony to its broad appeal. *The Simpsons* is also a merchandising and syndication phenomenon. During the first 14 months of the show, \$2 billion was generated worldwide (Griffiths, 2000: 25, 27-28). *The Simpsons* has become the biggest licensing entity that the Fox Network has, with merchandising revenues in the hundreds of millions, and syndication revenues estimated to be \$1 billion a year (Bonné 2003).

The far-reaching distribution and success of *The Simpsons* has made it globally recognizable. The show has usually enjoyed success wherever it has been distributed, and audiences in Europe, Brazil, Australia, and Japan are likely to be familiar with it (Bonné 2003). *The Simpsons* has become a solid part of the cultural heritage that it parodies. It is no wonder that the show also takes the time to poke fun at itself (Basner 2000).

3.2 The creation process and the authors' intent

The creation of an episode of *The Simpsons* starts with ideas being proposed by the writing team of about 16 writers. After a rough idea for an episode is decided on, a main writer is assigned to produce the first draft, which is developed further in rewriting sessions. When the script and the storyboard are ready, and the vocal performers have done their parts, the animation studio takes over and creates the episode as instructed (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Simpsons). The whole process from the first idea session to the last edit takes six months (Nixon 2004).

Having enough time and a large writer pool allows each episode to be carefully crafted, and purposefully loaded with the kind of content the authors desire. I believe this makes the unconscious use of allusive material somewhat unlikely. Most allusions

in the show are probably carefully considered. The following quote from Matt Groening certainly indicates that as the creator of the show, he has a clear idea of the kind of text they are trying to create (Ivor 1999):

Everybody doesn't have to get every joke. People really appreciate not being condescended to. The history of TV has traditionally been not to do anything that would scandalize grandma or upset junior. Our solution on *The Simpsons* is to do jokes that people who have an education and some frame of reference can get. And the ones who don't, it doesn't matter, because we have Homer banging his head and saying, 'D'oh!'

I love the idea that we put in jokes the kids don't get. And that later, when they grow up and read a few books and go to college and watch the show again, they can get it on a completely different level.

Groening's insight is very much in line with the fact that *The Simpsons* does not have a laugh track. Instead of providing the audience with cues on when the content is supposed to make them laugh, *The Simpsons* leaves it up to the viewer. Of course, it would be hard to justify the laugh track anyway, since the show is drawn and voice acted, not filmed in front of a live audience. I am also doubtful if the approach would even work very well, as the laughter would likely end up drowning out the next joke (Basner 2000), or constitute a non-stop annoyance during the most intensive parts of the episodes. The presence of a laugh track would also constitute a further challenge for the translator, as the laughter would indicate the presence of humorous content even when the jokes are not present in the translation.

3.3 Sari Luhtanen and the Finnish translation of *The Simpsons*

My interview with Sari Luhtanen provided valuable insight into the translation of the *The Simpsons*. Luhtanen has been the Finnish translator of the show from the very first episode onward. She was selected as the translator because she already had experience with translating and writing comics. Luhtanen had even encountered Groening's material before, having translated the *Life in Hell* comic books to Finnish. Luhtanen is also the co-author of *Maisa & Kaarina*, a long running Finnish comic strip, with Tiina Paju.

Luhtanen recalls that when the first material came in to be translated, there was very little information on *The Simpsons* as a show. It had not been recognized as having potential for a wider audience in Finland, and so it was initially profiled as an animated cartoon for children. Because of this, the first episodes were shown during daytime. The first seasons also provided challenges for the translator. Luhtanen received the episodes only a short time before the Finnish translations were needed, and the scripts for the episodes were often not available. Another translator, Kalle Niemi, has translated two or three of the early episodes, since Luhtanen was unavailable when those episodes had to be translated.

The subtitling system was also different in the beginning of the show, as the presentation of the subtitles was not automatic. Even though Luhtanen could naturally plan ahead how long each subtitle would appear, she had to be physically present for each broadcast, and display the subtitles at the correct time. Luhtanen states that this affected the timing and amount of subtitles, for there was an incentive to make the timing less demanding and easier to execute. When the subtitle system was later automated, she could make the timings more exact and use the subtitle space more efficiently.

In time *The Simpsons* established a wide viewership also in Finland, and the time slots for the show moved closer to prime time. By the time when the episodes in the corpus were shown, *The Simpsons* had long since become standard programming in Finland. The working conditions of the translator have also improved with time. Luhtanen is now provided with the episodes and their scripts well in advance, even a complete season at a time. Luhtanen also notes that culture-bound translation problems were more time consuming to research in the early 1990s, since the Internet was not available. Luhtanen estimates that it currently takes her approximately one working day to translate an episode of *The Simpsons*. She works alone when translating the episodes. She sometimes enlists a colleague to go over her translation, but typically she does not take advantage of this kind of a peer review.

When asked about the challenges that *The Simpsons* presents to the translator, Luhtanen relates that the biggest challenge is to obey the limits of the target format and omit enough material, all the while retaining the natural feel of the translation. The translator must endeavor to keep the viewers unaware of the many omissions in the subtitles, and avoid causing confusion with translations that are not in line with the events and characters of the show.

The amount of work it takes to solve the translation problems in *The Simpsons* varies quite much. Sometimes Luhtanen can think of a good solution immediately; sometimes she has to work harder. When presented with a more devious translation problem, she always tries to arrive at a solution that feels natural. Luhtanen says that the visual elements in the scenes are very important for this. Having translated *The Simpsons* for such a long time, Luhtanen has also come to consider the motivations of the characters. Sometimes her choices in translating dialogue are guided more by her understanding of what would suit the characters than the exact content of the source text.

Luhtanen has recognized allusions as a typical translation problem in *The Simpsons*. When deciding on a translation strategy, Luhtanen does not use any external sources to estimate whether an allusion is familiar to Finnish viewers. She counts on her own judgment; if she has to do research to extract the meaning of an allusion, chances are that many viewers are not familiar with the allusion either.

Luhtanen mentions food as one of the recurring culture-bound translation problems in *The Simpsons*. While food does not sound like a major translation issue, many episodes of *The Simpsons* feature scenes where the characters are gathered to eat, and the dialogue also touches on the subject. Luhtanen states that identifying the foodstuffs, as well as trying to establish whether the present meal is home cooking or take-out, is an important part in coming up with a natural translation. While the corpus of the study does not include any culinary allusions on the verbal channels, a closer scrutiny of the non-verbal elements might have revealed some.

Luhtanen herself has commented that she has no hard and fast rules for translation of allusions. She feels that they would prove too limiting in actual translation work. However, she does recognize that she always tries to avoid the situation where the viewer will become stuck on an out-of-place translation. To prevent this, she looks at each scene as a whole, keeping in mind that the viewers wish to be entertained. Luhtanen acknowledges that while translation theory is useful and interesting, the practical reality of the work has much in common with scriptwriting, and generally the writing of fiction.

4. SUBTITLING AS TRANSLATION

Subtitles first came into being after the 1920s, as an evolution of intertitles which were used in silent films to provide the audience with dialogue (Ivarsson, 1998: 9). Even though silent films have long since been consigned to the dustbin of history, this original purpose of subtitling survives to this day as subtitles for the hearing impaired. However, this study discusses subtitling exclusively in its interlingual meaning, as a means of translation between two languages. Gottlieb (2004: 135) provides the following definition for subtitling:

the rendering in a different language (1)

of verbal messages (2)

in filmic media (3)

in the shape of one or more lines of written text (4)

presented on the screen (5)

in sync with the original verbal message (6)

Gottlieb's fourth and fifth criteria define the target format for the translator: 'one or more lines of written text presented on the screen'. When considered together with criterion six, it becomes clear that the translator is considerably constrained by the target format. The exact limitations of subtitles as a target format are discussed in section 4.1 *Constraints of the format*.

