ON THE INSIDE TRACK TO LOSERVILLE, USA:

STRATEGIES USED IN TRANSLATING HUMOUR

IN TWO FINNISH VERSIONS OF *REALITY BITES*

Pro gradu thesis
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CONTENTS

Abbreviations

AM   Arja Meski; Arja Meski's translation of *Reality Bites*

AVT   audiovisual translation

SL   source language

ST   source text

TL   target language

TP   Timo Porri; Timo Porri's translation of *Reality Bites*

*TP   Timo Porri's translation of *Reality Bites* broadcast by MTV3 in January 1998

TT   target text

1.   Introduction

In its many manifestations, humour appears one of the most defining aspects of humanity. Attempts have been made to define the essence of humour from sociological and psychological as well as from linguistic perspectives. However, even if humour has been approached from several angles, it has rarely been systematically studied as a specific translation problem. Partly universal, partly culturally or linguistically bound, partly individual, humour has various levels of applicability, which often makes it a tangible problem for translators. Yet, for the purpose of maintaining intelligibility, the problem needs to be resolved in one way or another.

An everyday phenomenon, humour is increasingly part of the context of intercultural communication. A vehicle for mass entertainment, television nowadays offers a wide variety of programmes, both feature films and TV series mostly of Anglo-American origin, where humour is either a primary element or a secondary one. Translators are often faced with the task of having to translate seemingly untranslatable humour while not reducing the effect, which invariably tests their capacity for making creative solutions.

The topic of this pro gradu thesis is the problematics of translating humour in television, and my approach is descriptive. The theoretical part of the study consists of three chapters devoted to audiovisual translation, norms, and humour. In chapter 2, I shall briefly discuss the social status of audiovisual translation (2.1.) and then examine it as a special form of translation, characterising the difference between the two major forms of audiovisual translation: subtitling (2.2.1.) and dubbing (2.2.2.). In chapter 3, I shall examine the complex relationship between translation and norms, exploring Toury's (1995) ideas on translations as manifestations of norms (3.1.) Then I shall discuss how audiovisual translation could be approached from the perspective of norms, drawing on Delabastita

(1989) (3.2.), and what kind of general norms could be identified in Finnish subtitlings (3.3.). In chapter 4, I shall discuss and assess various definitions and theories of linguistic humour to see if they might be of use in detecting the variety of problems that translators come across in their work (4.1.). The topic of humour will then be approached from the viewpoint of translation: the idea of untranslatability traditionally associated with humour will be discussed in section 4.2., and the special constraints of translating humour in television in section 4.3.

In the practical part of the study, chapter 5, I shall proceed to examine what kind of strategies translators have chosen when translating different kinds of humour in television. The material for the study consists of two versions of the American feature film *Reality Bites* (1994), both with Finnish subtitles. I shall prepare the ground for an analysis of actual examples by exploring the Generation X phenomenon (5.1.), and by studying where *Reality Bites* draws its humour from (5.2.). The strategies employed by the subtitlers when translating humour will be analysed and compared with a view to establishing some of the various norms underlying their solutions (5.3.-5.5.). I shall also consult one version of the film with Swedish subtitles and one dubbed into German, wherever it appears relevant for the analysis. Finally, I shall discuss whether any generalisations could be made on the basis of the findings and whether the findings could be of any relevance to translators when it comes to actual decision-making (5.6.).

The reasons why I chose this particular topic are twofold, both academic and personal. Firstly, audiovisual translation is no longer a marginal area in translation studies but it has been studied on several occasions. Audiovisual translation has been entered into by such scholars as Delabastita and Gottlieb, to name but a few, and there have been several pro gradu theses on the subject in Finnish universities and elsewhere. However,

much of the work done in this field has either tended to repeat the technical peculiarities of audiovisual translation, or to assess individual subtitlings with varying success. Still, what has often been missing is combining the theoretical and practical aspects of audiovisual translation in a way that could contribute to our understanding of this field. It seemed to me that Toury's ideas on norms were a fruitful framework for studying how audiovisual translations function as parts of the target culture.

In addition to having an academic interest in audiovisual translation, I chose this as the topic for my pro gradu thesis, because I have been working as a freelance TV translator since July 1996. Audiovisual translators often feel as if they were working in a vacuum, because even if audiovisual translation is one of the most visible and far-reaching forms of translation, they very seldom get any feedback on their work. The problem of not having enough feedback is acutely felt by my colleagues and myself. I hope this study could provide us with some kind of insight into the complexities of translating humour in television as well as advice on practical decision-making in our work.

2. On audiovisual translation

2.1. Responses to audiovisual translation

Audiovisual translation (AVT), a term used here to cover subtitling and dubbing as well as the wide variety of translational activity they entail, is undoubtedly one of the commonest forms of translation encountered in everyday life in contemporary societies. One indication of the enormous body of work done in this field is the fact that of the 8,108 hours of programming broadcast by the Finnish broadcasting company YLE in 1996, 48% consisted of foreign-language programmes (including re-runs) (Kontula, Larma and Petäinen 1997:52-53).

The visibility of AVT is probably one reason why AVT also lends itself to easy and occasionally sharp criticism among viewers. According to Shochat and Stam (1985:46), "subtitles offer the pretext for a linguistic game of 'spot the error'" for those viewers who have a command of both the source language and the target language. There are, indeed, whole Internet sites devoted to listing subtitling gaffes; in July 1998 there were at least three of them in Finland (*Turun Sanomat* 5.7.1998). In addition, the low prestige generally attached to manifestations of popular culture as well as the fact that in the case of subtitling, the original soundtrack is present as a sort of touchstone, often contribute to the perception that AVT is "a necessary evil" (Zabalbeascoa 1996:235), easily dismissed and soon forgotten.

It is interesting that in a sense AVT has been a channel for venting ideas on linguistic purism for quite a long while. Paunonen (1996:549) gives a telling example of this: an angry viewer had written to the editor of *Uusi Suomi* in 1945 complaining about the quality of a subtitling in a film. The viewer had demanded that distributors should take

action to improve the quality of translations, or else censorship should intervene.

What is rarely appreciated is that AVT is a form of translation that is of vital, and growing, importance, and that it imposes a variety of constraints, both technical and contextual, on the translator. In the following section, I shall discuss what both subtitling and dubbing involve in actual practice.

2.2. Characteristics of audiovisual translation

2.2.1. Subtitling

Subtitling is defined in Shuttleworth and Cowie (1997:161) as "the process of providing synchronized captions for film and television dialogue". It is the dominant form of AVT in Finland and other Nordic countries, The Netherlands, Belgium, Portugal, Greece, and Israel (Gottlieb 1992:169). I will not enter into the particulars of what motivates the choice of a particular AVT technique in the first place (see Kilborn 1989 and O'Connell 1998), but it is at least partly due to the fact that subtitling is about fifteen times less expensive than dubbing (Luyken et al. 1991:105; see also Dries 1995:28-30).

Gottlieb (1992:162) defines subtitling as a (1) written, (2) additive (i.e. new verbal material is added in the form of subtitles), (3) immediate, (4) synchronous, and (5) polymedial (i.e. at least two channels are employed) form of translation. He follows Jakobson (1966) in distinguishing between different forms of subtitling: from a linguistic viewpoint, there is *intralingual* (within one language) and *interlingual* (between two languages) translation; whereas technically speaking subtitles can be either *open* (not optional, i.e. shown with the film) and *closed* (optional, i.e. shown via teletext) (1992:163). Television subtitling is prototypically interlingual and open, which means that SL linguistic material (speech,

other linguistic material) is transformed into TL subtitles, and that subtitles are broadcast simultaneously with the programme. According to Shochat and Stam (1985:41), "the interlingual film experience is perceptually bifurcated: we hear another's language while we read our own".

What distinguishes AVT from other forms of translation is that it involves both technical and contextual constraints. Using a bit different terminology, Gottlieb (1992:164) discusses what he calls the *formal (quantitative)* and *textual (qualitative)* constraints on television subtitling. *Textual* constraints are those imposed on the subtitles by the visual context of the film, whereas *formal* constraints are the *space factor* (a maximum of two lines are allowed, with some 35 characters each) and the *time factor*. Particularly the time factor plays a pivotal role in the decisions that translators make. Traditionally 5-6 seconds have been considered to be sufficient for reading a two-liner (Hanson 1974); however, Gottlieb (1992:164-165) brings up interesting evidence from more recent studies (d'Ydewalle et al. 1985), according to which some viewers have been able to read subtitles considerably faster. Also Delabastita (1989:200) discusses the problematics of film subtitling. One of the chief aspects to be considered is the amount of reduction it presupposes. This is due to the fact that the number of visual verbal signs on the screen is restricted, on one hand, by the space available and, on the other hand, by the time available. The constraints of space and time lead into the problem of selection as the translator has to analyse the source text material carefully to decide what should be transferred to the target text and what can or must be left out. Kovačič (1994:250) has applied relevance theory to subtitling, arguing that "decisions about deletions are context-dependent". Zigzagging in the crossfire of all these demands, a subtitler aims at producing a (subjectively) maximal result.

Actually, Delabastita (1989) addresses the debate of whether film translation, or

rather subtitling, can be regarded as translation proper. Technical constraints require such an amount of reduction that many consider "adaptation" to be a more suitable term. Delabastita admits that film translation may not be translation in the narrow sense of the word (i.e. "a maximally faithful linguistic recoding process" (1989:213)), but, then, neither would much of the other translation work done nowadays.

It is becoming increasingly common especially in larger subtitling companies to use *pivot translations*, i.e. translations made on the basis of an already existing translation, mostly for reasons of cost-effectiveness. Gottlieb (1994a:117-118) is very critical of this practice, arguing that it may mean that pivot language features and standards that are unacceptable in the TL system, or even outright errors, are transferred to the TL version. Whether this is the case or not, identifying the source of the translation is important when analysing a given subtitling, as Delabastita (1989:207) suggests.

To give an example of how subtitling has been studied, I shall return to the practical part of Gottlieb (1992), which deals with subtitling quality assessment. On the basis of his experience as a professional translator, Gottlieb has devised a set of strategies used by translators (1992:166). They are as follows:

(1) Expansion
(2) Paraphrase
(3) Transfer
(4) Imitation
(5) Transcription
(6) Dislocation
(7) Condensation
(8) Decimation
(9) Deletion
(10) Resignation

Of these, *condensation* is usually seen as the essence of subtitling. According to Gottlieb (1992:166-167), with strategies 1-7 we get a more or less adequate rendering of the source

text material into the target language, whereas strategies 8-10 involve some degree of semantic and stylistic loss. Employing these strategies, he has analysed a Danish subtitling of the film *Young Frankenstein* and found that strategies 8-10 have been used in the translation of only 16% of the verbal segments of the original. He argues that this proves that quantitative reduction does not necessarily involve significant semantic reduction.

The problem with Gottlieb's strategies is that they give the impression of being clear-cut, scientifically verifiable categories. Under scrutiny, however, they appear overlapping and subjective. For example, the line between *condensation* (described by Gottlieb as "condensed expression, concise rendering") and *decimation* ("abridged expression, reduced content") (1992:166) seems rather difficult to draw, and the examples from the dialogue of *Young Frankenstein* fail to shed any light on the issue. What is more, some of the strategies are awkward (such as *imitation*, which is used with proper nouns and international greetings), or marginal (such as *transcription* of non-standard elements). Therefore, it seems to me that Gottlieb is giving *a posteriori* labels to justify a translator's behaviour without defining the concepts he employs, such as the verbal segment he uses as the basic unit in his analysis. I also have a feeling that there is a built-in prescriptive quality in Gottlieb's approach. After more systematising, however, his strategies might prove an interesting starting-point for assessing the transfer and loss of information in subtitling.

2.2.2. Dubbing

Dubbing, which is sometimes called (post-)synchronisation, is the prevailing form of AVT especially among larger language communities. France, Germany, Italy, and Spain, to name but a few, are predominantly dubbing countries.

To put it simply, dubbing consists of replacing SL verbal elements on the

soundtrack with TL ones, a multiplex process in which "the foreign dialogue is adjusted to the mouth movements of the actor in the film" (Dries 1995:9). According to Shochat and Stam (1985:49), the viewers then "repress all awareness of the possibility of an incorrect translation" and in fact, they "forget that there has been any translation at all". Unlike subtitling, dubbing is essentially teamwork, involving not only a dubbing translator but also a number of actors and technical personnel, which is why dubbing costs are considerably higher than those of subtitling (see Dries 1995:14-16).

One of the major constraints of dubbing is that of synchrony, or "the agreement between the articulatory movements seen and the sounds heard" (Barbe 1996:259). Delabastita (1989:203) says that while the audience to some extent expect movements and sounds to match, the constraint of synchrony varies according to the camera angle and is greater in close-ups. The demand of synchrony also varies across cultures: Barbe (1996:257) argues, referring to German, that it is "generally subordinated to idiomaticity and natural language fluency", which implies that it is largely norm-governed (Delabastita 1989:203).

3. Translation and norms

3.1. Translation as a norm-governed activity

The idea of translation being a norm-governed activity was first explored at length by Gideon Toury in his innovative book *In Search of a Theory of Translation* in 1980. Toury further refined and updated the model in *Descriptive Translation Studies and Beyond* published in 1995.

Toury belongs to a group of translation scholars often referred to as the Manipulation School that began to gather momentum in the mid-1970's. Influenced both by Itamar Even-Zohar's polysystem theory and James Holmes's ideas of translation studies, Toury envisaged a descriptive and fundamentally target-oriented approach to translation. One of the central as well as initially the most controversial claims made by Toury was that the position and function of what is considered to be a translation in a given culture are determined by the target culture (1995:26) and that translations are first and foremost "facts of target cultures" (1995:29). Translational activity is governed by a set of norms that have cultural relevance in the target culture framework in which the translator operates. Establishing these underlying norms, the strategic choices made and strategies adopted by the translator, is the ultimate goal of descriptive translation studies (1995:53).