According to Gottlieb (in Baker 1998: 245), a film is a polysemiotic text which uses four simultaneous channels for communication:

(a) The verbal auditory channel, which includes the dialogue, background voices and lyrics.

(b) The non-verbal auditory channel, which includes all non-verbal sounds, effects and music.

(c) The verbal visual channel, consisting of the subtitles and any visible writing within the film (for example, written signs, newspapers, and other writing).

(d) The non-verbal visual channel, which includes all other visual elements, including the composition and flow of the image.

Gottlieb goes on to make a distinction between translations where the translation uses the same channel (isosemiotic translation) or switches to a different channel (diasemiomatic translation). In Gottlieb's view, subtitling is diasemiomatic, since it shifts the balance from channel (a) to channel (c). However, it is apparent that the original content of channel (c) in *The Simpsons* also carries allusive content that is of interest to the translator. In the empirical portion of my study, I will also consider the degree to which the subtitles in my corpus are isosemiotic, i.e. translating content from the verbal visual channel.

Since verbal messages only make up a small part of the information provided by programming in filmic media, it is obvious that subtitling is not concerned with the complete transformation of ST into a TT. Instead, it produces what Gottlieb (2004: 16) calls an 'additive': a new channel of expression that joins the other channels in the original text. I will refer to this additional channel as the 'subtitle channel' in this study.

It is notable that the verbal messages in the ST are not exclusive to the auditory channel: the visual channel will often contribute verbal elements that need subtitling (Gottlieb 2004: 41). This is borne out by the presence of exclusively visual allusions in the corpus.

Ivarsson (1998: 72) has characterized subtitling as simultaneous interpreting in a written form. This is an apt comparison when the result of the translation work is concerned: both simultaneous interpreting and subtitling result in a new channel that is presented synchronously with the original channels of the source text. However, the

practical work of a subtitler and an interpreter are substantially different. A subtitler usually has some time to prepare the subtitles and research the translation problems, and can try out different solutions before committing to one of them. Simultaneous interpretation only allows one attempt at the translation, and it has to be created immediately to avoid becoming out of sync with the source text.

4.1 Constraints of the format

It is easy to see that the subtitle channel is subject to severe limitations. While it is technically possible to fill the screen area with translated text, practice has shown that subtitles will only remain useful to the viewers if certain fairly strict guidelines are followed. These guidelines are slightly different for the two main environments of filmic media, cinema and television, due to their technical differences. Cinema provides a huge, high-resolution screen area, whereas television screens are smaller, and the broadcast resolution is lower than in cinema. These differences, combined with the differences between TV and cinema audiences, make it necessary for television to use a slower subtitle speed (Ivarsson 1998: 27).

The ‘speed limit’ for television is some twelve subtitle characters per second (12 cps), which translates to a full two line subtitle every five seconds (Gottlieb 2004: 20). One line subtitles and very short subtitles can be shown for a shorter time. Vertanen (2001: 133-134) sets the limit between two and three seconds for a one line subtitle, with a minimum of one second for any subtitle. It is, of course, also possible to display a subtitle for an extended period, but Vertanen does not recommend durations of over ten seconds.

The maximum length of one subtitle line depends on the environment, but is typically no more than 40 characters (Ivarsson 1998: 53). In Finnish television, line lengths of 30-32 characters are typically used. *The Simpsons* are subtitled for television,

using the 32 character line length that is used by the Finland's MTV3 channel (Vertanen 2001: 133).

Ivarsson (1998: 5) provides an estimate of the available *bandwidth* for the subtitle channel, to borrow a concept from information technology. They state that '...one hour of a film or TV programme is equivalent to 30 pages of print'. According to Wikipedia, the running time of an episode of *The Simpsons* is 20-23 minutes. This means that the total bandwidth available to the translator of *The Simpsons* is the equivalent of ten printed pages.

4.2 The concept of equivalence in subtitling

Chesterman introduces the idea of equivalence, and the surrounding controversy, in the following way (1997: 9):

The equivalence supermeme is the big bugbear of translation theory, more argued about than any other single idea: a translation is, or must be, equivalent to the source, in some sense at least.

Most people probably agree that in order to be considered a translation, the TT should be equivalent to the ST in *some sense*. But what is the sense in which subtitles are equivalent to their ST? Since subtitles are a highly condensed translation of assorted verbal elements contained by the ST, what kind of equivalence can we expect?

Nida (1964, as cited in Chesterman 1997: 9) distinguishes between formal and dynamic equivalence. Formal equivalence focuses on the message itself, aiming at the same form and meaning, whereas dynamic equivalence focuses on the reception of the message, aiming at the same effect. The shoe of formal equivalence does not seem to fit subtitling, since it usually involves changing the form of the message from spoken to written word. Additionally, some meaning is usually lost due to the essential condensation of the message. Dynamic equivalence, on the other hand, seems to describe

what a subtitler is attempting to do. The subtitler is attempting to translate in such a manner as to recreate the original viewing experience for a linguistically and culturally distant viewer.

I believe that it is precisely in this sense that we should be thinking about equivalence in subtitling. However, dynamic equivalence presents the translator with some strict requirements. The translator must be competent enough to view the ST as a member of the original audience, and be able to create a translation that produces a similar viewing experience. In this, the translator can benefit from having some additional information on the intent of the original author, and keeping in mind the assignment that he or she has been given (Oittinen 2001: 13).

5. PRESENTATION OF DATA

This chapter presents quantitative data on the verbal allusions found in the corpus. Where percentages are presented, they are rounded to the nearest integer. Non-verbal allusions are not included, although they will be brought up in the discussion as examples, and also when they are relevant to the work of the translator. The corpus included one recurring non-verbal allusion where this was the case.

A particular verbal allusion within an episode only counts as one, even if the allusion is repeated, as is often the case with PNs. For example, some of the names of performers and bands, such as *Sonic Youth*, come up more than once during the *Homerpalooza* episode. Allusions in the episode titles are included, although to be exact, the episode title is not shown during the episode proper, at least not in the original ST version. However, the Finnish subtitles display the title during the opening credits.

5.1 Verbal allusions found in the corpus

In the six episodes that were analyzed, a total of 194 verbal allusions were found in the ST. 151 (78%) of the allusions reside on the verbal auditory channel, 43 (22%) on the verbal visual channel. It is notable that there are very few KP allusions on the verbal visual channel. Of the total of six KP allusions on the verbal visual channel, only one was translated. The translated KP was the famous line ‘All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy’ from the movie *The Shining*.

The average number of allusions in an episode was 32, rounded down from 32.3. Assuming a running length of 22 minutes per episode, this gives us one verbal allusion roughly every 41 seconds.

The number of allusions in an episode varied between 20 and 44. See Figure 1 for a breakdown of the allusions per episode. The height of the column indicates the total number of verbal allusions found in the episode. The number of visual and auditory allusions is shown separately.