According to Toury, norms occupy the middle-ground in a scale of sociocultural constraints ranging, in terms of their force, from more or less absolute rules to mere idiosyncrasies (1995:54). The borderline between these constraints is by no means absolute, quite the reverse. They can gain or lose their validity across time along with "changes of *status* within a society" (1995:54; emphasis original). Norms could be described as the society's way of regulating behaviour by saying what is accepted or tolerated, on the one

hand, and what is disapproved of or outright forbidden, on the other (1995:55). Learning this code of conduct is part of an individual's socialisation process (1995:55). Toury points out that possible deviations do not pre-empt the existence of norms; rather, deviations occur at the risk of *sanctions* on the part of society. He also draws a distinction between actual norms as such and normative formulations; while the latter may reflect actual norms in society, they may also be motivated by other reasons, such as the desire to create new norms (1995:55).

According to Toury, translation is a text that occupies a position or fills a slot in the target culture, as well as a target-language representation of a pre-existing source-language text belonging to another culture (1995:56). He considers the choice between these two sources of constraints to be an **initial norm**. Basically it is the question of a translator deciding to conform to the norms of the source text and, by implication, of the source culture, or to those of the target culture. The two poles between which a translator then operates are, therefore, the translation's **adequacy**, or "adherence to source norms" (1995:56), and its **acceptability**, or adherence to target norms. In practice, the choices made by a translator involve some sort of compromise or negotiation between the two extremes.

Toury divides translational norms into two basic categories. I have listed them in the table below:

PRELIMINARY NORMS	OPERATIONAL NORMS
Translation policy: choice of text-types or individual texts to be translated	**Matricial norms**: the existence and location of TL material, segmentation
Directness of translation: use of mediating languages	**Textual-linguistic norms**: the selection of linguistic material for TT formulation

I will not go into **preliminary norms** here, since they are outside the scope of my study; instead, I will concentrate on **operational norms**, i.e. those norms governing the way "translations come into being" (1995:60), involving both source and target norms, though to a varying degree. Toury also touches upon the concept of equivalence, stating that the type and extent of equivalence found in translations is also norm-governed (1995:61).

When discussing norms, Toury mentions two of their qualities that bear on every practising translator as well as anyone wishing to study them methodically: the **socio-cultural specificity** of norms and their **instability** (1995:62). As regards their specificity, norms do not necessarily apply across cultures nor even across the various sub-cultures of a society, whereas their fundamental instability means that they also change across time. Such changes may be prompted by translators themselves, translation criticism, translation ideology, and translation schools (1995:62). The fact that norms change their status across time means that at a given time there may exist three different sets of norms in a society: *mainstream* norms, traces of *previous* norms, and rudiments of *new* ones (1995:62-63). One should establish the varying status and force of norms so as to be able to draw conclusions and make generalisations.

There are two different sources for studying translational norms: textual sources, i.e. actual translations showing the effects of norms, and extratextual sources, i.e. normative and critical formulations and comments from those involved, though they can sometimes be biased (1995:65). By studying these sources a scholar could find out whether particular norms are, in terms of their force, **basic** or rule-like norms, **secondary** norms or tendencies, or **tolerated behaviour** (1995:67). This is, indeed, what I set out to do in this study: I will look at extratextual sources in section 3.3. and textual sources, i.e. two Finnish versions of the film *Reality Bites*, later on in chapter 5.

3.2.   Audiovisual translation and norms

Delabastita (1989) approaches translation from the perspective of audiovisual communication. According to him, this branch of research has been practically overlooked in scholarly circles despite the increasing quantitative importance of translation in mass media (1989:193). He argues that this is due to the fact that the study of popular culture phenomena has never been high on the list of priorities among scholars. Delabastita does admit that the past few years have seen a proliferation in the number of individual field studies but at the same time he deplores the scarcity of a holistic outlook on the subject.

What Delabastita calls for is the recognition of the special qualities of film and TV translation and their establishment as a fully-fledged scientific discipline. Instead of seeking only partial solutions, of probing merely into one aspect of film and TV translation, scholars should adopt a more comprehensive view (1989:194). Translation in mass media should be seen in a much wider context of intercultural dynamics. For this purpose, Delabastita attempts to provide scholars and translators with a theoretical outline covering the entire problem field.

As a starting point for his discussion Delabastita employs the tripartite division of "translational relationships" (1989:194) into *competence*, *norms*, and *performance* suggested by Gideon Toury (1980). He agrees with Toury in that translation studies should be descriptive instead of prescriptive. The term *competence* covers all the possible modes of translation theoretically available for a translator, whereas the term *performance* comprises the actual patterns of translational behaviour within a given culture. Between the theoretical *competence* and the practical *performance* it is, therefore, possible to establish a set of culture-bound *norms* that govern the choices made by a translator.

To discuss *competence*, Delabastita defines "film" (which he uses as a generic term to include feature films, documentaries, etc.) from a semiotic standpoint as a complex sign which conveys a multi-code meaning through the visual and acoustic channels. It differs from a theatrical performance in its "material reproducibility" (1989:197), which, indeed, makes it a form of mass-communication and which imposes a number of technical constraints within which a film translator must operate. Delabastita proposes "a film translation scheme" (1989:199) to cover all the options that exist. A film transmits both verbal and non-verbal signs, and Delabastita points out, rightly, that these do not necessarily coincide with the distinction "acoustic channel/visual channel". As an example of verbal signs transmitted through the visual channel he mentions the credit titles and all kinds of written material shown in the course of the film, whereas music and sound effects are non-verbal signs transmitted through the acoustic channel. The procedures a translator can employ when rendering a SL sign into the TL are the following: *repetitio* (formal reproduction), *adiectio* (addition), *detractio* (reduction), *transmutatio* (change of order), *substitutio* (replacement), and *deletio* (omission) (1989:199-200). Delabastita regards subtitling as an example of *adiectio* in that source film signs are repeated with the addition of new visual

verbal signs, whereas in dubbing SL acoustic verbal signs are replaced (*substitutio*) by TL acoustic verbal signs. As Delabastita himself admits, the scheme is more of a provisional pattern than a competence model as such, since it does not specify what kind of linguistic or stylistic relationships there are between the source film sign and the target film sign (1989:201). Therefore, he stresses that the scheme needs to be complemented with findings from translational reality.

While the concept of *competence* includes the modes available in theory, in a given target culture there are *norms* directing the choices a translator makes. Delabastita points out that "the effect of norms can be deduced from particular regularities of behaviour" but they can also be detected in metatexts, i.e. "in prescriptive statements but also in scholarly discussions of the subject" (1989:205). One recent example of such a metatext is Karamitroglou (1998), who has suggested a trans-European set of subtitling standards. Delabastita then formulates two sets of questions a scholar should pose when examining a particular translation in order to detect a norm, or rather "a complex interactive group of norms" (1989:206). The first set is aimed at defining the translation type of an individual film (e.g. what is the technique used? does the syntax sound foreign?) (1989:207). In the case of subtitling, one should study e.g. what is the presentation time of the subtitles and what kind of source text information has been omitted. The second set of questions can be applied to a large corpus of translations in order to establish the whole cultural framing (e.g. what kind of relations do the source and the target cultures have?) because, according to Delabastita, studying film translation "is necessarily part of the larger project of the analysis of the 'polysystem' of culture as a whole" (1989:210-211). Guided by questions such as those above, a scholar could eventually find out what lies behind a translator's choices. However, this can only be deduced by systematically studying actual translational *performance*,

i.e. a large number of individual translations.

Delabastita provides translators and scholars alike with a very useful theoretical framework which inserts film translations into a larger context and shows that they do not operate in a cultural vacuum. By necessity somewhat abstract, it aims at guiding future research rather than giving predigested information.

3.3.   Possible general norms in Finnish subtitlings

At this point it is worth discussing the possible general norms governing the choices made by Finnish subtitlers. What follows is by no means intended to be an exhaustive list of all the possible norms at play; rather, it is based on statements made by both scholars and subtitlers themselves, discussions with colleagues, in-house stylebooks used by television channels and subtitling companies as well as my personal experience and observations as a subtitler. In other words, coming from a variety of sources, it is a heterogeneous collection of both actual and desired translational behaviour. (For more information on Finnish subtitlers' work, see e.g. Häkkinen and Itkonen 1999, Immonen 1987, Pere 1987, Rinne 1994, Uusitorppa 1997, Valtanen 1998, Virtanen 1992 and Vähäkylä 1996.)

The possible general norms in Finnish subtitlings could be loosely divided into two categories: **formal** and **linguistic-textual** norms. The division is my own, and even if both could be called operational norms, using Toury's terminology, they do not correspond to his division of operational norms into matricial and textual-linguistic norms. I have a feeling that my definition of linguistic-textual norms here is much looser than that of textual-linguistic norms used by Toury.

Formal norms relate to the technical as well as visual aspects of subtitling, which

is why they are also more easily observable than linguistic-textual norms. Those mentioned in practically every study in the field are *space* and *time*, which are often considered to be the technical constraints specific of subtitling. This fact often leads to a misunderstanding as to their normativity, because it is believed that they are absolutes rather than variables and, therefore, norm-governed. The situation, however, is not so simple but needs to be examined at some length.

Space refers to the number of characters and rows used in subtitling. While the maximum number of characters is more or less constant (some 35-37 characters), there are other specifics relating to characters that are rarely mentioned. Firstly, the colour of the characters used is white, yet with teletext there are also other options available. Secondly, ordinary script is used with the exception of such instances as untranslated foreign words, voice-over narration, and/or songs, where cursive script is often used; however, this option is not available in teletext. In addition, subtitling companies and individual subtitlers seem to have a wide variety of conventions as regards the use of cursive script. Capital letters are normally reserved for titles as well as captions, i.e. written information in the picture.

Also the number of rows used is bound by certain conventions. In cinemas, where subtitlings are often bilingual, the upper row is reserved for the Finnish version and the lower one for the Swedish version. In television, the standard seems to be 1-2 rows for *open* subtitles, which is often justified by the desire to cover as little of the picture as possible. However, with *closed* subtitles shown via teletext even 3 rows are allowed, occasionally even more. As to the location of the rows, they are usually placed at the lower half of the picture. This is an absolute rule in Subtitling International, whereas it appears that elsewhere the rows can also be lifted lest they cover the credits, for example. When subtitling for the deaf and hard of hearing, the rule of thumb is to place the subtitles so that they do not cover the

mouth of the person speaking. The texts are usually left justified except in cinemas, where the convention is to centre them. Captions are normally centred as well.

Time refers to the presentation time of the subtitles, which varies considerably among the various practitioners in the field. The presentation time needs to be differentiated from the reading time, though the two concepts are often confused. The time it actually takes an average person to read a one- or a two-liner has been studied on many occasions, but the results have been rather ambiguous (see e.g. Gottlieb 1992) and any generalisations are hard to make. In YLE and MTV3, for example, roughly 2 seconds is considered to be the minimum for a one-liner and 4 seconds for a two-liner, whereas in Subtitling International the presentation times are considerably longer, the motivation being that the viewers then have time not only to read the subtitle but also to look at the picture. Longer presentation times are also recommended in subtitlings for the deaf and hard of hearing: about 4 seconds for a one-liner, 7 seconds for a two-liner, and 8-9 seconds for a three-liner. It could be said, therefore, that presentation time is but an abstraction and, as such, norm-governed.

Other **formal** norms affecting the Finnish subtitlers' work refer to *layout* (use of hyphenation; punctuation; how dialogue subtitles are constructed; whether more than two speakers are "allowed" in one subtitle), and *timecueing* (the number of frames between subtitles; whether subtitles are "allowed" to hang over cuts or scene changes). In both of these, there are considerable differences between companies.

Linguistic-textual norms are a very diverse group of conventions that are very difficult to summarise systematically. Subtitling companies have their own practices, which often show a great deal of variation and which each subtitler to some extent adopts. Companies may have their own in-house stylebooks that contain advice, recommendations,

and sometimes even outright rules for subtitlers; and/or in-house practices may be gradually assumed and exchanged through feedback from employers, colleagues, and viewers.

One of the ideals that one often comes across when reading comments made both by viewers and translators themselves is a certain kind of *invisibility* of subtitlings. As Pia Valtanen wrote in her interview of the veteran subtitler Esko Vertanen (*Helsingin Sanomat* 12.6.1998, translated by SJ):

> "There exists a paradox in Vertanen's work:
> the more invisible a Finnish translation is, the better it is."

The same idea was expressed by Eivor Gummerus from FST, the Swedish-language unit of YLE, when she said that a subtitling is good when it does not disturb the eye. The manual used in Subtitling International also advocates the invisibility of subtitles, saying that "[t]hey should ideally blend in with the film in such a way that the viewer doesn't notice them and they must never distract the viewer from the story" (3).

Another aspect of *invisibility* is *readability*, which can, of course, mean different things in different contexts. As regards subtitling, it basically means avoiding such linguistic elements that require extra processing on the part of the viewer, because of the transitory quality of subtitles. Kaarina Suvanto said in a recent interview in *Katso* (Häkkinen and Itkonen 1999, translated by SJ):

> "A subtitling should be easy to read and concise,
> so that the viewer would have time to concentrate on the picture."

Readability is often used as an argument for avoiding slang and dialects. Eija Pokkinen said in an interview (*Helsingin Sanomat* 14.3.1987, translated by SJ):

> "I would like to use dialects in translations,
> but they are considered to be difficult to read."

The situation may have changed over the years, but it is still true that dialectal words and expressions are rarely seen in subtitles. The subtitling guide used by YLE says that "translations should be flawless and clear standard language" (Järvinen 1992:20, as cited in Rainò 1997:615, translated by SJ). However, easy readability is not the only factor behind the tendency of avoiding dialects. A good example of this is the controversy caused by the translation of the Irish TV series *Family* broadcast by YLE in early 1996; the subtitler had relied quite heavily on dialectal expressions, which was criticised even in the press. It may be that the invisibility traditionally associated with subtitlings was considered violated in this case and the translation was felt to be unauthentic because of the strongly regional as opposed to social quality of dialects in Finland. The illusion of the invisibility of subtitles was, in a way, broken when the subtitling did not seem to fit the reality of a Dublin working class family. A similar kind of discussion was raised by the subtitling of the German series *Heimat* broadcast by YLE in 1986 (Rainò 1997:615).

One **linguistic-textual** expectation among viewers appears to be that the subtitling should not deviate too much from the SL version. This ideal of *faithfulness to the source text* would seem particularly difficult to achieve in subtitling, where the medium imposes its own constraints on the outcome. Still, the fact that subtitling is practically the only form of translation where the SL version and the TL version are simultaneously present, often leads into partisan discussions on the liberties a translator is allowed to take. These discussions tend to be rather atomistic, concentrating on individual words or expressions that are deemed to have been translated inadequately. Underlying these discussions there is probably the notion of equivalence in the strict sense of the word, and the long-time arguments over whether subtitling is, indeed, translation proper.

In addition to the somewhat vague **linguistic-textual** norms discussed above, some

more specific tendencies may apply at the level of individual subtitlers or subtitling companies. One of these regards the use of pragmatic (local) equivalents, or cultural adaptations. The manual used in Subtitling International is very explicit about this: "Do not change the name of products or companies into local equivalents. Use the original name [--], or use a descriptive phrase [--]" (30). Also, there are differing views on whether e.g. song lyrics and captions, i.e. visual linguistic information, should be translated.

4.   What is humour?

4.1.   Definitions and theories of humour

However commonplace it is in everyday life, humour seems to be rather elusive and unpindownable as a theoretical concept. However, this has not prevented scholars of various disciplines, ranging from psychology to sociology to pedagogy to linguistics, from probing into the topic of humour, which has, more often than not, resulted in "epistemological hairsplitting" (Attardo 1994:1). The problems involved in defining humour are such that several scholars have doubted that an all-embracing definition of humour could be formulated (see Attardo 1994:3).

One of the difficulties in defining humour derives from the fact that the terminology used to describe it is not explicit. Some scholars, such as Schmidt-Hidding (1963, see Attardo 1994:6-7), have attempted to clarify the issue by proposing semantic maps of humour but undoubtedly various others, significantly different, could be formulated.

The definition of what humour is ultimately depends on the purpose for which it is used. As Attardo (1994:4) points out, in the field of literary criticism, for example, there is a need for a fine-grained categorisation, whereas linguists have often been happy with broader definitions, arguing that whatever evokes laughter or is felt to be funny is humour, i.e. that humour can be deduced from its effect. However, laughter as such is not necessarily a condition for humour. Bearing this in mind, Attardo (1994:13) considers Kerbrat-Orecchioni's (1981) pragmatic definition of humour as a text whose *perlocutionary*, i.e. intended, effect is laughter, to be a more fruitful approach. In other words, humour is whatever is intended to be funny, even if it might not always be perceived or interpreted as such. This definition does have its problems, since measuring intention is hardly easy; yet

it is useful because it accounts for humour as a fundamentally social phenomenon as well as one whose manifestations can vary greatly in different cultures. Therefore, for the purposes of this study, I have chosen to use "humour" as a generic term to cover any phenomena with humour-inducing potential.

Despite the difficulties discussed above, the topic of humour has been approached by several linguists. At this point it is useful to give an overview of the research done in the field to see if that would help us to understand the scope of the problematics of humour. The following discussion is largely based on Attardo 1994. In his book, Attardo sheds light on the various linguistic theories of humour that have been proposed, dividing them into four categories: **structuralist**, **semiotic**, **sociolinguistic**, and **script-based** theories. Even if these theories have different standpoints, they seem to cover a great deal of common ground.

The most prominent **structuralist** theories of humour are based on Greimas's (1966, 1970, 1972) rather complex notion of isotopy. Isotopies, seen as the semantic components of a text, are basically polysemous and, therefore, ambiguous. To determine the sense of a text, a process of disambiguation takes place (Attardo 1994:94). Puns, in particular, have been studied within the structuralist framework (Attardo 1994:108); Duchàcek (1970) presented a detailed taxonomy of puns (Attardo 1994:113-114).

The inspiration for **semiotic** theories comes from Koestler's (1964) cognitive bisociation model. Bisociation is defined by Koestler as "the perceiving of a situation or idea [--] in two self-consistent but habitually incompatible frames of reference" (1964:35, as cited in Attardo 1994:175), and it has been quite influential in the field of literary criticism. One of the scholars with a semiotic approach to humour research is Manetti (1976), whose notion of a "relational grid" (Attardo 1994:177) defines the kind of contrasts

between isotopies that are regarded as humorous within a given culture; however, he does not provide any actual lists of such oppositions. Another scholar within the semiotic school is Eco (1986), who wants to include "pragmatic competence such as conversational implicatures and intertextuality" (Attardo 1994:180) into humour research. Both Manetti and Eco have applied Grice's Cooperative Principle (see below) to humour research (Attardo 1994:272).

Sociolinguistic theories of humour apply conversation analysis to humour research. Jokes are usually divided into canned and conversational (or situational) jokes (see e.g. Fry 1963), even if, as Attardo points out (1994:296ff), the boundary between them is not a clear-cut one. Sherzer (1978) and Sacks (1972) have studied conversational puns (Attardo 1994:312ff), and Tannen (1984) has probed into the study of conversational humour at length (Attardo 1994:316ff).

Script-based theories of humour originated within the field of generative grammar (Attardo 1994:195). The most prominent among these is the Semantic Script Theory of Humor proposed by Raskin (1985). The main hypothesis of the Semantic Script Theory of Humor is that "a text can be characterized as a single-joke-carrying text if both of the (following) conditions [--] are satisfied[:] i) The text is compatible, fully or in part, with two different scripts [and] ii) The two scripts with which the text is compatible are opposite [--]" (Raskin 1985:99). A script is defined as "a large chunk of semantic information surrounding the word or evoked by it" (Raskin 1985:81), i.e. all the information, both intralinguistic and extralinguistic, or encyclopedic, included in a lexical unit (Attardo 1994:201). Scripts are linked with other scripts, forming "semantic networks" (Attardo 1994:201). Raskin uses the following joke to illustrate his point (1985:100):

"Is the doctor at home?" the patient asked in his bronchial whisper.

"No," the doctor's young and pretty wife whispered in reply. "Come right in."

According to Raskin, the joke above is (at least partly) compatible with the scripts DOCTOR and LOVER (1985:85) and the opposition between the two scripts could be verbalised in the following way: "The patient comes to the doctor's house to see the doctor vs. The patient comes to the doctor's house not to see the doctor" (1985:110).

With an interest in pragmatics, Raskin also discusses what he calls the non-*bona-fide* mode of communication. According to him, non-*bona-fide* (i.e. humorous) communication differs from *bona-fide* (i.e. "earnest, serious, information-conveying") (Raskin 1985:100) communication in the way it violates one or more of the four conversational maxims of Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principle. These maxims, defining what *bona-fide* communication is based on, are those of quality, relation, manner, and quantity, relating to "the speaker's committment (*sic*) to truth, relevance, clarity, and to providing the right quantity of information at any given time" (Attardo 1994:274). Raskin points out that the violation of these maxims can be either intentional or unintentional on the part of the speaker; in the former case, (s)he is aware, and in the latter case unaware, of the semantic ambiguity (s)he has created (Raskin 1985:100). Therefore, even if in the latter case the speaker is, in fact, earnest and serious, the hearer will interpret the utterance as a non-*bona-fide* one (that is, if (s)he notices the ambiguity).

As Attardo points out, the Semantic Script Theory of Humor is basically a tool for analysing jokes. Attardo and Raskin (1991) have proposed a revised version called the General Theory of Verbal Humor that could, in principle at least, be applied in the analysis of other humorous genres as well (see Attardo 1994:222-227 for more information). Although Attardo and Raskin's General Theory of Verbal Humor is not fully developed, it appears a promising attempt to approach the topic of humour from a global perspective

and to account for a wider variety of humorous texts than mere jokes (Attardo 1994:229).

With the exception of sociolinguistic theories that are more interested in studying humour in context than in defining what humour consists of, the theories presented above seem to coincide in arguing that all linguistic humour involves some sort of ambiguity or incongruity. However, it seems to me that, fundamentally, humour is a social phenomenon. The application of Grice's Cooperative Principle to humour research and the idea of linguistic humour belonging to the non-*bona-fide* mode of communication appear very interesting approaches. Still, I doubt whether purely linguistic theories of humour can be applied to humour in television, where it comes in a visual package. It is necessary to look at humour as part of entertainment, and I will do that at the beginning of section 4.3.

4.2. Humour and translation

The discussion of the relationship between humour and translation is perhaps best started by addressing a debate that has dominated much of humour research: that of the untranslatability of certain kinds of linguistic humour. Traditionally, linguistic humour has been assigned to two groups on the basis of its translatability. Already Cicero distinguished between verbal humour (*facetiae dicto*) (i.e. "involving the phonemic/graphemic representation of the humorous element") that is untranslatable, and referential humour (*facetiae re*) (Attardo 1994:27) that is translatable, a division corresponding to that used by several modern scholars.

As useful as the categorisation above may have proved once, it ultimately relies on the somewhat outdated notion of strict formal equivalence. Modern translation studies have concentrated more on functional considerations and the equivalence of effect. Neubert and Shreve (1992:144) point out that "equivalence is not really a relationship between textual

surfaces; it is a relationship of textual *effect* - of communicative value" (emphasis added), whereas Laurian (1992) suggests that while verbal humour may not be translatable within strict formal equivalence, it can, depending on the capacity of a translator, be translated functionally. According to her, the functional approach to humour translation could be considered also when it comes to referential humour because much of referential humour draws from culture-bound elements that may not have the desired effect in the TL audience. Also Catford (1965:94ff), while not referring to humour translation in particular, distinguished between linguistic and cultural untranslatability.

In translation studies, emphasis has gradually shifted towards cultural issues, which has had profound implications for translating humour as well. Nedergaard-Larsen (1993:211), among other scholars, has drawn a table of the variety of culture-bound problems translators may encounter in their work. While this also applies to humour, the whole issue of translating humour is rather more complex, because a translator not only has to judge whether the TL reader understands the humour in a given text but also to know or guess whether the humour functions as humour in the target culture. Humour is, therefore, both a social phenomenon and a cultural one.

Wordplay, combining "formal similarity" and "semantic dissimilarity" (Delabastita 1993, as cited in De Geest 1996), is a good example of humour being culture-specific. It is culturally bound in that culture defines what kind of wordplay is appropriate and that recognising and appreciating it requires background knowledge (Leppihalme 1996b). When translating wordplay from the SL to the TL, a translator has basically three options available: wordplay, some other rhetorical device or no wordplay (Leppihalme 1996b). The choice between the options at hand is not simple. Quite the contrary, it includes both textual and extratextual concerns. SL wordplay may contain, for example, elements that are

unacceptable, or even taboo, according to TL norms and that may have to be played down for TL purposes. One could say that the translator necessarily rewrites humour for the TL audience following, at least to some extent, the norms accepted in the target culture.

One might ask if translating humour is fundamentally different from any other form of translation; after all, it is often agreed that successful translation involves recreating in the TL text those features of the SL text that are relevant for the text to function for a certain purpose (see Kussmaul 1995:90). With a humorous text, the purpose is, for all practical purposes, always the same: to elicit laughter. In a way the translator has less latitude with a humorous text, in that the translation should be able to function for the TL audience in a maximally similar way as the original text did for the SL audience, even if this were achieved by substantially altering it. Balancing between SL restrictions and TL demands, the translator is engaged in what could be compared to an exercise in tightrope walking, in that the immediacy of effect can easily be lost.

4.3.   Translating humour in television

In this section, I shall study translating humour in a specific medium: television. While it could be argued that much of humour in everyday life is spontaneous and unintentional, in entertainment humour results rather from conscious intellectual endeavour, even if, at times, it comes in the guise of spontaneity. Humour as entertainment in general and humour in television in particular could be described as a specific genre, and the audience has certain genre-based expectations towards it. When a viewer switches on the TV to watch, say, a sitcom, they expect to see a programme punctuated with one-liners and funny situations, where humour is signposted for the viewer with canned laughter. It could be said that even here "laughter depends on some sort of framework of expectancy"

(Nash 1985:87-88, as cited in Zabalbeascoa 1996:240). However, within a given culture, the expectations the audience have towards humour in television derive largely from what that culture considers to be humour-inducing (see Attardo 1994:9).

It is important to notice that, owing to its audiovisual quality of the medium, not even verbal humour in television is a purely linguistic phenomenon. Sometimes humour arises from an incongruity between what is said and what is shown. It could be that while in purely verbal linguistic humour the incongruity of scripts is explicit in the language, in television humour the incongruity can be implied by the context or situation. However, this aspect of humour appears to have been little studied.

The visual dimension of television as a medium means that translating humour in television has a great deal in common with translating comic strips. Pertti Palo, who has studied the language used in Finnish translations of *Donald Duck*, has remarked that culture-bound jokes and wordplay really test a translator's creativity (Tuliara 1987). This is especially true when humour is, in one way or another, dependent on what is seen. A good example of this is the US television comedy *Sabrina, the Teenage Witch* (subtitled by Tuula Friman). In one episode (broadcast by YLE on 4 August 1998) Sabrina's aunt Hilda suffers from *punnitis* (translated as *sanaleikkisyndrooma*), which means that her puns and metaphors are taken matter-of-factly and they come true, literally. Here is one example:

> [HILDA:] You need to play the field.
> [SABRINA FINDS HERSELF IN THE MIDDLE OF A RUGBY GAME.]
> [HILDA:] Sorry, it's that darn punnitis flaring up again.
> [SABRINA'S TALKING CAT SALEM:] "A fine kettle of fish". Say it. Oh please, say it.
>
> [HILDA:] Laajenna kokemusmaailmaasi.
> [SABRINA HUOMAA OLEVANSA RUGBYOTTELUSSA.]
> [HILDA:] Anteeksi, sanaleikkisyndrooma iski jälleen.
> [SABRINAN PUHUVA KISSA SALEM:] "Kaunis soppa, oikea kalakeitto". Sano se!