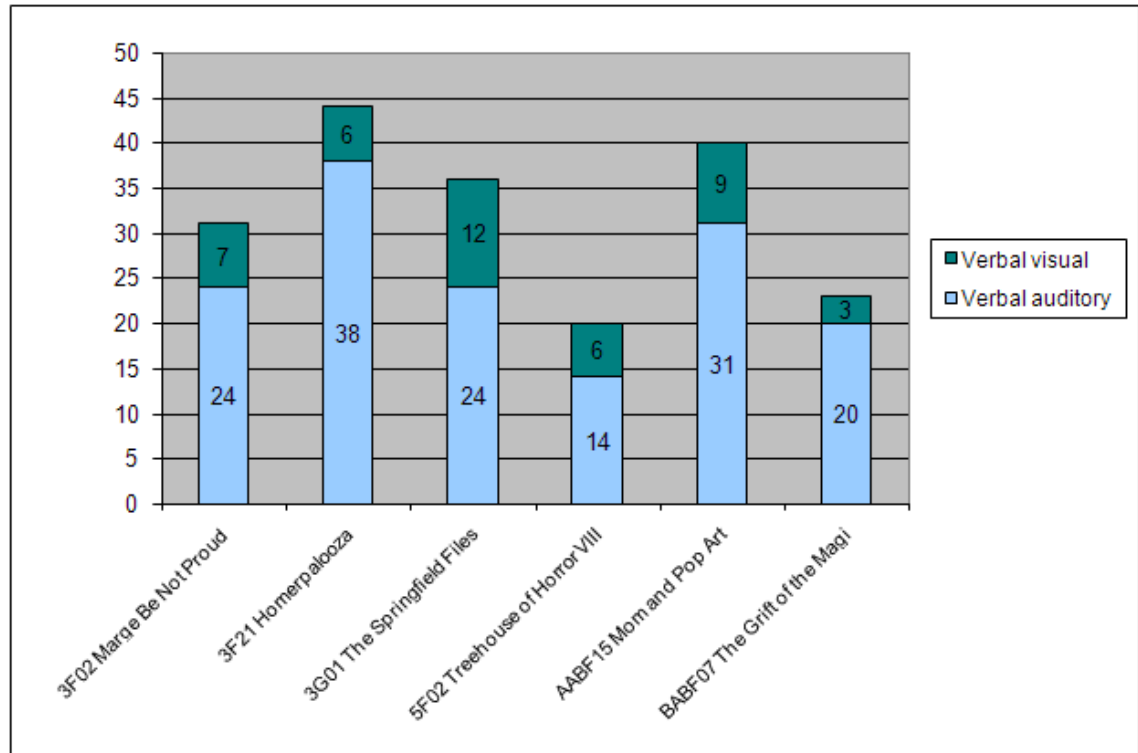


Figure 1 Breakdown of verbal allusions per episode and channel

My hypothesis concerning the *Treehouse of Horror VIII* episode was that there would be a difference to the other episodes. Figure 1 indicates that it had the lowest number of verbal allusions of any episode in the corpus. *The Grift of the Magi* comes rather close, so the low number may be simply a characteristic of the *Treehouse of Horror VIII* episode. Further Halloween special episodes could be analyzed to provide a more definitive answer. Note that the macro allusions that are present in the episode are not included in the totals.

5.2 Use of translation strategies

All of the basic translation strategies for PN allusions mentioned in section 2.4 (keep, change, or omit the name) were in use. The same holds true for the basic KP strategies mentioned in 2.5 (translate or omit).

Figure 2 provides the number of times each basic strategy was used by Sari Luhtanen, and the relative popularity of each strategy. Omitting an allusion is clearly not an exception, and is slightly more common for KPs (25%) than PNs (19%).

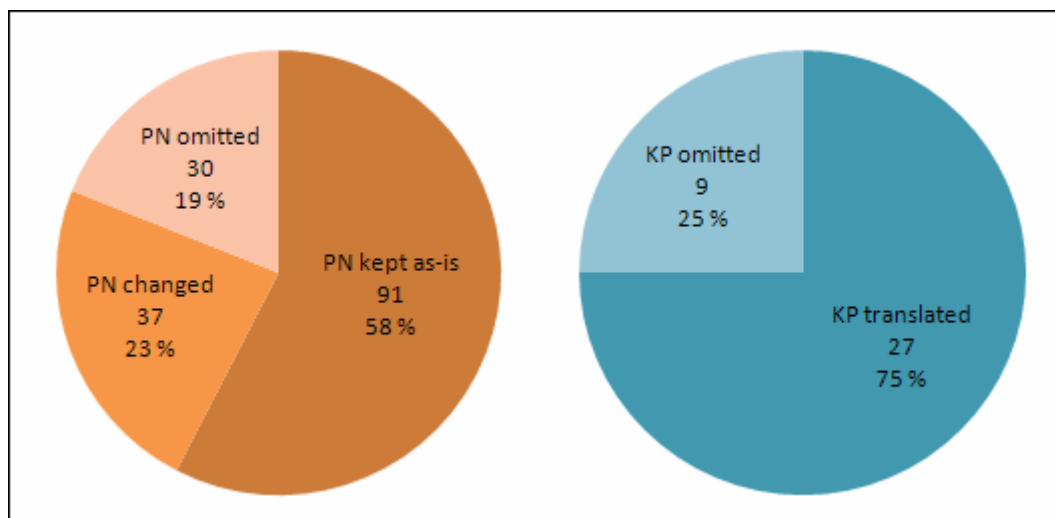


Figure 2 Basic translation strategies used in the corpus

Figure 3 shows how Luhtanen applied the translations strategies for allusions on the auditory channel. For PNs, the most popular strategies are to retain the name unchanged (1a) or reduce the name to its meaning (3a). Luhtanen does not seem to be in favor of completely omitting a PN that appears on the auditory channel, since she only does it five times in the entire corpus. None of the KP translation strategies are strongly favored over the others. For allusions on the verbal auditory channel, complete omission (strategies 3b and I) are used in only 6% of the cases, rather less than the chart of basic strategies suggests.

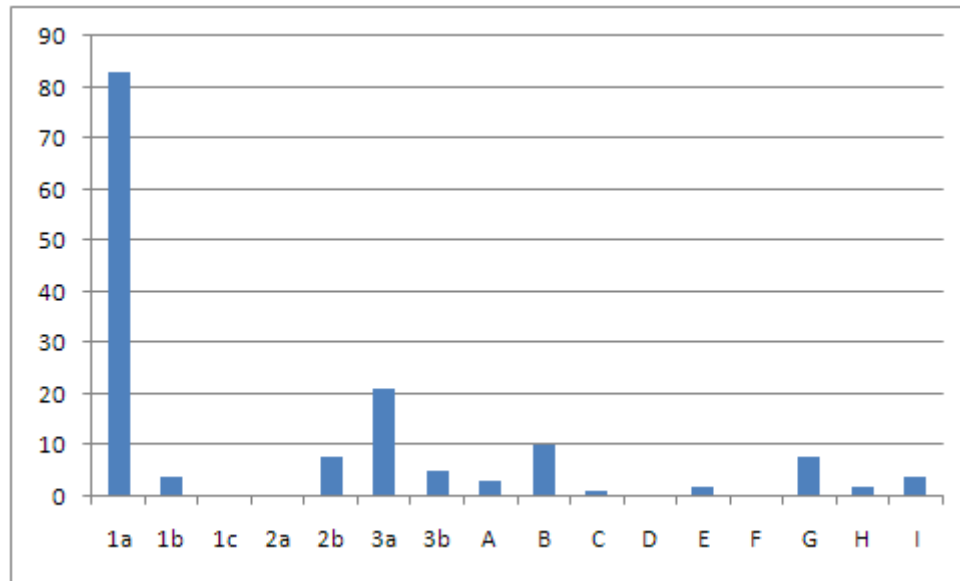


Figure 3 Strategies used for allusions on the verbal auditory channel

Figure 4 shows how the strategies were used for allusions on the verbal visual channel. The strategies used most are now outright omission for both PNs and KPs, with a significant 70% of allusions on the verbal visual channel being omitted.