Here the translator's latitude is bound by the context. What might work in a text may be impossible to realise in television, and even the best solution available may feel contrived.

Occasionally there are no satisfactory solutions available; in another episode (broadcast on 30 June 1998) Sabrina feigns to be ill, and her aunt Hilda transforms her into a fakir sitting on a bed of nails. The scene goes as follows:

> [SABRINA:] I'm sick.
> [HILDA TRANSFORMS SABRINA INTO A FAKIR.]
> [SABRINA:] A bed of nails? Why am I like this?
> [HILDA:] Because you're a fakir [feɪkər]. You know, an Indian mystic. A fakir [faːk.ɪər].
> [SABRINA:] This is a very painful pun, Hilda.
>
> [SABRINA:] Olen kipeä.
> [HILDA MUUTTAA SABRINAN FAKIIRIKSI.]
> [SABRINA:] Naulamatto? Minkä takia?
> [HILDA:] Koska olet fakiiri. Intialainen mystikko. Fakiiri.
> [SABRINA:] Tämä on kivulias vitsi.

The example above includes a pun based on homophony, i.e. one of the two alternative ways of pronouncing the word *fakir* coincides with how the word *faker* is pronounced. What makes the wordplay untranslatable in Finnish is the fact that is has been visualised, and the translator has basically no option available other than resignation (see Gottlieb 1992). The visual aspect of the medium cannot be manipulated (Zabalbeascoa 1994:96). In a way this also violates the invisibility of the translation, or, in Gottlieb's words (1994b:268; emphasis original), "the illusion of the translation as the *alter ego* of the original is broken".

The *fakir* pun is illustrative of negative visual feedback effect, where the image makes it practically impossible to rewrite the humour in the TL. Here the image carries "cues which support the dialogue" (Roffe 1985:219), which cannot be altered or removed. However, visual feedback is not necessarily always negative; it can sometimes aid the dialogue, thus diminishing the scope of cross-cultural translation problems (Nedergaard-Larsen 1993:214). The following two examples are, again, from *Sabrina, the Teenage Witch* (broadcast on 9 June 1998 and 4 August 1998, respectively):

> [SABRINA TOYS WITH FISH FINGERS IN THE SCHOOL CAFETERIA.]
> [SABRINA:] Look! Fishhenge - a deep-fried tribute to the druids.
>
> [SABRINA LEIKKII KALAPUIKOILLA KOULUN RUOKALASSA.]

[SABRINA:] Katso. Stonehenge kalasta. Kunnianosoitus druideille.

***

[HILDA:] Sometime's you're such a dictator.
[SABRINA CHANGES INTO "CASTRO", DRESSED IN FATIGUES AND SMOKING A CIGAR.]

[HILDA:] Olet joskus oikea diktaattori.
[SABRINA MUUTTUU MAASTOPUKUISEKSI "CASTROKSI", JOKA POLTTAA SIKARIA.]

In the first example, the visual support provided by the feedback effect is more implicit than in the second one, where the image is, in a way, the joke's coda. Besides the visual feedback mentioned above, there can be audial and contextual feedback. Negative audial feedback means that the audial cues on the soundtrack are so strong that translators feel that they must leave, say, a culturally specific name intact in the subtitle. It needs to be borne in mind, though, that what kind of feedback and how much of it is interpreted as negative is ultimately a cultural issue and, therefore, one bound by norms.

Contextual feedback can be regarded as negative for example in connection with "jokes presupposing a detailed knowledge of people and places in the source culture" (Gottlieb 1992:165). A TL approach, i.e. replacing a SL-specific item with a TL-specific one and thus naturalising it, may be considered inappropriate in the visual medium, where all the other cues are SL ones. According to Gottlieb (1994b:268), the feedback effect from the context can be felt to be "so strong that a more idiomatic, 'functional' rendering will be counter-productive". I am not quite convinced that this is due to the fact that viewers want "a direct translation of what is said", as Gottlieb claims, but he does make an interesting point when remarking that "a consistently target-language oriented, 'idiomatic' translation may backfire" (1994b:268). Also Nedergaard-Larsen (1993:231) says that cultural adaptations give rise to "a credibility problem".

When translating a television comedy, a subtitler is faced with a task in which they

are guided by their instinct rather than by any clear guidelines. On one hand, they try to seek for solutions that might function for the TL audience in a maximally similar way as the original did for the SL audience; on the other hand, they can sometimes only guess how the solutions chosen by them will actually be seen and accepted by the audience. What is more, the perceptions that some members of the audience have on translation might be considerably different from those of the translator, as the following extract from a reader's letter to the editor of *Katso* well demonstrates (Lehto 1997, translated by SJ):

> "One should, in my opinion, translate clever wordplay so that the meaning of the sentence is retained and the joke is lost and not try to force a Finnish-language wordplay and lose the whole plot in the process."

The opinion above hardly reflects the views of all members of the audience, yet it is a plausible concern for translators. Zabalbeascoa (1996:249) makes an interesting point when he suggests that translators may be afraid of meeting with criticism either on the part of the viewers or their employers or clients. This is, indeed, a manifestation of what Chesterman (1993) calls *expectancy norms*, that is "TT readers' expectations of what translations should be like" (Shuttleworth and Cowie 1997:54).

5. An analysis of some humour-inducing elements in *Reality Bites* and the translation strategies used

In this chapter, I shall analyse how humour has been translated in two versions of the film *Reality Bites*, both with Finnish subtitles. These versions are the existing video version (both rental and retail) translated by Timo Porri (later referred to as TP) and the version made for the satellite movie channel FilmNet by Arja Meski (AM). Timo Porri first subtitled the film for the cinema, but I have not used that version here; instead, I have looked at the slightly modified TP version broadcast by MTV3 in January 1998 (*TP) and consulted one version of the film subtitled into Swedish and one dubbed into German to illustrate cultural and other variations in norms. I will discuss the global translation strategies used in TP and AM in section 5.3. to see if they could be characterised as SL-oriented or TL-oriented. In sections 5.4.-5.5., I will analyse the strategies used with different kinds of humour. I am interested in seeing what are the similarities and differences between the two Finnish versions and what kind of assumptions could be made on the norms influencing Finnish subtitlings.

Before proceeding with the analysis, I shall explore the Generation X phenomenon and discuss how the humour in *Reality Bites* could be defined in order to assess what kind of problems it might pose from the viewpoint of translation.

5.1. The Generation X phenomenon

On its release in 1994, *Reality Bites* was seen, and advertised, as the signature movie for the so-called Generation X. The term became widely known in 1991, when Douglas Coupland published a book titled *Generation X*. Even if the term originally appeared in a

1965 self-help manual for young adults (Brinkley 1994), it was the book by Coupland that loaded the concept with the connotations that have later on been attached to it.

The concept of Generation X stereotypically refers to the descendants of the baby boomers born after the World War II. While their parents let their hair grow, protested against the war in Vietnam and saw Woodstock but then sold their ideals in the midst of economic growth and consumerism in the 1980's, Generation X-ers born between 1964-1974 do not seek to change the world but to fulfil themselves. Raised by the media and becoming of age in a period of recession, Generation X-ers do not harbour any hopes of a Brave New World where diligence is rewarded; instead, a college diploma at its best yields a McJob. As one of the protagonists in *Reality Bites* says, Generation X-ers "take pleasure in the details". In Coupland's book, too, a group of young adults searches for meaning in their lives outside traditional middle-class values.

At this point it is necessary to sketch in more detail the cultural setting *Reality Bites* and its humour belong to. Sarah Dunn, herself a 20-something university graduate, offers an interesting glimpse of the whole Generation X phenomenon in *The Official Slacker Handbook* published in 1994. Her definition of what she calls "the slack sensibility" includes e.g. the following aspects: "conscious non-participation", "rejection of consumerism", and "contempt for corporate America" (Dunn 1994:6). The days of an archetypal slacker, preferably living in Austin, Texas, "ground zero of the slack *zeitgeist*" (Dunn 1994:67), are spent hanging around in warehouses and cafés pondering metaphysical dilemmas and smoking unfiltered Camels, watching sitcoms and re-runs on TV or, alternately, dialling 1-800 numbers. Having left behind college - safe because there "the student loan people don't pester you to death" (Dunn 1994:19) and parents still send some money - a slacker enters the outside world overqualified, at best with the prospect of finding a job where they are

"compensated for showing up periodically" (Dunn 1994:22), yet dreaming of becoming a "lead vocalist" or a "Pulitzer Prize-winning novelist" (Dunn 1994:25). Still, one can always get fired for having "time to lean, not to clean" (Dunn 1994:28). When parents complain that Generation X has no work ethic, they are unaware of the fact that the only way of rebelling against the establishment left for slackers is "stealing things from work" (Dunn 1994:27).

Looking at Dunn's book, one notices that the concept of Generation X is used with a certain irony, with a sense of ironic detachment. Characterising a heterogeneous and individualistic generation in homogeneous and collective terms, Dunn seems to realise that there exists a certain paradox in what she says: when using the media concept of Generation X in connection with themselves, Generation X-ers simultaneously have to distance themselves from it. In other words, they have to mark in their speech that the marketing strategy used in connection with them is artificial. When admitting to being part of Generation X, they have to deny it at the same time. This means that the meaning of the concept of Generation X is not free from conflict nor is its use neutral among those it usually refers to.

Bill Salzmann (1995) looks at how the whole Generation X ideology took shape in his interesting essay titled "*Reality Bites*, So Buy a Big Gulp!", distinguishing between two so-called media waves in it. While the early definitions of Generation X comprised basically all of the 40 million Americans born between 1964 and 1974, it soon turned out that the concept was too wide and it had to be narrowed. Salzmann writes that in the narrower sense Generation X-ers are predominantly white, highly educated, and upper middle-class. They mainly live in coastal towns, and their biggest problem seems to be that their college diplomas do not automatically guarantee them dream jobs as they did for their parents.

Salzmann also writes that in late 1993 the concept of Generation X had already become a cliché. By then the media no longer tried to analyse the concept as such but to create a consumer identity for its target group. In other words, it tried to identify Generation X primarily as consumers. Accordingly, Salzmann argues that what was characteristic of the second media wave of Generation X phenomenon was the assumption that Generation X was a homogeneous group in terms of its consumption patterns and that the definition of Generation X was already known to its target group. Therefore, Generation X-ers could be approached during this second wave indirectly by using certain codes and symbols already established during the first wave.

Reality Bites is, in Salzmann's opinion, an excellent example of this second media wave. According to him, to understand the film it is not enough to belong to Generation X in the narrow sense of the concept. *Reality Bites* also requires a media-literate audience who are familiar with the ideological references to "seventies pop-culture and hyper-commodified foods" (Salzmann 1995) in the film; in other words, an audience that identify themselves as Generation X-ers. The film employs a language known to Generation X, "the language of product placements, 'hip' consumerism, and music videos" and thus creates "an alternative consumerist ideology for the Generation X".

As flawless as Salzmann's analysis appears, it relies on the assumption that the target group of *Reality Bites*, i.e. Generation X, not only recognise themselves in the movie but also approve of the view the movie gives of them. That it should be so is by no means clear judging by the reaction the film got from the contemporary audience. Various Internet sources show that *Reality Bites*, advertised both in the US and Finland as a "comedy of love in the 90's", opened in 1994 to rather mixed reviews. While Joan Ellis (1994) described it as "an appealing slice of contemporary despair", Michael John Legeros (1994) dismissed it

as "completely conventional". Some argued that *Reality Bites*, with a script by the 23-year-old newcomer Helen Childress, manages to "encapsulate an era" (Howe 1994), whereas others accused it of selling out and trivialising its subject matter. What most people seemed to agree on, however, was that *Reality Bites* was very funny as a comedy. It appeared that most of the 20-something audience the film was particularly aimed at could relate to its depiction of "post-collegiate malaise" (Kempley 1994); still, as the Washington Post critic Desson Howe (1994) put it, *Reality Bites* was "perfectly understandable [--] to anyone who speaks humor".

5.2. Humour in *Reality Bites*

The protagonist of *Reality Bites* is the 20-something Lelaina (Winona Ryder), who has just graduated from college and who is struggling to carve her own niche in modern American society. She has a part-time job as an assistant in a morning talk show while filming a documentary on her friends: the college dropout Troy (Ethan Hawke), who sports a goatee and plays and sings in a band called Hey That's My Bike; the cynical man-eater Vickie (Janeane Garofalo), who works as a manager at The Gap and whose room is full of 70's kitsch; and the shy Sammy (Steve Zahn), who is waiting for the right moment to come out of the closet. Messing things up is the yuppie-type Michael (Ben Stiller), an executive working for In Your Face TV (described in the film as "like MTV but with an edge"), who Lelaina starts dating.

At the beginning of the film, Lelaina gives a valediction, where she, on behalf of her class, breaks away from the baby boom generation, saying:

> "And they wonder why those of us in our 20's refuse to work an 80-hour week just
> so we can afford to buy their BMW's, why we aren't interested in the counterculture
> that they invented? As if we did not see them disembowel their revolution for a pair

of running shoes."

According to the Generation X ideology and *Reality Bites*, even counterculture has been harnessed to the market forces, so one can only rebel by not identifying with anything or anyone. Irony has, therefore, become a central means of rebellion.

Reality Bites is firmly anchored in Generation X both linguistically and visually. The term "Generation X" is never mentioned in the film, but the word "slack" is; and much of the humour in the film relies on the recognisability of the language used by its characters, on the associations it raises in its audience. For example, Scott Renshaw (1994) argues that the best thing about *Reality Bites* is "details and the individual laughs of *recognition* they provide" (emphasis added), continuing: "I will admit to participating in a group sing-along of 'Conjunction Junction' like these characters, and to playing games based on sit-com episodes." On the other hand, Rose Martel (1994) wrote:

> "[T]he film does go overboard in the beginning with the slacker culture references: a copy of Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance, Big Gulps, the phrases 'den of slack' and 'time suckage'. These are a bit too expected and try too hard to be witty."

The linguistic recognisability of *Reality Bites* is complemented by the visual one. Some of the things highlighted in *The Official Slacker Handbook* by Dunn that are either mentioned or visualised, or both, in the film are The Gap (clothes chain), *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, *Being and Time*, Dial-a-Psychic, and Columbia Record and Tape Company, to name but a few. In other words, there are both linguistic and visual codes and symbols in *Reality Bites* that the American audience will immediately recognise.

Even if *Reality Bites* is set in a distinctly American milieu, the growing globalisation of youth culture, or rather the worldwide predomination of American popular culture, means that the way of life depicted in the film is more or less familiar to the Finnish

audience. Hundreds of Finnish secondary school students spend a year studying in the United States; and American TV programmes, films, and music are distributed across the world. Still, what Finnish viewers probably do not appreciate is that *Reality Bites* is, at least for the American audience, quintessentially a Generation X movie. Even if it is true that *Reality Bites* may quite legitimately function for the Finnish audience in a different way than it did for the American one, it is equally true that the latter tapped especially to its semblance of reality. In that sense, there does exist a certain *gap* between American and Finnish youth cultures (see Laurian 1992:124).

To sum up, *Reality Bites* could be characterised as a humorous *text*, in that its humour is not merely at the level of individual jokes. It does have its share of one-liners, but in addition there are more subtle forms of humour, such as irony. One could say that much of the humorousness in *Reality Bites* derives from its creating a *pastiche* recognisable to the American target audience. Sari Luhtanen, who has translated e.g. *The Simpsons* for MTV3, probably hit the target when remarking that (*Helsingin Sanomat* 17.7.1992, translated by SJ):

> "From the viewpoint of humour, the most important thing is the way people talk and the way their world view is reflected in their speech. Jokes are by-products."

The script of *Reality Bites* is a mixture of contemporary youth jargon, some more classic examples of wordplay, and references to things and people, which means that the challenges *Reality Bites* poses to translators have to do with both intralinguistic and extralinguistic reasons. In the former group there is the kind of humour where the effect derives from language-related elements, such as slang, wordplay, and allusive humour; whereas in the latter group humour is created by means of culture-related elements. These two groups are presented in the following table:

INTRALINGUISTIC HUMOUR	EXTRALINGUISTIC HUMOUR
-Generation X catchphrases and slang -indirect allusions: advertisements, Shakespeare, other -wordplay, puns, phrases	-direct cultural references to: TV programmes films music other cultural staples

I shall analyse intralinguistic humour in *Reality Bites* in section 5.4. and extralinguistic humour in section 5.5.

5.3. Global translation strategies

in two Finnish versions of *Reality Bites*

Lörscher (1991:76) defines a translation strategy as "a potentially conscious procedure for the solution of a *problem* which an individual is faced with when translating a text segment from one language into another" (emphasis added). He draws a careful distinction between a *problem* and a *task*, in that solving a problem requires innovative thinking on the part of the translator, whereas solving a task is merely an exercise in reproductive thinking. While this distinction may not always hold methodologically or in translational practice, it is useful in noting that not all text segments are equal in terms of translating them. I would argue that translating humour in television qualifies as a translation problem, since we are dealing with a culturally bound element in a contextually bound medium, which does not necessarily work in the TL environment. Choosing a translation strategy, then, involves a decision-making process where various factors come into play.

The strategies employed by translators in terms of a SL-TL continuum can be

roughly divided into three categories. I have presented them in the table below:

SL		TL
EXOTICISATION		
	NEUTRALISATION	
		NATURALISATION

Exoticisation is here what Toury (1995:56) called "adherence to source norms", retaining culturally specific elements in the ST or slightly modifying them; whereas **naturalisation** means adapting the ST to target culture norms. The choice between the two constitutes an initial norm (Toury 1995). Between these two extremes there is the middle-ground covered by **neutralisation**, i.e. choosing a culturally neutral solution. However, drawing exact boundaries between the three categories is difficult. In addition to these three categories there is also the option of **omission**, i.e. deleting a culturally specific element altogether.

The global translation strategies used in TP and AM differ from each other to some extent. While TP shifts towards neutralisation and occasionally even naturalisation on the SL-TL continuum, AM's approach is more consistently SL-oriented or culturally neutral. However, looking at the subtitlings at the level of individual solutions, one notices that there is a great deal of variation. It seems, therefore, that the idea of the whole text being the most important unit of translation cannot be corroborated on the basis of findings from these two subtitlings.

When analysing the translation strategies chosen by the two subtitlers of *Reality Bites*, I have used a *subtitle*, i.e. the amount of text seen on the screen at one time, as the logical unit of translation. The object of my analysis is often part of one subtitle or it may occasionally extend over two or more subtitles. However, I think that at a conceptual level it is reasonable to regard a subtitle as a unit of translation. After all, the division into

subtitles is the initial choice made by the subtitler, or in the case of subtitlings made on the basis of pivot translations, one made by the timecuer. It can be argued that ideally a subtitle is an independent whole, or at least a semi-independent one. Nevertheless, in conceptual terms it is a unit that is separated from the speech flow, and more or less self-contained in terms of a viewer processing it. It is interesting to notice in Finnish cinemas that the audience often react to, say, a joke in a subtitle not immediately after having read the subtitle but after the amount of speech flow corresponding to the subtitle has been completed. In a way, the TL audience feel they don't have a "licence" to laugh before the SL audience do.

5.4.   Intralinguistic humour

5.4.1. Generation X jargon

Calling this subgroup of intralinguistic humour "Generation X jargon" is actually misleading, since that gives the impression of it being a neat, compact category. Instead, it is a very heterogeneous collection of linguistic material that situational comedies, in general, are made of: one-liners, witticisms, quick repartees. Still, what makes it a subgroup in its own right is that the humour in it revolves in one way or another around Generation X concerns: their concepts, catchphrases, and ideology; their post-college life, or echoes of student years; their attitudes towards work or the state of joblessness. There are, however, two things that one needs to bear in mind. Firstly, part of the material in this subgroup is hardly culture-specific at a cognitive level but may characterise most Western societies; at

a linguistic level, however, there are differences between, say, the American and Finnish educational systems. Secondly, with this subgroup it is particularly hard to estimate the extent to which humour relies on the visual context.

One of the key concepts of the Generation X movement is *slack* and its derivative *slacker*, and the former appears in *Reality Bites*:

(1):   [LELAINA:] Vickie, he will turn this place into a den of slack.

TP: [LELAINA:] Vickie, hän tekee tästä löysyyden pesän[.]

AM: [LELAINA:] Vickie, hän tekee tästä velttoilun pesän[.]

The problem with *slack* is that it does not seem to have any direct equivalent in Finnish; therefore, literal translations, such as those chosen by TP and AM, function differently compared to the original expression, because they cannot count on similar associations. The Swedish solution is of particular interest in this respect:

SWE: Han gör lägenheten till ett slackers-näste.

Here the Swedish version has the English word *slacker*, which is probably more widely known than *slack*. Yet, the fact that the translator has decided to use an English expression indicates that he presumes that the Swedish audience know it. This kind of exoticisation strategy also presupposes a relatively high degree of toleration of Anglisms in Swedish.

One of the stereotypical activities of a slacker is *time suckage*, as in example (2) below:

(2):   [TROY:] What the hell is your problem?
[LELAINA:] I have to work around here and unfortunately, Troy, you are a master at the art of time suckage.
[TROY:] Oh well, I'm sorry, Miss poster girl for the Workers' Party, but until I get that toehold in the burger industry, I've got a little time to suck.

TP: [TROY:] Mikä sua rassaa?
[LELAINA:] Minun pitää tehdä töitä[,] ja ikävä kyllä sinä olet ajan tappamisen mestari[.]
[TROY:] Valitan, työväenpuolueen julistetyttö[,] mutta kunnes murtaudun purilaisalalle, voin tappaa aikaa[.]

AM: [TROY:] Mikä sua vaivaa?
[LELAINA:] Satun käymään töissä, ja sinä olet mestari lorvimaan[.]
[TROY:] Anteeksi, Miss työväenpuolue[.] Ennen kuin saan leipäni pikabaarihommista, on aikaa lorvia[.]

Both TP and AM have used idiomatic and colloquial Finnish expressions; they speak of "killing time" and "idling away", respectively. Lelaina's reply also has an element of wordplay in it, since *a master at the art of time suckage* sounds like a mock-degree, yet in Finnish there is no such ambiguity, *maisteri* and *mestari* being separate words.

Troy speaks ironically about getting *that toehold in the burger industry*, and the two Finnish versions follow on similar lines: TP talks about "breaking into" the burger industry and AM about "earning one's bread in the snack bar business". The German version interestingly modifies an idiom:

GER: ...in die ewigen Arbeitsjagdgründe eingehen...

The idiom in question is the German counterpart of "the happy hunting grounds", or, in other words, it is an euphemism for "dying". The modification makes the expression at once more concrete and gives it a 20-something twist.

While not exclusively a Generation X concept, the word *loser* encapsulates much of the post-baby boom society, i.e. the life as Generation X-ers know it. The word, which does have its Finnish slang counterpart in *luuseri*, is used in *Reality Bites* in an innovative context, as can be seen below in example (3):

(3):   [LELAINA:] And whether you know it or not, you're on the inside track to Loserville, USA.

TP: [LELAINA:] Muussa tapauksessa päädyt Nyhrälään[.]

AM: [LELAINA:] Muuten olet armotta alamäessä[.]

Here we find also an element of wordplay, as the word *loser* has been made part of an imaginary place-name by attaching the ending *-ville* to it. TP has used the same kind of idea in his translation, adding the *-lä* ending to the verb *nyhrätä* [fiddle around]. AM, on the other hand, has paraphrased the original expression as *muuten olet armotta alamäessä* [otherwise it will be all downhill for you], which has alliteration.

One of the features of the Generation X phenomenon is that it is constantly cutting

loose from the set of values of the generation preceding it, yet it is reluctant to call itself a generation:

(4):   [LELAINA:] ...why we aren't interested in the counterculture that they invented? As if we did not see them disembowel their revolution for a pair of running shoes.

TP: [LELAINA:] Miksei heidän valtakulttuurinsa kiinnosta? Emmekö nähneet heidän vaihtavan vallankumoustaan lenkkitossuihin?

AM: [LELAINA:] Miksei heidän valtakulttuurinsa kiinnosta[.] Silti he itse pettivät ihanteensa parista lenkkareita[.]

Example (4) illustrates the kind of ambivalence that Generation X-ers show towards the revolutionary ideals of the 60's that have gone sour: they disassociate themselves from the mainstream, but also counterculture has been marred. Interestingly, both TP and AM have chosen to translate *the counterculture that they invented* as *heidän valtakulttuurinsa* [their mainstream culture]. The opposite expression is more compact than a minimum change solution would have been as well as less conflicting in that the relation between baby boomers and X-ers is here reduced to one between mainstream and countercultures.

The early 90's saw the rise of *real(-life) programming*, in other words filming real people in their homes and fitting their lives into the format of a television serial. One of these was *The Real World* broadcast by MTV. The title of *Reality Bites* already suggests that *real* things are a recurring motif in the film, as can be seen below:

(5a):   [MICHAEL:] It's a special night, because, as you know, we're entering into a new phase here in the channel: real programming.

TP: [MICHAEL:] Tämä on erikoinen ilta. Aloitamme uuden vaiheen: oikeat ohjelmat[.]

AM: [MICHAEL:] No niin. Tämä on tärkeä ilta[.] Aloitamme uuden vaiheen: oikeat ohjelmat[.]

***

(5b):   [LELAINA'S FATHER:] I'm not gonna sit here and listen again to some strange ethical argument about a damn car. It's got four wheels and it runs well. And, little girl, after you've been in the real world for a while, you're gonna appreciate that car.

TP: [LELAINAN ISÄ:] En aio kuunnella eettisiä löpinöitä jostain hiton autosta[.] Siinä on neljä pyörää ja se kulkee. Tosimaailmassa arvostat sitä autoa[.]

AM: [LELAINAN ISÄ:] En aio kuunnella eettisiä höpinöitä yhdestä autosta[.] Se kulkee hyvin. Ja tosielämässä osaat antaa sille arvoa[.]

***

(5c):   [MICHAEL:] I wish I could be like him, I mean I wish I could live off creeds and mottoes and all that shit, all right? But I'm in the real world, okay?

TP: [MICHAEL:] Voisinpa olla kuten hän! Elää uskosta[.] Mutta elän todellisessa maailmassa[.]

AM: [MICHAEL:] Olisinpa Troy[.] Latelisin pelkkiä sitaatteja[.] Mutta minä elän tosimaailmassa[.]

***

(5d):   [TROY:] I might do mean things and hurt you and I might run away without your permission and you might hate me forever, and I know that scares the shit out of you because I'm the only real thing you have.

TP: [TROY:] Voin loukata tai häipyä, ja ehkä vihaat minua[,] ja se kauhistuttaa sinua koska olen ainoa todellinen asia elämässäsi[.]

AM: [TROY:] Ehkä loukkaan sinua[,] ja häivyn ja sinä vihaat minua[.] Ja sitä sinä pelkäät, koska sinulla on vain minut[.]

Real has been translated either as *todellinen* or *tosi* in examples (5b), (5c), and (5d), but in the *real programming* example we find instead *oikeat ohjelmat*. The concept does not have an established Finnish translation, and the two translators may have felt that an explicitation on the lines of *tosielämään perustuvat ohjelmat* is too long. The word *oikea* may have been chosen also because it alliterates with the word *ohjelma*.

Reality Bites also draws humour from student life. The school system in the United States differs considerably from that in Finland. It is true that a large number of young Finns spend a year in the United States as exchange students, gaining first-hand experience of American schools. Therefore, the concepts as such are not foreign but they do not necessarily have any apt equivalent in Finnish:

(6a):   [LELAINA:] I'm not a valedictorian but I play one on TV.