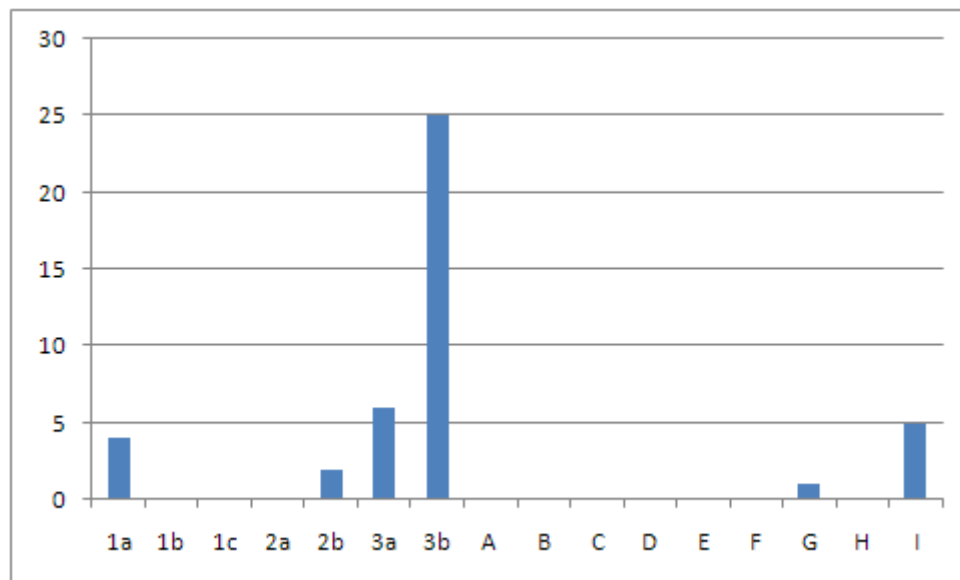


Figure 4 Strategies used for allusions on the verbal visual channel

It is apparent that some of the translation strategies listed by Leppihalme are not used at all in the corpus, and that the most popular strategies make up the bulk of the instances. The following list summarizes some of the noteworthy features of how the allusions are retained:

- Allusions on the verbal auditory channel are retained in 94% of instances
- Allusions on the verbal visual channel are retained in 30% of instances
- PNs on the verbal auditory channel are retained unchanged in 72% of instances, and changed to a different name or reduced to sense in 24% of the remaining instances
- PNs on the verbal visual channel are retained unchanged in 11% of instances, and changed to a different name or reduced to sense in 19% of instances
- KPs on the verbal auditory channel are translated in 87% of instances
- KPs on the verbal visual channel are translated in 17% of instances

5.3 Analysis of the allusions in one episode

This section presents an analysis of the allusions in the episode *The Springfield Files*. The analysis is presented separately for PN and KP allusions. I have also included a section on non-verbal allusions which I noted while viewing the episode. Repeated allusions are not included in the analysis or the totals. Some of the repetition is caused by the allusion appearing simultaneously on the verbal visual and verbal auditory channels. In these cases, I have given preference to the verbal auditory channel, and not counted the allusion on the verbal visual channel.

5.3.1 Proper name allusions

The episode contains 29 separate PN allusions. When translating these PN allusions Luhtanen has clearly favored strategy 1a, retaining the name unchanged or in its conventional TL form. The 14 allusions translated using strategy 1a are shown in Table 2. The table includes the original verbal content with the allusive frame in **bold**, Luhtanen's subtitle(s), and my analysis on the referent(s) of the allusion. I have listed the referents that I have detected, but it is likely that some readers will differ in their interpretation.

Table 2 Unchanged proper name allusions in *The Springfield Files*

Original verbal content	Finnish subtitle	Allusion
Nimoy: Hello, I am Leonard Nimoy	Iltaa, olen Leonard Nimoy	Leonard Nimoy plays the character Spock in the original <i>Star Trek</i> series.
Generic sarcastic middle-aged worker: Sorry, Donkey Kong , you're just not a draw anymore Note: The name also appears on the verbal visual channel	Valitan, Donkey Kong, et vedä enää väkeä	Donkey Kong is the name of a video game character from the 1980s.
Hot dog vendor: Hey Spock! What do you want in your hot dog? Nimoy: Surprise me.	Spock, mitä pannaan hodariin? - Yllätä minut	Leonard Nimoy plays the character Spock in the original <i>Star Trek</i> series.
Marge: Hello, can I help you? Agent Mulder: Agents Mulder and Scully , FBI.	Miten voin auttaa? - Mulder ja Scully FBI:sta	Two allusions: Agents Dana Scully and Fox Mulder are both FBI agents from the Fox series <i>The X-Files</i> .
Homer: Well, the evening began at the gentleman's club, where we were discussing Wittgenstein over a game of backgammon.	Ilta alkoi herrasmieskerhossa Pelasimme backgammonia ja puhuimme Wittgensteinista	Ludwig Josef Johann Wittgenstein (April 26, 1889 – April 29, 1951) was an Austrian philosopher who contributed several groundbreaking works to contemporary philosophy.
Marge: I try to be supportive, but this has gone too far! Please, just let it be? Homer: No, I can't. This is my cause. I'm like the man who singlehandedly built the rocket and went to the moon. What was his name? Apollo Creed?	Tämä on mennyt liian pitkälle. Antaisit asian olla En voi. Olen kuin mies, joka rakensi raketin ja lensi kuuhun Mikä sen nimi olikaan? Apollo Creed? – Ruvetaan nukkumaan	Apollo Creed is a character in the <i>Rocky</i> movies.

Original verbal content	Finnish subtitle	Allusion
(Three frogs on a pond) Frog 1: Bud Frog 2: Weis Frog 3: Er	Bud. – Weis. - Er	Budweiser has a commercial for its brand name beer where three frogs croak the brand name in the same fashion.
Crocodile: Coors	Coors	Coors is a brand of beer by the Molson Coors Brewing Company.
Hospital patient: Do Sonny and Cher still have that stupid show?	Vieläkö Sonnylla ja Cherillä On se tyhmä tv-ohjelma?	Sonny & Cher were an American rock & roll duo, made up of husband and wife team Sonny Bono and Cher in the 1960s and 1970s.
Kent Brockman: But first: E.T. phone Homer.. Simpson	E.T. soittaa Homerille, Homer Simpsonille	<i>E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial</i> is a well known 1982 science fiction and fantasy movie. The main character in the movie is simply called E.T.
Barney: Is the alien Santa Claus ? Homer: Yes.	Onko olio joulupukki? - On	Santa Claus needs no introduction for a Finnish viewer.
Jimbo holding a sign: ALIEN-DUDE: NEED TWO TICKETS TO PEARL JAM Note: Verbal visual channel	<i>Hei, olio! Tarttis saada piletit Pearl Jamiin</i>	Pearl Jam is an American grunge band.
Name on bar breathalyzer test machine: BORIS YELTSIN Note: verbal visual channel	Boris Jeltsin	Boris Nikolayevich Yeltsin, the first President of the Russian Federation from 1991 to 1999. His drinking became something of a routine sneer during his political career. The name is retained in the conventional TL form.

Table 3 shows the four PN allusions that Luhtanen translated by substituting a TL name instead of the original name (strategy 2b). I believe that she chose this strategy because she identified the original referents as being unknown to the majority of Finnish viewers.

Table 3 Changed proper name allusions in *The Springfield Files*

Original verbal content	Finnish subtitle	Allusion
Homer: So, I says, blue M&M , red M&M , they all wind up the same color in the end.	Sinisiä tai punaisia ranskan-pastilleja. Samanvärisiä niistä tulee	M&M's are a brand of milk chocolate candy. Luhtanen has replaced the name with the name of a similar candy that is available in Finland.
Lisa: Dad, according to <i>Junior Skeptic Magazine</i> the chances are 175 million to one of another form of life actually coming in contact with ours.	<i>Junioriskeptikon</i> mukaan todennäköisyys, - että törmäämme toiseen elämän- muotoon on yksi 175 miljoonasta	Modified allusion: Skeptical Enquirer is a bimonthly American magazine. I am not aware of it being available as a translation in Finland. Luhtanen has substituted a TL name that simply means 'junior skeptic'.
Lisa: All right, it's time for ABC's TGIF lineup!	Kivaa, on ABC-kanavan <i>Tähtikavalkadin</i> aika	TGIF was the slogan of a prime time programming block on the ABC TV network. The slogan comes from the initials of the popular phrase 'Thank God It's Friday'. Luhtanen has uses a made-up name that could be roughly translated as 'stars on parade'.