TP: [LELAINA:] En ole paras oppilas, näyttelen vain[.]

AM: [LELAINA:] Esitin parasta oppilasta[.]

***

(6b):   [LELAINA'S MOTHER:] Why don't you get a job at Burgerama? They'll hire you. My Lord, I saw on the TV they had this little retarded boy work in the cash register.

[LELAINA:] Because I'm not retarded, mom. I was valedictorian in my university.

[LELAINA'S STEPFATHER:] Well, you don't have to put that down in your application.

TP: [LELAINAN ÄITI:] Pääset varmasti purilaispaikkaan[.] Näin TV:stä, että niillä oli kehitysvammainen poika kassassa[.]

[LELAINA:] En ole kehitysvammainen, äiti. Olin luokkani paras[.]

[LELAINAN ISÄPUOLI:] Ei sitä tarvitse laittaa hakemukseen[.]

AM: [LELAINAN ÄITI:] Pääset varmasti Burgeramaan[.] Näin tv:stä että niillä oli kassassa heikkolahjainen poika[.]

[LELAINA:] En ole heikkolahjainen. Olin vuoden paras oppilas[.]

[LELAINAN ISÄPUOLI:] Älä pane sitä hakemuksiin[.]

A *valedictorian* is the head of the class who gives a speech on behalf of the students in a graduation ceremony. Finnish does have the word *priimus*, yet both TP and AM have preferred to use the explanatory expression *(luokkani/vuoden) paras oppilas*. On the other hand, the following example, (7), shows that there are some constants in both Finnish and American students' lives:

(7):   [VICKIE:] My favorite part about graduating now will be dodging my student loan officer for the rest of my life.

TP: [VICKIE:] Parasta koulun päättymisessä? Välttelen opintolainapankkia loppuikäni[.]

AM: [VICKIE:] Hauskinta tulee olemaan se miten pääsen maksamasta opintolainoja[.]

TP and AM have had different approaches to translating culturally specific items connected with education. TP has translated *fellow graduates* as *ylioppilastoverit*, AM as *opiskelutoverit*; and when the original version speaks about a *graduation present*, we find *lakkiaislahja* in TP and *valmistumislahja* in AM. In other words, TP has used terms belonging to the Finnish system, though he has also, perhaps unwittingly, made the protagonists secondary school students; AM, on the other hand, has used culturally neutral terms. However, neither of them is systematic in their approach, since TP has translated *college* as

koulu (neutralisation) and AM has left it untranslated (exoticisation).

Work-related humour in *Reality Bites* does not present linguistic difficulties, as can be seen in examples (8) and (9) below:

(8):   [LELAINA'S FATHER:] I'll tell you the problem with your generation: you don't have any work ethic.

TP: [LELAINAN ISÄ:] Sinun sukupolvellasi ei ole työmoraalia[.]

AM: [LELAINAN ISÄ:] Ikäpolvellasi ei ole työmoraalia[.]

***

(9):   [LELAINA:] I was this close to selling fruit at intersections.

TP: [LELAINA:] Olin jo menossa myymään hedelmiä risteykseen[.]

AM: [LELAINA:] Olin jo alkaa myydä hedelmiä[.]

Both translations are more concise than the original version, but otherwise the changes are only minimal.

To sum up, the linguistic material in this subgroup is quite diverse. The Generation X concepts in examples (1) and (2) do not have Finnish equivalents in the sense that Generation X is an American phenomenon and a literal or minimum change strategy cannot convey these cultural associations. In the *Loserville* example, (3), TP has used a similar technique as the original and AM has used an alliterative paraphrase. Examples (4) and (5) show that the space constraints of AVT, among other reasons, can influence the choices made by subtitlers. Terminology related to work is less culture-specific than that related to education, where TP has mostly used TL concepts and AM culturally neutral concepts.

5.4.2. Wordplay

Wordplay, or punning, was defined by Delabastita (1996:128) broadly as "textual phenomena" contrasting "linguistic structures with *different meanings* on the basis of their

formal similarity" (emphasis original). For the purposes of a more fine-grained typology, puns can be further divided into such categories as homonymy, homophony, homography, and paronymy according to the type and degree of similarity (Delabastita 1996:128). However, labelling can be problematic, since we are dealing with a multi-faceted and complex phenomenon, which sometimes defies easy categorisation. The same applies to translation; and discussions on the untranslatability of humour have often centred around the various forms of wordplay.

Also in *Reality Bites* wordplay comes in various guises. Example (1) below represents one of the most classical forms of punning, that is paronymy:

(1):   [TROY:] You know the punishment for premature evacuation?

TP: [TROY:] Tiedäthän rangaistuksen ennenaikaisesta evakuoinnista?

AM: [TROY:] Tiedät rangaistuksen kun häippäsee kesken[.]

Troy utters the line above to Lelaina, whom he secretly fancies, when she goes out with Michael for the first time. The humour arises from the phonetic and formal resemblance of the word *evacuation* to *ejaculation*, and this resemblance is further accentuated by the adjective *premature*.

The two Finnish subtitlers have handled the *evacuation* example quite differently. TP has used the minimum change strategy, which is likely to puzzle most of the audience; the Finnish term for *ejaculation* is *siemensyöksy*. Therefore, it is very improbable that the Finnish audience should link *evakuointi* with *siemensyöksy* on the basis of the word *ennenaikainen* alone, unless they are able to make the connection through English and grasp the sexual overtone of the original wordplay. AM has interpreted the latter part of the example in the sense that it is not allowed to leave early on a date, suppressing the sexual overtone. Delabastita (1996:135) suggests that occasionally translators feel it is "safer to play the punning down"

and that untranslatability may be used as "the foolproof pretext for toning down the sexual content of the passage" either for personal reasons or target culture considerations. While this sounds reasonable enough, I would think that Finnish norms would not require holding back sexual innuendos; the more logical explanation in this case is that the translators have been unaware of the wordplay in the first place. The Swedish version has, interestingly, made the humour more explicit but omitted wordplay:

> SWE: Vad är straffet för för tidig sädesavgång?

Another example of partial paronymy as the source of humour is seen below:

> (2):   ["TROY" IN THE TELEVISION SERIES:] I'm Audi 5000.
>
> TP: [TELEVISIOSARJAN "TROY":] Mä häippään[.]
>
> AM: [TELEVISIOSARJAN "TROY":] Olen Audi 5000[.]

The rap expression is based on the pronunciation of the word *Audi* resembling that of *outta [here]*. According to the online *Napolean's Rap Dictionary*, this "farewell bidding" first evolved to "I'm Audi" and then to "5000" "after the Audi 5000 car, which got recalled and is a rare sight nowadays". However, whereas in the *evacuation* example such clues as the word *premature* may help those Finnish viewers who know English get the joke, *Audi 5000* is less transparent. AM's literal rendering is, in a sense, awkward and most viewers are likely to end up baffled when they see the subtitle, because it does not seem to connect with anything that has been said before. Some viewers might actually link it to earlier discussions of BMW's; yet, this does not facilitate processing the joke.

Example (3) below relies on polysemy, i.e. it plays on the two possible meanings of the word *cheesy*:

> (3):   [LELAINA:] He's so cheesy I can't watch him without crackers.
>
> TP: [LELAINA:] On niin lipevä että etoo[.]
>
> AM: [LELAINA:] On niin mauton että ällöttää[.]

Lelaina refers here to her boss, a slick talk show host, but what makes the remark humorous is the latter part of the sentence: the word *crackers* evokes the less obvious meaning of *cheesy*, that is "full of cheese", "cheese-like". TP and AM have resolved the problem similarly in the sense that the humour in their translations is more at the level of individual words than in surprising associations.

Winona later revenges herself on her smarmy boss by rewriting his cuecards in a live broadcast:

(4):   [GRANT:] Being a total prick... ...ly pear...

TP: [GRANT:] Koska olen täysi molo... *täysi molo...* --tovin cocktail...

AM: [GRANT:] Koska olen mäntti... pää[...]

Lelaina's boss tries to save the situation by improvising and continuing the sentence, though the reaction of the audience makes it clear that the harm has already been done. The joke actually has two climaxes: firstly, when Grant is tricked into saying an obscene word; and secondly, when he tries to correct his mistake. TP's solution is rather clever in that it employs the same technique as the original joke and does it quite convincingly. AM has left out the latter part of the joke, so the success of her solution relies more on situational or contextual factors.

The Generation X-ers in *Reality Bites* also engage in conscious wordplay, as in examples (5) and (6) below:

(5):   [VICKIE:] Don't Bogart that can, man.
             [TROY:] Are you retarded?
             [VICKIE:] No, I'm rhyming.

TP: [VICKIE:] Savut sulle, jämät mulle[.]
             [TROY:] Oletko jälkeenjäänyt?
             [VICKIE:] Riimittelen vaan[.]

AM: [VICKIE:] Jätä jämä, jäbä[.]
             [TROY:] Änkytätkö?
             [VICKIE:] Leikin sanoilla[.]

***

(6):	[VICKIE:] Evian is naive spelled backwards.
TP:	[VICKIE:] "Evian" on "naive" toisinpäin[.]
AM:	[VICKIE:] "Evian" on takaperin "naive"[.]

In example (5) TP has followed the original example in retaining the rhyming, yet I would like to suggest that his solution has a particularly Finnish twist to it. The *X sulle, Y mulle* [X to you, Y to me] type pattern may bring to mind a certain line belonging to Finnish Palm Sunday traditions. AM's solution *jätä jämä, jäbä* [give me a swig, dude] cleverly combines alliteration and assonance. She has changed the technique of wordplay, which is reflected in the latter part of the example: Troy asks Vickie if she stutters, and Vickie replies that she is just playing with words.

Example (6) illustrates well the contextual constraints inherent in AVT; here negative visual feedback is partial, because even though a bottle of Evian is seen and pointed at, in theory there exists the option of inventing a totally different joke based on Evian. Still, both TP and AM have decided to translate the example literally. This may have been motivated by several reasons: they may have thought that *naive* is sufficiently close to its Finnish counterpart *naiivi*, or that Finnish viewers know enough English to understand the wordplay; or else they may have felt that there is negative audial feedback which does not justify making any drastic changes. Then there is the possibility that, as Gottlieb (1994b:267) put it, "the subtitler is simply lured by the original phrasing".

In the following example wordplay has been omitted on account of an earlier decision made by the translators:

(7):	[MICHAEL:] Hang on, 'cause this is gonna change the face of In Your Face.
TP:	[MICHAEL:] Se tulee muuttamaan Häirikkö-TV:n kasvot[.]
AM:	[MICHAEL:] Se muuttaa kanavamme kasvot[.]

TP has translated the name of this MTV-like music channel as *Häirikkö-TV*, whereas AM

has left it untranslated; in example (7), though, she only speaks of a *kanava* [channel].

Other instances of wordplay in *Reality Bites* are based on surprising associations.

Lelaina and Michael have the following in-depth discussion on their first date:

(8):   [LELAINA:] Are you religious?
             [MICHAEL:] Um. I guess... I guess I'm a non-practising Jew.
             [LELAINA:] Hey, I'm a non-practising virgin.

TP: [LELAINA] Oletko uskonnollinen?
             [MICHAEL:] Olen kai... epäaktiivinen juutalainen[.]
             [LELAINA:] Ja minä epäaktiivinen neitsyt[.]

AM: [LELAINA:] Oletko uskovainen?
             [MICHAEL:] Olen kai en-harras juutalainen[.]
             [LELAINA:] Ja minä en-harras neitsyt[.]

The word *non-practising* is somewhat problematic for Finnish translators, since it does not

seem to have any easy equivalent in Finnish. This also shows in the solutions made by both

TP and AM in the sense that both contain some semantic aspect of the original expression.

In other cases choosing the Finnish expression is more straightforward, as in example (9):

(9):   [LELAINA:] I thought the ad said that this was a job for a production assistant.
             [MAN:] Yes, and you'll be assisting me in the production of video tapes. You're gonna make copies for me. Many copies.
             [LELAINA:] Is this... is this like a pirate operation?
             [MAN:] Do I look like a pirate to you?

TP: [LELAINA:] Ettekö hakeneet tuotantoapulaista?
             [MIES:] Kyllä, avustaisit minua videonauhojen tuotannossa[.] Tekisit kopioita. Paljon kopioita[.]
             [LELAINA:] Onko tämä piraattijuttuja?
             [MIES:] Näytänkö minä piraatilta?

AM: [LELAINA:] Tehän haitte tuotantoavustajaa[.]
             [MIES:] Niin, avustat minua videofilmien tuotannossa[.] Teet minulle kopioita. Paljon kopioita[.]
             [LELAINA:] Onko tämä piraattitoimintaa?
             [MIES:] Näytänkö minä piraatilta?

Fired from her previous job, Lelaina uncovers first-hand the semantics of job descriptions,

when a promising opportunity turns out to be something sleazier instead. However, the

correspondence between Finnish and English is not one-to-one, which is reflected in the *TP version:

> *TP: [MIES:] Näytänkö minä merirosvolta?

Even malapropism, i.e. "using polysyllabic words incorrectly" according to the definition used in *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* (1991:523), is a form of wordplay, and Michael's inarticulateness and his fumbling and groping for words is a constant source of amusement in *Reality Bites*, as in example (10):

> (10a):   [MICHAEL:] Excuse me if somebody doesn't know the secret handshake with you.
> [TROY:] There's no secret handshake. There's an IQ prerequisite, but there's no secret handshake.

> TP: [MICHAEL:] Valitan etten tunne salaista käsimerkkiä[.]
> [TROY:] Ei ole mitään salaista käsimerkkiä. Ainoastaan älykkyysvaatimus[.]

> AM: [MICHAEL:] En ehkä osaa käsitellä sinua[.]
> [TROY:] Ei sitä vaaditakaan. Vain vähimmäis-ÄO, ei muuta[.]