Original verbal content	Finnish subtitle	Allusion
<p>Bart: Lis, when you get a little older, you'll learn that Friday is just another day between NBC's Must See Thursday and CBS's Saturday Night Crap-o-Rama.</p>	<p>Lis, vanhempana tajuat että perjantai on vain yksi päivä</p> <p>NBC:n <i>Torstaitähtien</i> ja CBS:n <i>Lauantaihuuman</i> välissä</p>	<p>'Must- See TV' is an advertising slogan used by NBC for its block of primetime sitcoms, mostly applied to the Thursday night lineup. Luhtanen's translation means 'Thursday stars'.</p> <p>The CBS show mentioned by Bart is not real, it is merely a jab at CBS. This is where Luhtanen has actually added a modified allusion where none exists in the original. The name <i>Lauantaihuuma</i> is close to <i>Lauantai-illan Huumaa</i>, the translated name of the movie <i>Saturday Night Fever</i>.</p>

The four PN allusions in Table 4 were reduced to sense (strategy 3a). The problem with translating an allusion to Steve Urkel or Red Tick Beer appears analogous to the allusions presented in Table 3: the referent is simply not well known by the target audience. That is not the case with the allusion to the movie *Speed*. The movie is known to the Finnish audience, but the two-part structure of the movie's Finnish title makes it hard to work it into the translation of Homer's wordplay.

Table 4 Proper name allusions reduced to sense in *The Springfield Files*

Original verbal content	Finnish subtitle	Allusion
<p>Episode title: The Springfield Files</p> <p>Note: Verbal visual channel</p>	<p>PERJANTAI-ILLAN AAVE</p>	<p>The title is a modified allusion to the name of the TV series <i>The X Files</i>. Even though the translation does not directly allude to the name of the series, it retains the supernatural theme of <i>The X Files</i> by using the Finnish word for ghost ('aave').</p>

Original verbal content	Finnish subtitle	Allusion
Homer: The alien has a sweet, heavenly voice... like Urkel! And he appears every Friday night... like Urkel!	Sillä oli suloisen taivaallinen ääni... kuin urheilutoimittajalla Se ilmestyy joka perjantai... kuin urheilutoimittaja	Steven Quincy Urkel (born 1976), better known as Steve Urkel was a character on the 1990s sitcom <i>Family Matters</i> . It would also have been defendable to consider this allusion omitted. However, since the sense of a frequent TV appearance remains, I judged this translation to be an example of the reduction to sense strategy.
Moe: All right, here you go – Red Tick Beer . Note: the name of the beer appears on both the verbal auditory and verbal visual channels.	Jäin kiinni. Ota tästä. Kirppukalja	Modified allusion: Red Dog is the name of a beer produced by the Plankroad Brewery in Wisconsin.
Homer: Don't worry, I have a plan. I saw this in a movie about a bus that had to speed around the city, keeping its speed over fifty, and if its speed dropped, it would explode! I think it was called, <i>The Bus That Couldn't Slow Down</i> .	Minulla on suunnitelma. näin leffan bussista, jonka piti kaahata ympäriinsä yli kahdeksaakymppiä, - muuten se olisi räjähtänyt Sen nimi taisi olla <i>Bussi, joka ei voinut hidastaa</i>	The movie <i>Speed</i> features the exact plot Homer describes. The conventional translation would have been <i>Speed – kuolema kyydissä</i> . The wordplay is simply not possible using the standard translation. This allusion is a good example of a very high frequency word serving as the allusive frame.

Table 5 shows the six PN allusions omitted by Luhtanen. With the exception of one allusion, the omitted allusions all appear on the verbal visual channel.

Table 5 Omitted proper name allusions in *The Springfield Files*

Original verbal content	Finnish subtitle	Allusion
Kent Brockman: Tonight on Eyewitness News : A man who's been in a coma for 23 years wakes up	Tänään: mies herää 23 vuoden koomasta	Eyewitness News is an American format for producing local television newscasts.

Original verbal content	Finnish subtitle	Allusion
<p>Plaque on a framed photograph/painting:</p> <p>J. EDGAR HOOVER</p> <p>Note: The picture shows Hoover wearing a women's dress.</p> <p>Note: Verbal visual channel</p>	-	<p>J. Edgar Hoover was the founder of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) in its present form and its director from May 10, 1924, until his death in 1972. There were various claims about his personal life, including his supposed homosexuality, and that he enjoyed wearing women's clothes.</p>
<p>Name sign on a video game:</p> <p>KEVIN COSTNER'S WATERWORLD</p> <p>Note: Verbal visual channel</p>	-	<p>Two PN allusions: Actor and director Kevin Costner and his movie <i>Waterworld</i>. The movie was initially considered an expensive flop, much like Milhouse's experience with the video game in the episode.</p>
<p>Names of video games visible in the Noiseland Arcade:</p> <p>TERMINATOR</p> <p>MY DINNER WITH ANDRE</p> <p>Note: Verbal visual channel</p>	-	<p>Two PN allusions: The movies <i>Terminator</i> and <i>My Dinner with André</i>.</p>

5.3.2 Key phrase allusions

The KP allusions from the episode are all listed in Table 6. Luhtanen used various translation strategies to render the allusions in the subtitles. She characteristically omitted KPs on the verbal visual channel, but provides translations for those in the verbal auditory channel.

Table 6 Key phrase allusions in *The Springfield Files*

Original verbal content	Finnish subtitle	Allusion
Kent Brockman: A local man, Homer Simpson, shown here with his tongue stuck to a lamppost, has given us this videotape. It's a close encounter of the blurred kind.	Paikallinen Homer Simpson, kuvassa kieli lyhtypylvässä, on antanut meille tämän videonauhan Epätarkan asteen yhteys	The phrase evokes the name of the movie <i>Close Encounters of the Third Kind</i> in a modified form. Luhtanen uses the standard translation for the movie name (strategy A), creating a PN out of the KP allusion.
Kent Brockman: But first: E.T. phone Homer.. Simpson	E.T. soittaa Homerille, Homer Simpsonille	The famous phrase 'E.T. phone home!' from the movie <i>E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial</i> . A literal translation (strategy B) is used.
Bart: But, what's with the glowing? Burns: Um, I'll field that question. A lifetime of working in a nuclear power plant has given me a healthy green glow. [to himself] And left me as impotent as a Nevada boxing commissioner.	Miksi ukko loistaa? - Minä vastaan Työskentely voimalassa on tehnyt minusta hehkuvan terveen - ja impotentin kuin nevalalaisesta nyrkkeilyliiton johtajasta	The boxing commissioners of Nevada are notoriously unable to break the power of the casinos, the mob, and people like Don King. The translation is another literal translation.
(An English language subtitle appears, in all capital letters, one letter at a time in a rapid succession:) MOE'S BAR 3:02 PM TEMPERATURE 72° ALL WORK AND NO PLAY MAKES JACK A DULL BOY ALL WORK AND NO PLAY MAKES JACK A DULL BOY (last line repeats a total of 16 times, filling the screen) Note: Visual verbal channel	Moen kapakka kello 15.02 Työ ilman hupia tekee aivoista mössöä Note: the Finnish subtitle is placed in a black box, partially covering the English subtitle	The famous line from the movie <i>The Shining</i> , and Stephen King's novel on which it is based. Luhtanen has chosen to re-phrase the allusion (strategy G).

Original verbal content	Finnish subtitle	Allusion
Bart writing on the billboard in the opening sequence: THE TRUTH IS NOT OUT THERE	-	A modified allusion to the X Files slogan 'The truth is out there'. This allusion is omitted entirely (strategy I). Luhtanen stated in the interview that it has been an editorial choice not to translate these billboard writings which appear at the start of every episode.
Text on Homer's T-shirt: SIT ON IT Note: Verbal visual channel	-	Expression from the <i>Happy Days</i> TV series. Omitted.
Poster on Scully's wall reads: I WANT TO BELIEVE Note: Visual verbal channel	-	This is the text from the well known X-files poster. Omitted.