> ***

> (10b:)   [MICHAEL:] We are not... like... intelligence quotations.

> TP: [MICHAEL:] Emme ole... älykkyysosamääriä[.]

> AM: [MICHAEL:] Ei mitään... älykkyysosamääriä[.]

What makes the scene funny is that Michael believes that *IQ* stands for *intelligence quotations*. Both TP and AM have ignored this, so Michael's apologising gestural language does not have its verbal counterpart in the two Finnish versions.

As we have seen above, TP and AM have had a variety of approaches to wordplay. Being a very language-specific element, wordplay has often been simply omitted and other techniques used instead. In examples (1) and (2), where wordplay is based on similarities in pronunciation, the translators have used either a paraphrase or a literal translation strategy. The reasons behind choosing a literal translation strategy are manifold: translators may have missed wordplay, as AM in example (2), or, possibly, TP in example (1); or they

may have assumed that the viewers will get the joke through English, as in example (6); or wordplay has been more at the level of associations, as in examples (8) and (9). TP has used creatively the same technique as the original in example (4); and AM has used other rhetorical devices, notably alliteration and assonance, in example (5).

5.4.3. Allusions

An allusion is, in the broad sense of the concept, defined in *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* (1991:29) as "an implicit reference, perhaps to another work of literature or art, to a person or an event". Various other definitions have been proposed, but most of them seem to agree on the indirectness of allusions as a rhetorical device.

However, the definition above seems too all-embracing for this study, which is why I prefer to focus on one type of allusions, that defined by Leppihalme (1996a:200) as elements involving "some modification of a *frame*" (emphasis original). Leppihalme has studied allusions and allusive humour as well as how they have been translated into Finnish on several occasions (1994, 1996a, 1997). She defines a frame as "a combination of words that is accepted in the language community as an example of preformed linguistic material (1997:41). Such frames include "idioms, proverbs, catchphrases and allusions to various sources" and they can be modified, for the purposes of humour, either linguistically or situationally (Leppihalme 1996a:200).

The allusions used in *Reality Bites* are predominantly connected with audiovisual culture, that is television, commercials and films. If we assume that *Reality Bites* reaches its American target audience of 20-somethings fed with the media, we may equally assume that they will recognise allusive humour in the form of allusions to advertisement jingles and tap to it. This is, indeed, what is suggested in various Internet reviews of the film.

When translating allusions to commercials, arguably a very culture-specific type of humour, both TP and AM have, in a way, neutralised them, yet their approaches have been somewhat different in example (1) below:

(1):   [VICKIE:] It's cool, Troy, you can stay. Welcome to the Maxi Pad.
         [SAMMY:] Yeah, with the new dry-weave it actually pulls moisture away from you.

TP: [VICKIE:] Voit jäädä, Troy. Tervetuloa kimppakämppään[.]
         [SAMMY:] Jossa elämä on pelkkää pämppää[.]

AM: [VICKIE:] Käy taloksi, Troy. Tervetuloa kimppakämppään[.]
         [SAMMY:] Jossa on hyvää seuraa ja kaikki mukavuudet[.]

The original version plays with the word *pad* and its two meanings, one associated with a flat and the other one with a sanitary towel, and Sammy responds to this with what sounds like a real jingle, or, alternatively, an imitated one. Both TP and AM have kept the former association and translated *Maxi Pad* as *kimppakämppä*, which contains both alliteration and assonance. It is difficult to say when the Finnish expression was originally coined, but judging by the fact that both translators have used it, it must have been current at the time, and it still is. However, it is the latter part of the example that is of particular interest, in that TP continues in a similar vein with the expression *pelkkää pämppää*, which both alliterates and rhymes with *kämppä*. The expression toys with the idea of sharing a flat, putting it rather bluntly that alcohol is consumed there in large quantities. I would like to suggest that TP has naturalised the humour in Finnish by replacing implicit allusive humour with explicit alcohol-related humour and thus rewriting the humour in the TL. Besides, the fact that the two translators have compensated the loss of allusive wordplay with other rhetorical devices possibly indicates that allusive humour is, generally speaking, less common in Finnish than it is in English (Leppihalme 1996a:212) and that Finnish therefore tends to employ other humour-inducing techniques. In other words, both the source and the techniques of humour are different in the TP example.

Troy's responses in examples (2) and (3) below are also from TV advertisements:

(2):   [LELAINA:] Aren't you excited, Troy?
             [TROY:] I'm bursting with fruit flavor.

TP: [LELAINA:] Troy, etkö ole innostunut?
           [TROY:] Hihkun riemusta[.]

AM: [LELAINA:] Tyytyväinen, Troy?
           [TROY:] Halkeamaisillani[.]

***

(3):   [LELAINA:] I've finally figured out what your problems are.
             [TROY:] What's that? I'm not a Pepper?

TP: [LELAINA:] Keksin lopulta mikä ongelmasi on.
           [TROY:] Etten ole pirtsakka?

AM: [LELAINA:] Nyt tajuan ongelmasi, Dyer.
           [TROY:] Etten ole pyrkyri?

In example (2), both TP and AM have translated the allusions by using neutral, yet idiomatic expressions in Finnish, but it may be that the solutions work just as well in the visual context; therefore, the interplay between what is said and what is seen accentuates the sarcasm in Troy's response. The same applies also to example (3). It is interesting to notice that in the Swedish version Troy's response in example (2) has been translated literally (*Jag är proppfull av fruktsmak*), whereas in example (3) it has been omitted altogether.

Allusions to literature, too, can be found in *Reality Bites*. Examples (4) and (5) below allude to works that are either in the curriculum of American schools or otherwise familiar in the English-speaking world:

(4):   [TROY:] Hello, you've reached the winter of our discontent.

TP: [TROY:] Haloo. Soitit tyytymättömyyden talveemme[.]

AM: [TROY:] Haloo. Tyytymättömyyden talvemme[.]

***

(5):   [MICHAEL:] I know why the caged bird sings.
           [LELAINA:] Why?

TP/AM: [MICHAEL:] Tiedän miksi häkkilintu laulaa.
          [LELAINA:] Miksi?

Example (4) contains a well-known quote from the beginning of Shakespeare's play *King Richard III* [Now is the winter of our discontent Made glorious summer by this sun of York...], which has been translated into Finnish by Paavo Cajander:

    "Nyt nurpeuden talven meillä muutti aurinko Yorkin kesäks ihanaksi..."

The *winter of our discontent* allusion is a good example of a frame (see Leppihalme 1996a:200) that is linguistically unmodified but has been modified situationally. In other words, the humorousness of the situation arises from a kind of bathos effect: Troy answers the telephone by using a lofty Shakespeare quote. The two Finnish subtitlers have used the minimum change or literal translation strategy, possibly because they have missed the allusion in the first place. Still, even if they had recognised the literary source and used the Cajander translation, the scene and the humour in it might have been equally baffling for the Finnish audience. After all, Shakespeare is not taught in Finnish schools, and apart from such examples as "to be or not to be", quotes from his plays are marginally known. Leppihalme (1996a:212) suggests that the few frames used in allusions found in Finnish journalism tend to have a popular culture-related origin rather than a literary one. Leppihalme (1994) has used the term "culture bump" in connection with translated allusions that puzzle TL readers because of their cultural specificity. This is undoubtedly to some extent true of example (5), denoting the title of a novel that practically all American schoolchildren read at some point of their school years. The humour derives from Michael trying to convince Lelaina he is not a yuppie; however, his attempt seems misplaced and he is forced to admit to having quit school before they got that far.

    Turning briefly back to the Shakespeare allusion, it is interesting to note that the German translator has adopted a completely different approach, as can be seen below:

GER: Hallo? Katholisches Männerbad.

In a sense, dubbing "allows" the translator to rewrite the humour in German without being found out and to replace an obscure literary quote with a joke relying on a strong homosexual sub-text. What is sophisticated in the original version has become something more straightforward in the German one. Barbe (1996:262-263) discusses the cultural aspects of dubbing humour into German, in particular, giving examples of German versions of *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* and one episode of the US sitcom *The Golden Girls*. She argues that in both cases dubbing translators have taken considerable liberties, adding extra lines and generally making humour more explicit. She suggests that this is due to the fact that the translators "feel that the picture is not enough" and that they want to "make sure the viewers 'get it'" (1996:263). Therefore, Laurian's (1992:122) suggestion that "the notion of the implicit is fundamental in humor" may not ring quite true, since it does not allow for cultural preferences.

Although allusive wordplay relies on the audience recognising it in the first place, it can be argued that recognition is not always necessary for appreciating the humour in it. Such is the case in the following example, (6):

(6):   [TROY:] Is there a frog in your throat or are you just glad to see me?

TP: [TROY:] Sammakko kurkussa, vai ilahduitko minusta?

AM: [TROY:] Nielitkö sammakon vai ilahduitko, kun tulin?

The original version is a nod towards a famous quote from a Mae West film from the 1930's ("Is that a gun in your pocket or are you just glad to see me?"). Instead, the following example, (7), which alludes to a famous line by President Clinton might be recognisable at least to some members of the Finnish audience as well, since it was widely reported in the Finnish press at the time:

(7):   [LELAINA:] You guys better not be inhaling.

TP: [LELAINA:] Paras olla vetämättä henkeen[.]

AM: [LELAINA:] Älkää vetäkö henkeen[.]

On the other hand, what may be more difficult to capture in a translation is irony in allusions. In example (8) below Lelaina has just heard that Troy has been fired from his umpteenth job and will share a flat with her and Vickie until he finds another job:

(8):   [LELAINA:] That's the American Dream of the 90's. It can take years.

TP: [LELAINA:] Uusi amerikkalainen unelma. Se voi viedä vuosia[.]

AM: [LELAINA:] Toiveajattelua. Se vie vuosia[.]

Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable (1984:30) defines the *American Dream* as "a phrase epitomising [--] American way of life at its best". TP has translated it using the minimum change strategy, whereas AM has made it both neutral and more explicit. AM's solution, i.e. *toiveajattelua* [wishful thinking], is also very short in comparison with the literal rendering. While the specific constraints of AVT as such do not dictate the choice of a particular translation strategy, they may indirectly favour some strategies over others. I would hesitate to suggest that AM's choice has been prompted by the demands of AVT, but it is one plausible explanation.

To sum up, a majority of allusions in *Reality Bites* have been translated either by using a literal translation strategy or a paraphrase. The latter strategy has been applied in examples (1), (2) and (3), which contain allusions to very culture-specific commercials. The *Maxi Pad* example, (1), interestingly contains other rhetorical devices, namely alliteration and assonance, probably to compensate the loss of allusive wordplay. The literal translation strategies in examples (4), (5), (6) and (7) may have been prompted by various reasons: the subtitlers may have assumed that humour comes across in context, even if the viewers did not recognise the source of the allusion; or that the viewers will recognise it; or they may have missed the allusion themselves. TP has rewritten the latter part of example (1) for the

Finnish audience, and AM has used an explicit paraphrase in example (8).

5.5. Extralinguistic humour

Much of the humour in *Reality Bites* derives from its being embedded in American popular culture and from its protagonists' and audience's attitudes, sometimes ambivalent and often ironic, towards cultural items and icons and consumerism in general. Extralinguistic humour is, indeed, what is defined in Coupland's *Generation X* (1991:165) as *obscurism*, i.e.:

> "The practice of peppering daily life with obscure references (forgotten films, dead TV stars, unpopular books, defunct countries, etc.) as a subliminal means of showcasing both one's education and one's wish to disassociate from the world of mass culture."

Again, extralinguistic humour requires an audience that recognise it in the first place and, to a lesser extent, practice it. Communicating the connotative load associated with some of those cultural items is by no means an easy task.

Some of the cultural items referred to in *Reality Bites* have become well established in Finland, and they have been rendered in both TP and AM either by retaining the proper nouns intact or using the established Finnish equivalent. Examples of these are *Teräsmies/Superman*, *Apinoiden planeetta/Planet of the Apes* (films); *Melrose Place* (television series); *Peter Frampton* and *Marky Mark* (music); and *Snickers* (chocolate bar). Sometimes the cultural item in question may be less familiar in Finland, as in example (1) below:

> (1): [LELAINA:] Just don't understand why things can't just go back to normal at the end of the half-hour like in "The Brady Bunch" or something.

> TP: [LELAINA:] Minä en vain ymmärrä... miksei kaikki voi olla hyvin aina lopussa, kuten vaikka The Brady Bunchissa[.]

> AM: [LELAINA:] En vaan käsitä miksei puolituntisen jälkeen kaikki palaa ennalleen vaikka niinku The Brady Bunchissa[.]

Both TP and AM have retained the reference to a famous 60's sitcom, possibly believing

that the context in a way fills in the cultural gap. Still, translators cannot be certain about what the audience know. It may be that they are themselves not always aware of the reference, even if it is a direct one, which may be the case with TP's solution in example (2):

(2a):   [TROY:] As you can see, I have the occasional run-in with an anti-Hey-That's-My-Biker and to those people I say nobody... nobody can eat 50 eggs.

TP: [TROY:] Kuten näette, taistelen joskus Hey That's My Bikin herjaajia vastaan[.] Niille ihmisille sanon, ettei kukaan voi syödä 50 kananmunaa[.]

AM: [TROY:] Kuten huomaatte, voi tulla kränää bändin herjaajien kanssa[.] Niille tyypeille sanon: ei kukaan... Ei kukaan syö 50 munaa[.]

***

(2b):   [MICHAEL:] The stuff that you... It's really... It's really great stuff. Really, that whole... that whole thing about 'nobody can eat all the eggs'... That was... surreal.
        [TROY:] I was quoting Cool Hand Luke.

TP: [MICHAEL:] Loistavaa kamaa. Sekin kun sanoit ettei kukaan voi syödä kaikkia munia. Todella...
        [TROY:] Siteerasin Cool Hand Lukea[.]

AM: [MICHAEL:] Mahtavaa kamaa. Esimerkiksi "kukaan voi syödä kaikkia munia", hieno kohta[.]
        [TROY:] Siteerasin Lannistumatonta Lukea[.]