5.3.3 Non-verbal allusions

The Springfield Files contains various non-verbal allusions. The visual channel contains a scene at the FBI Springfield office, where the following fictional characters are standing at a police lineup:

- Marvin the Martian, a character appearing in the *Looney Tunes* cartoons.
- Gort, a robot in the movie *The Day the Earth Stood Still*
- Chewbacca, a member of a hairy humanoid race called Wookies in the *Star Wars* universe
- ALF from the TV series with the same name
- Kang and Kodos, frequently appearing minor characters in *The Simpsons*, are aliens from Rigel VII

The visual channel also contains an allusion to a brand of beer that nicely supports the allusion to the Red Dog beer. The label of the Red Tick Beer bottle contains a modified visual allusion to the pint carrying girl on the label of the St. Pauli Girl beer.

Instead of a girl that carries six pints of beer, three in each hand, the label shows a picture of a similarly dressed tick holding six pints of beer:



Figure 5 Co-occurring visual and verbal allusions

The episode also contains non-verbal auditory allusions. As Homer is walking home from Moe's bar, you can hear the well-known *Screaming violins* sound from the shower scene in the movie *Psycho*. At various points in the episode, easily recognizable parts of the *The X-Files* soundtrack can be heard.

One of the non-verbal auditory allusions also evokes the movie *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*. As the Springfield residents are assembling to welcome the supposed alien, Mr. Largo, the music teacher at the Springfield Elementary, conducts five of his students. The students play the famous five-note theme from *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* with marching band instruments.

6. DISCUSSION

6.1 Retaining proper name allusions in dialogue

On the basis of the data presented in chapter five, it is clear that Luhtanen wants to avoid omitting PN allusions from the verbal auditory channel, which in *The Simpsons* consists predominantly of dialogue between the characters. Almost all PN allusions in the dialogue are either retained as-is, or reduced to sense to provide the meaning of the allusion. Following Matt Groening's spirit of not being condescending to viewers, Luhtanen has no problem in leaving such PN allusions as the one below in the subtitles:

Original dialogue	Finnish subtitle
Oh Spade , why did you put Farley in charge of the bees?	Spade , mitäs panit Farleyn hoitamaan mehiläisiä

The comedy of actors Christopher Crosby Farley and David Wayne Spade may be known to some Finnish viewers from *Saturday Night Live*, but they are certainly not household names, and many viewers are likely to miss the allusion. However, every now and then Luhtanen decides that the flow of the action is better preserved by opening up the allusion, and providing the viewers with an easy answer:

Original dialogue	Finnish subtitle
Hey, Ansel Adams , let's go. Take the photo!	Hei, fotari , ota jo se kuva!

Ansel Easton Adams (February 20, 1902 – April 22, 1984) was an American photographer, best known for his black and white photographs of California's Yosemite Valley. In my opinion, this allusion is all but certain to be missed by a large majority of the Finnish viewers.

In the rare cases where Luhtanen omits a PN allusion, she has probably felt that the allusion is unlikely to be familiar to a Finnish viewer, and an attempt to explain the

allusion would only result in a long subtitle, and would not provide additional information to the viewer. I believe that is the case in the following subtitle from *The Springfield Files*:

Original dialogue	Finnish subtitle
Tonight on Eyewitness News : A man who's been in a coma for 23 years wakes up	Tänään: mies herää 23 vuoden koomasta

Eyewitness News is a television newscast format on the FOX channel. To my knowledge, the newscasts are not shown in Finland, and neither is the format used by Finnish newscasts. This means that there is no easy referent that would be familiar to viewers. There is also no bandwidth to provide a lengthy explanation of the allusion, although it would have been possible to state that the context is a newscast. However, as Figure 6 shows, it is apparent from the visual cues in the scene. Additionally, the news anchor is Kent Brockman who appears in most episodes of *The Simpsons*. His mere appearance is enough to orient familiar viewers accordingly.



Figure 6 Kent Brockman on *Eyewitness News*

Occasionally the lack of subtitle space seems more pressing, especially when the ST contains multiple names that are likely to be unfamiliar to Finnish viewers. The following PN allusions appear in the episode *Grift of the Magi*:

Original dialogue	Finnish subtitle
Do you have any idea how much pressure we're under to come up with a new Furby or Tickle Me Elmo ?	Tiedätkö, miten eri lelut painostavat meitä?

Furby and Tickle Me Elmo are both children's toys that became highly successful in the North American market. Furby had been available for over a year before the episode aired in the USA, and Tickle Me Elmo had already been sold for three years. At the time when Luhtanen was translating the episode, both toys were quite unknown in Finland. She chose to omit the allusions, although it would have been possible to use the strategy 2b and substitute names of more familiar toys for Furby and/or Tickle Me Elmo.

In my interview with Luhtanen, she commented that she does not favor substituting Finnish product names for foreign ones. She feels that doing so would needlessly foreground the translator's work, and possibly confuse the viewers by placing a familiar product name in a strange context. However, she also stated that she might consider this if a suitable translation problem presented itself. For example, a long-running joke that repeats across many episodes might lend itself to the use of a familiar product name.

Dealing with PN allusions also brings up the issue of re-translation. As target audience recognition of names changes with time, a translator working on the same material ten years later could find that omission is no longer necessary, at least for the reason that the allusion is unknown. The Furby toy later became available in Finland, and is now much more likely to be known to Finnish viewers.

6.2 Use of standard translation for key phrase allusions

As mentioned before, the basic strategy of keeping the allusion unchanged is not available for KP allusions. The closest equivalent of that would be KP translation strategy A, using a standard translation. Using a standard translation would often be an efficient and competent choice, since it ‘requires no new verbalization from the translator and, being transcultural, helps to convey the full range of meaning, including connotations’ (Leppihalme 1997:94-95).

Unfortunately there does not seem to be much overlap between allusive KPs in English and Finnish, and standard translations are consequently unavailable in most cases (Leppihalme 1997:95). Typical examples of standard translations that are available include quotations from transcultural literary works, such as The Bible. The corpus of this study includes some examples of standard translation, such as the following use of a biblical phrase from the episode *Marge Be Not Proud*:

Original dialogue	Finnish subtitle
I'm afraid your son broke the eleventh commandment: Thou shalt not steal.	Hän rikkoi 11. käskyä: Älä varasta

It may also happen that even though a standard translation is available, it may be still be unusable for the translation. The translation may simply be too long to be used within the limitations of the subtitle format. It is also possible that the standard translation is not one that the target audience would recognize.

The episode *Marge Be Not Proud* also includes two other frames which have been translated using a standard translation. I considered eliminating both of them from the corpus due to not being creative allusions, but stereotyped expressions that have lost their alluding quality through over-use (Leppihalme 1997: 50-51):

Original dialogue	Finnish subtitle
Are you guys shoplifting? - Four-finger discount , dude.	Pöllittekö te tavaraa? - Neljän sormen alennus , jäbä
Everyone thinks I'm the black sheep . Well, I'll show 'em what a black sheep can do!	Kaikki pitävät minua mustana lampaana . Minä näytän, mihin musta lammas pystyy

The first frame is a reference to the phrase ‘five-finger discount’, which is a well known 1960s slang expression for stealing. In its unmodified form I would not have counted this frame as an allusion, but the modification makes it much more creative. The characters of *The Simpsons* all have four fingers instead of five, which makes the viewer work slightly harder in recognizing the evoked phrase.

The second frame is decidedly transcultural, and shows the wear and tear of being a stereotypical expression. Black sheep (‘musta lammas’ in Finnish) is such a widely used expression that it no longer brings to mind the color variation of sheep. Instead, it merely evokes the image of someone who is the outsider, different from others.

6.3 Possible reasons for unused strategies

Some of the translation strategies were not used in the corpus at all; namely strategies 1c, 2a, D, and F. The lack of strategies 1c and D is not a surprise: providing a detailed explanation would consume precious subtitle space, not to mention likely ruin the entertaining qualities of the allusion (Nash 1985:77). A separate footnote subtitle could possibly be implemented, but it could not be written in a substantially smaller text than the actual subtitle for fear of ruining its legibility and reading speed (Vertanen 132-133).

It is more interesting that Luhtanen did not take advantage of strategy 2a at all: she never replaced a SL name with a more familiar SL name. While she does not consider

this to be a rule that she follows, this is probably a by-product of the guidelines that she has set for herself. For one thing, she does not like the subtitles to feel out-of-place and to draw attention to the translator's work. This particular strategy certainly has the potential to do just that, at least for culturally competent viewers. Also, she can only make an educated guess at how familiar a particular SL person or character is in Finland. There is no database of SL names and their familiarity in different cultures that would enable a reliable use for this strategy (Leppihalme 1997:81).

I cannot find any apparent reason for the lack strategy F, replacement by a preformed TL item. It is possible that the opportunity to use this strategy just did not present itself within the material in the corpus.

6.4 Omissions

Nearly one fifth of the PN allusions were omitted by Luhtanen when subtitling the episodes in the corpus, and one fourth of the KP allusions. It is also apparent that Luhtanen has omitted far more allusions on the verbal visual channel than on the verbal auditory channel, translating mostly diasemiotically instead of isosemiotically.

Considering that subtitles do not greatly interfere with the original content, but simply provide translations on an additional channel, it seems like a prudent choice to concentrate on the verbal auditory channel. Choosing not to include an allusion from the verbal visual channel in the subtitles does not necessarily mean that anything is lost. The viewer can usually still see the alluding name or phrase, and perhaps the translator really does not have anything to add. For allusions on the verbal visual channel, there is usually no continuity that would suffer, as would happen if some dialogue was omitted. The translator is simply choosing not to provide additional help with understanding the allusion.

Content on the verbal auditory channel is more difficult to leave untranslated. The auditory content is less accessible to viewers since they only get one try at understanding it, unless they have the technical capability of replaying the scene. Replaying scenes is probably detrimental for the viewing experience, and not likely to happen very often for the sake of understanding the dialogue. The translator also has to live up to the expectations of the viewers (Chesterman 1997:64). The long tradition of Finnish subtitling has established certain expectancy norms, and I presume that translation of dialogue is an expectation shared by most viewers.

It may also be that the bandwidth of the subtitle channel can become a severely limiting factor and prevent the translator from providing a meaningful translation. The episodes in the corpus contain some clusters of allusions on the verbal visual channel that would be challenging to translate even without the special limitations of subtitling.

6.5 Allusion clusters on the verbal visual channel

The authors of *The Simpsons* sometimes make an extra effort to include humorous content in the verbal visual channel. This content, while often highly entertaining, can be rather difficult to turn into subtitles due to the short time it is shown on the screen. The brief scenes that include such content are often referred to as ‘freeze-frame fun’ in the Episode Guides, referring to the fact that the use of the pause button often seems to be a prerequisite for enjoying the content. Figure 7 shows such a scene, with a cluster of allusions on the verbal visual channel.

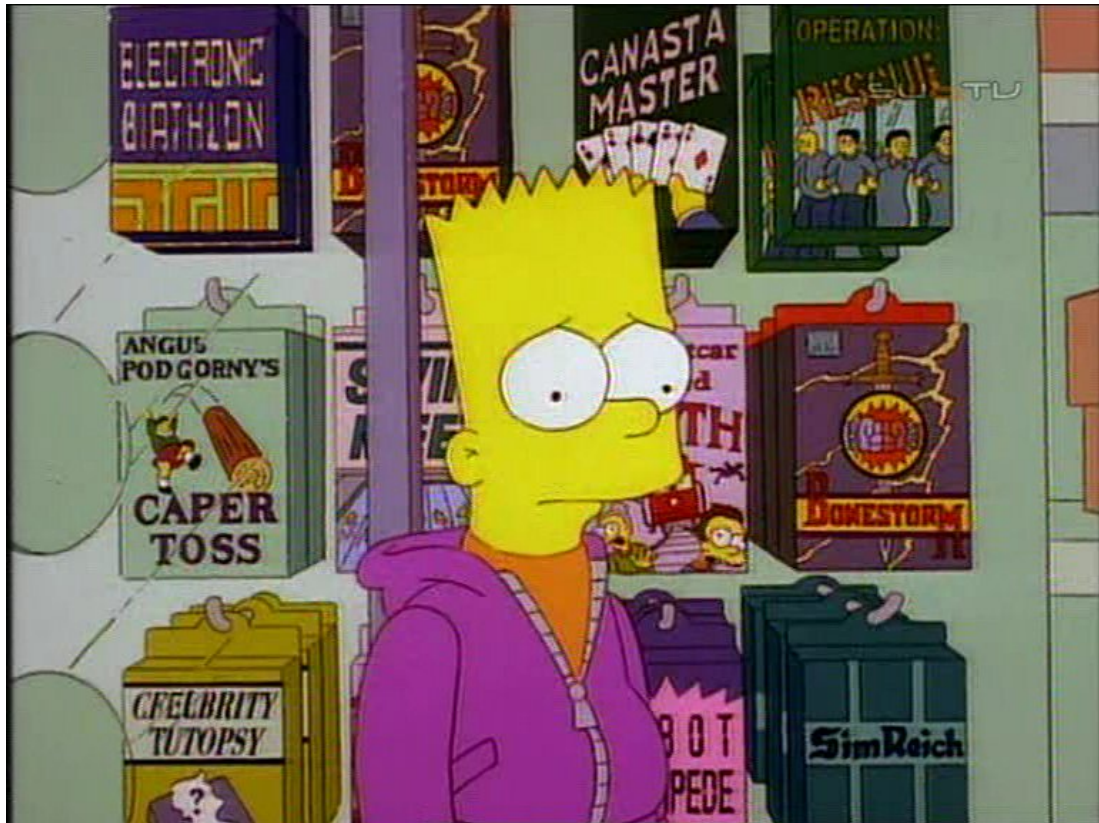


Figure 7 Allusion cluster on the verbal visual channel

The scene is only shown for a few seconds, but the authors have managed to include at least the following modified allusions onto the names of the game cartridges in the display case behind Bart:

- *A Streetcar Named Death* (*A Streetcar Named Desire* is a famous play by Tennessee Williams)
- *SimReich* (a reference to the *SimCity* video games)
- *Operation: Rescue* (a reference to the *Operation: Wolf* video game)
- *Angus Podgorny's Caper Toss* [sic] ('Angus Podgorny' was the Scotsman played by Michael Palin on the *Man turns into Scotsman* sketch in an episode of *Monty Python's Flying Circus*)
- *Save Hitler's Brain* (a reference to the movie *They Saved Hitler's Brain*)
- *Canasta Master* (a parody of the novel *The Vegas Kid* by Barney Vinson)
- *Celebrity Tutopsy* (a reference to the *Alien Autopsy* show on the FOX Network, and also the *Celebrity Autopsy* episode of the *The Critic*)

Many allusions in clusters such as this are mainstays of the show, and likely to be known to many viewers. The allusion to *A Streetcar Named Desire* is one of them; *The Simpsons* has even had an episode called *A Streetcar Named Marge*. Others are positively esoteric, especially to a Finnish viewer. Luhtanen has made the decision not to provide the viewers with any help with subtitles for these allusions.

It is difficult to imagine how the translator could provide enjoyable subtitles for these allusions, given the limited bandwidth and screen time that is available for the subtitles. Naturally the subtitles could run longer than the action on the screen, but that would make them out of sync with the translated material, to the serious detriment of the viewing experience (Vertanen 2001:134). Clustered allusions on the verbal visual channel account for a significant fraction of the omitted allusions.

6.6 Translation of episode titles

Each episode of *The Simpsons* has a title, which often contains an allusion. This was also the case with the episodes in the corpus, with modified PN allusions in the episode titles *Marge Be Not Proud*, *Homerpalooza*, *The Springfield Files*, and *Grift of the Magi*. From the source material point of view Luhtanen did not need to translate the episode titles, since Finnish viewers never see the original title. The original title does not appear even during the credits at the end of the episode, only the production code. The broadcasting network nevertheless needs to have translations of the episode titles as they are typically provided in programming guides, and sometimes announced before the program begins. Luhtanen has included the episode titles at the end of the opening sequence:



Figure 8 Subtitle showing a translation of an episode title

Since the viewers are not simultaneously presented with the original title, one could think that they might be confused by the presence of the subtitle. More so since there is other content on the verbal visual channel which is left untranslated. However, frequent viewers soon realize the meaning of the subtitle at the end of the opening sequence. The practice of providing the episode title in this manner is also used in the translation of other programs, and may be somewhat of a subtitling convention. It is conceivable that the translator could also add the original episode title in the subtitles, to allow the bicultural viewers to enjoy the untranslated allusion as well.

6.7 Non-verbal allusions affected by subtitling

The episode *The Springfield Files* (the name of which is an allusion to the popular television series *The X-Files*) has a recurring allusion that, while not exactly a verbal allusion, must nevertheless be taken into account by the translator. The scenes where the characters Mulder and Scully from *The X Files* appear have some English subtitles that display the current location and/or time. These subtitles appear one character at a time, as if being written on the screen by a typewriter. The series *The X Files* uses English subtitles with this exact function and appearance. The appearance of two subtitles at the

same time created a problem, since the Finnish subtitle can cover the English subtitle completely, and prevent the non-verbal allusion from being noticed.

I believe Luhtanen has detected this allusion, and wanted to retain it. The first time that the English subtitle is used, Luhtanen moves the Finnish subtitle to a different location on the screen, and allows the English subtitle to be displayed undisturbed. This approach consumes extra screen area, but enables the viewer to spot the allusion. Luhtanen also uses a black background on the Finnish subtitle text when the English subtitle is visible, presumably to improve legibility and to indicate the difference between the two.

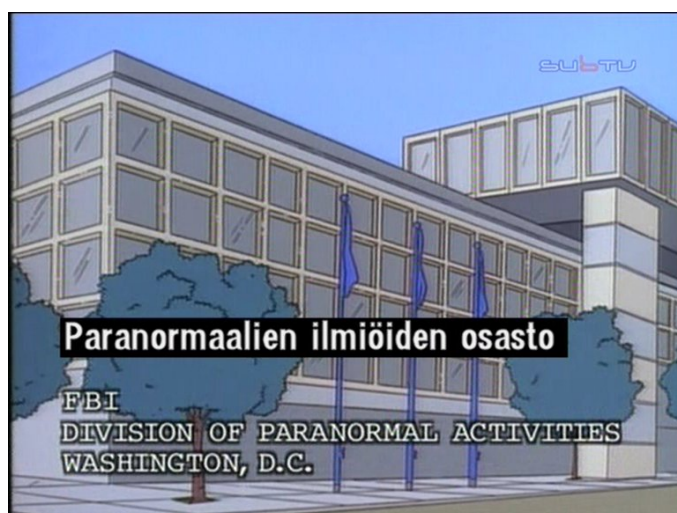


Figure 9 English and Finnish subtitles co-occurring for the first time

Figure 9 shows how the subtitles co-occur, consisting of four lines of text in two different typefaces. This is not a strategy that is maintainable for long, since the subtitles take up far too much space. Furthermore, the black box behind the text is sub-optimal (Ivarsson 1998:39). Later instances of the English subtitle do not receive this preferential treatment, and the Finnish subtitles are placed in their familiar position. When the English subtitles start to appear, they are soon obscured by the Finnish subtitle with the black background.



Figure 10 **Overlapping subtitles**

With the exception of this one type of allusion, the impact of subtitles on the non-verbal allusions was minimal. While some visual content is always covered by the subtitles, I did not detect any allusions being hidden under the subtitles. Most scenes in *The Simpsons* last longer than any one subtitle, allowing even the covered visual material to be shown briefly. I paid particular attention to the episode *Mom and Pop Art*, since it features many famous works of art. None of the featured paintings and allusive visual elements were hidden by the subtitles.

7. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The purpose of this study was to perform a quantitative analysis of Luhtanen's translation choices with regard to the translation of verbal allusions in the animated cartoon *The Simpsons*, using Leppihalme's classification of the translation strategies. My intention was to find out the significant trends in Luhtanen's choice of strategies, particularly the extent to which she omits allusions from the subtitles. I also wanted to identify effects of the severely limited target format on the translation choices.

The analysis was performed on a selection of six episodes from seasons 7 through 11. The allusions in the corpus were differentiated according to type (proper name or key phrase allusion), and according to the channel they appeared on (visual or auditory). Both the type and the channel of the allusion proved to be important in the analysis, and revealed significant differences in the translation strategies applied.

Luhtanen seems to prioritize the content on the verbal auditory channel, where she applied a non-omission translation strategy in 94% of the allusions. Of the allusions on the verbal visual channel, only 30% of the allusions found their way into the subtitles. These results highlight the practical aspects of subtitling: the translator must serve the audience by offering translations for those verbal elements that the audience has the most need to understand.

On the basis of the corpus, Luhtanen also favors keeping proper name allusions as unchanged as possible. Generally, she will only choose another strategy when the connotations of the name are likely to be obscure to the target audience, or subtitle space does not allow her to provide a translation. Luhtanen deals with key phrase allusions in a more varied way, without clearly preferring any of the available strategies.

The available subtitle space seems to be a very significant factor in determining the translator's choices. Ten printed pages worth of bandwidth per episode do not allow for long explanations that open up the allusions, and often they do not even allow a

translation at all. However, due to the fact that subtitles rarely interfere significantly with the original visual content, providing a translation each and every time does not seem to be a prerequisite for successful subtitling. Since the source text material is still there, it is possible for a culturally competent reader to detect and enjoy the allusions. Less competent readers will just have to do without; frequently, they will not notice the allusion at all.

The corpus contains some instances where Luhtanen had to make hard choices to maintain this unobtrusive state. One example of this are the allusion clusters on the verbal visual channel, where the translator may be tempted to use all of the subtitle space in an attempt to provide subtitles for everything. Luhtanen often chose not to disturb the viewer with an onslaught of rapid subtitles, and instead omitted all of the allusions on the verbal visual channel. Another example are the non-verbal visual allusions, which the translator can perhaps tiptoe around as Luhtanen has done. It appears that the translator must be on the lookout for visual allusions that are affected by the subtitles, lest they be lost.

This study is not without its margin of error. While I have taken steps to minimize the number of allusions that I have missed in the material, it is likely that some allusions have gone undetected. Some of my classifications of the translation strategies can also be contested, since all of the translations do not fit neatly into the categorization. It is also likely that some allusions have possible referents that I have missed. The interpretation of the allusions should be considered to be my reading; yours may differ.

The high quality of Luhtanen's translations was taken as a given. Although no evaluation of the quality of the translations was included in the study, such a study could be performed, for example, by comparing the viewer responses between two different translations. Parallel translations of several seasons are now available on the DVD distributions of *The Simpsons*.

I hope this study serves as a useful data point for translators and researchers who are interested in the constraints of subtitling, and their effect on a translator's ability to solve culture-bound translation problems to the viewers' satisfaction.

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