Cool Hand Luke is a Paul Newman film made in 1967 and quite famous for the one-take scene where he eats 50 eggs. For those who are familiar with the film it is also an in-joke, since *Cool Hand Luke* starred Joe Don Baker, who plays Lelaina's father in the film. The film was shown in Finland with the title *Lannistumaton Luke*, which AM has used. Even so, it can be assumed that not all 20-somethings in Finland know it.

Coca Cola, or Coke, is, on the other hand, undoubtedly one of the most famous American cultural staples. Both TP and AM have translated *Coke* by using its colloquial Finnish equivalent, as can be seen below in example (3a):

(3a):   [LELAINA:] Well, I know this sound cornball, but I'd like to somehow make a difference in people's lives.
        [TROY:] And I... I would like to buy them all Coke.

TP: [LELAINA:] Kuulostaa nyyhkyltä, mutta... haluaisin muuttaa ihmisten elämää[.]
        [TROY:] Ja mä haluaisin ostaa kaikille kokiksen[.]

AM: [LELAINA:] Tää kuulostaa kornilta[.] Haluaisin merkitä ihmisille jotain[.]
[TROY:] Haluaisin tarjota kaikille kokikset[.]

***

(3b):   [TROY:] She's had too many Diet Cokes today.

TP: [TROY:] On juonut liikaa kevytkokiksia.

AM: [TROY:] Juonut liian monta dieettikolaa[.]

Also in example (3b) TP has used the current Finnish equivalent, whereas AM's *dieettikola* has an unidiomatic, 'translated' feel to it. The *kokis*-type colloquialisms are also found elsewhere in the two Finnish versions of *Reality Bites*. Whereas the original version speaks neutrally about BMW's, both TP and AM have occasionally opted for the colloquial *Bemari*, as in example (4) below:

(4):   [LELAINA:] And they wonder why those of us in our 20's refuse to work an 80-hour week just so we can afford to buy their BMW's?

TP: [LELAINA:] Ihmetellään miksi kieltäydymme 80 tunnin työviikosta jolloin olisi varaa Bemariin[.]

AM: [LELAINA:] He kysyvät miksi me emme tee 80 tunnin työviikkoa ja osta heidän Bemareitaan[.]

In the same vein, the rather un-hip Michael speaks about *Nykki* in the TP version, which some might regard as a misplaced solution. I would like to suggest that the *kokis*-type solution illustrates a kind of compensatory TL approach in the sense that the film is thus brought closer to the TL audience. After all, from the TL audience's point of view there are many culturally opaque elements in the original version, i.e. linguistic elements that in all probability are foreign to most of the TL audience. Neutralising such elements in the translation means that the TL version may, in a way, feel less authentic, a cultural no-man's-land. I would argue that the *kokis*-type solution is an attempt to give the translation back some of its cultural specificity by highlighting such elements that have been established also in the target culture.

In some cases TP and AM have had similar approaches to cultural items; we find solutions such as *suklaamurot/Cocoa Puffs*, *postilevyfirma/Columbia Record and Tape Company*, *Meediopalvelu/Dial-a-Psychic*, *palvelunumero/1-900 number*, and *kirjalyhennelmät/Cliffs Notes*. Here the two subtitlers have used the neutralisation (and explicitation) strategy. In other cases TP has used the neutralisation strategy, whereas AM has kept the original linguistic element intact, using the exoticisation strategy, like below in examples (5) and (6):

(5):   [LELAINA'S MOTHER:] Why don't you get a job at Burgerama? They'll hire you.

TP: [LELAINAN ÄITI:] Pääset varmasti purilaispaikkaan.

AM: [LELAINAN ÄITI:] Pääset varmasti Burgeramaan.

***

(6):   [MICHAEL:] I think that your documentary would be perfect for In Your Face. Forget it... You were probably thinking more... like PBS or something.

TP: [MICHAEL:] Dokumenttisi sopisi loistavasti meille[.] Mutta odotat kai ei-kaupallista kanavaa[.]

AM: [MICHAEL:] Dokumenttisi sopisi In Your Faceen[.] Ei sitten. Ajattelit ehkä ennemmin PBS:ää[.]

Though TP generally seems to prefer neutralisation, his approach is not systematic, as can be seen in the following two examples:

(7):   [TROY:] They've found that Nutrasweet causes you to grow a third eye?

TP: [TROY:] Huomattiinko että Nutrasweet kasvattaa kolmannen silmän?

AM: [TROY:] Makeutusaineista saa kolmannen silmän[.]

***

(8):   [LELAINA:] The most profound and important invention of my lifetime: Big Gulp.

TP: [LELAINA:] Kaikkein syvällisin, tärkein keksintö elämässäni on Big Gulp[.]

AM: [LELAINA:] Aikani suurin ja tärkein keksintö[:] Jättimuki[.]

AM's solution in example (8), i.e. *Jättimuki*, is interesting in that it resembles the one in the Swedish version:

SWE: Den största och viktigaste uppfinning som gjorts i min livstid: Jättemuggen

It may be that AM's translation is a pivot translation based on the Swedish one. This is plausible considering that FilmNet translations into Finnish were earlier made in Sweden on the basis of Swedish translations (Carina Engström, personal communication).

The following example, (9), shows how a reference that is culturally obscure to the TL audience has been handled in the two Finnish versions. Lelaina expresses her doubts about Troy moving in, but he assures her that:

(9):   [TROY:] It's not like Mr. Roper's gonna burst in.

TP: [TROY:] En ui liiveihin[.]

AM: [TROY:] En käy päälle[.]

Troy refers here to the role that actor Norman Fell played in the late 70's sitcom *Three's Company*, a "grumpy, vaguely homophobic apartment owner Stanley Roper" who was "more obsessed with tenant Jack Tripper's sex life than his own" (Ryan 1998). The sitcom had a cult following in the Generation X audience, and the actor became known simply as "Mr. Roper" (Ryan 1998).

Troy's reply can be interpreted in two ways: it may mean that Lelaina doesn't have to fear she will be getting into trouble with her landlord, or that she doesn't have to fear that Troy will start prying into her life. Both TP and AM have had a similar approach to the direct reference in example (9): both of them have omitted the name and made the possible sexual undercurrent more explicit, but the expression used by TP, *uida liiveihin* [get into someone's pants], is more colloquial.

The TP version is interesting in that it occasionally enters the territory of naturalisation, as in example (10) below:

(10): [TROY:] I'll probably be working at Whole Foods you know, playing warehouses and hanging around places like the Radio Shack screaming that I used to know you and you'll be in the lights and all beautiful and shit.
[LELAINA:] Oh, Troy, no no no no no, that would never happen. They'd never hire you at Whole Foods.

TP: [TROY:] Olen varmaan töissä Elannossa, soitan varastoissa ja kiljun että tunsin sinut, ja sinä loistat valoissa[.]
[LELAINA:] Ei siinä niin käy. Ei sinua otettaisi Elantoon[.]

AM: [TROY:] Olen duunissa luultavasti Whole Foodsissa ja soitan tavarataloissa ja kehuskelen että tunsin sinut. Ja sinä säteilet parrasvaloissa[.]
[LELAINA:] Siitä ei ikinä tule totta[.] Et ikinä saa duunia Whole Foodsista[.]

Here the two Finnish subtitlers have adopted two opposite strategies on the SL-TL continuum. The pragmatic equivalent chosen by TP, i.e. *Whole Foods* translated as *Elanto*, seems to violate the ideal of invisibility of the translation as well as the principle of "referential accuracy" mentioned by Zabalbeascoa (1996:237); after all, Finnish viewers do know that *Elanto* is part of the Finnish cultural framework. TP has applied here the naturalisation strategy, using it as a kind of surprise element, but he has probably been aware of the strategy being controversial, since in the *TP version *Elanto* has been replaced by the more neutral *alehalli*. Interestingly, Timo Porri says in a recent interview in *Katso* that "translations seen on television are my last word" (Häkkinen and Itkonen 1999). While TP has adapted the SL concept to the TL system, AM has kept the SL concept intact. The Swedish version has also left *Whole Foods* as such, whereas the German dubbing has naturalised it (*Naturkostladen*).

Another interesting example of a marked difference between TP and AM is seen below in example (11):

(11): [TROY:] What 'Hey, That's My Bike' would like to do as a band is travel the countryside like Woody Guthrie.
[SAMMY:] Or Richard Simmons. You know, how in his commercials he surprises people jogging.

TP: [TROY:] Hey That's My Bike haluaisi bändinä kiertää maata, kuten Woody Guthrie[.]
[SAMMY:] Tai lottovoittaja jonka "pitäs kiertää mualimoo"[.]

AM: [TROY:] Hey That's My Bike haluaisi bändinä kiertää maata kuin Woody Guthrie[.]
[SAMMY:] Tai Richard Simmons joka yllättää kansaa kuntolenkillä[.]

AM has in a way further exoticised the humour for the Finnish audience by leaving out the reference to commercials and, therefore, the translation is left hanging in the air. It is very unlikely that the Finnish audience would recognise the reference even if it this reference were made more explicit. Commercials are in this respect still very culture-specific despite the increasing globalisation in the field. TP has adopted the opposite approach, replacing the reference to an American commercial by another one to a well-known Finnish commercial and retaining the idea of touring. The Finnish commercial in question was widely seen around the time *Reality Bites* opened in Finland, so the TL audience must have been familiar with it. Again, naturalisation here seemingly infringes norms as regards the invisibility of the translation, as the TL audience undoubtedly know the commercial in question is Finnish. Still, whereas in *TP the *Whole Foods* translation has been neutralised, the naturalisation of the *Richard Simmons* one has been retained. The reason may be that proper nouns reveal the cultural specificity of a text more easily than other linguistic elements. Though commercials are very much products of their own time, the *lottovoittaja* commercial still seems to be current in language use, in that it appeared in a slightly different form in an interview in *Helsingin Sanomat* on 2 August 1998 ("Olemme nähneet [--] 'mualimaa'.").

As we have seen, the approaches TP and AM have had to translating extralinguistic humour show some differences, but one clear guideline is whether a given cultural item is familiar in Finland or not. In the former case, both have had a tendency of either retaining the SL item or using its Finnish equivalent, when such an equivalent exists. In the latter

case, however, there is more variation. Both TP and AM have often used the neutralisation (and explicitation) strategy, yet some culture-specific items show vacillation: TP has neutralised and AM retained the item in examples (5) and (6), but in examples (7) and (8) it is vice versa. Retaining the SL item in this case is possibly motivated by the desire not to strip the translation of its cultural specificity. This is true also of such colloquial solutions as *kokis*, *Bemari*, and *Nykki*, even if the approach here is TL-oriented. TP's naturalised solutions in examples (10) and (11) are very interesting and possibly controversial attempts to break norms for the purposes of humour.

5.6.   Discussing the findings

In the two previous sections I have looked at intralinguistic and extralinguistic humour in *Reality Bites* and what kind of strategies the Finnish subtitlers have used in translating them. There are both similarities and differences in their approaches, and the results raise a wide variety of questions as to the norms behind Finnish subtitlings.

As regards similarities in the two Finnish versions, we find that both have used a literal or minimum change strategy in most cases involving intralinguistic humour, whether we are dealing with Generation X jargon, wordplay, or allusions. With Generation X jargon, it is probably a default strategy, as the linguistic difficulties it entails are largely negligible apart from some cultural connotations. With wordplay and allusions, it may indicate that translators have thought that a literal translation strategy functions adequately for the TL audience or that they may have missed them in the first place. Paraphrases, on the other hand, show awareness of the linguistic specificity of wordplay and allusions and they often come with added rhetorical devices, namely alliteration, assonance, and rhyme. They are

also a way of bringing the translation closer to target culture preferences. With extralinguistic humour, both translators have had a tendency of assessing whether the SL element is known to the TL audience or whether it makes sense in context and acting accordingly, yet the solutions they have adopted are sometimes different.

As to differences, the two Finnish versions show obvious dissimilarities at the level of individual words and structures, but what is striking in terms of actual translation strategies is that TP has used the naturalisation strategy twice. It is a surprising move, since the film has both audial and visual cues pointing towards the source culture. Indeed, the strategy may have been chosen precisely because it passes for humour, even if it invites the viewers, as it were, to suspend their disbelief. However, TP has neutralised one of the two controversial solutions in the version shown on television.

What kind of conclusions can we make regarding the norms in Finnish subtitlings on the basis of these findings? Judging from evidence such as this it is extremely difficult to assess the stringency of norms, i.e. whether certain patterns of behaviour on the part of the translator are due to personal taste and/or skill or target culture norms or something in between. This is largely due to the fact that placing the findings in a wider cultural context would require information on actual translational practice, not only information filtered through extratextual sources. As far as I have been able to ascertain, the general norms influencing AVT in Finland have not been systematically studied on the basis of textual sources. In other words, we would need a general framework, and to establish that we would need a larger corpus of Finnish subtitlings than the one I have used here. Besides, such a framework is necessary for establishing the norms behind the strategies in translating humour, in particular. Without it comparing norms of humour to general norms is bound to be extremely hard.

Despite the difficulties outlined above, one can approach the issue by reflecting on what the subtitlers strive to achieve, on one hand, and what the audience expect to get, on the other. I would like to suggest that a partial answer to both questions is adequacy and acceptability **as humour**. In practice it often means adjusting the source text to the needs of the target-language audience, when translators feel that a SL-oriented rendering, i.e. using a literal or minimum change strategy, cannot communicate the humour of the original. It can also mean breaking the invisibility, readability, and faithfulness to the source text often associated with subtitlings for the purposes of humour.

It could be argued that all AVT occupies an intermediary space between SL and TL cultures; after all, even if a subtitling were deprived of all SL-specific features, images and sounds would still disclose its origin. On the other hand, some features in the visual and audial context of the film may call for adhering to SL norms. Translating humour in television may differ from translating other kinds of linguistic material in television, because it leaves room for moving away from the original, stretching the boundaries of reality.

6.   Concluding remarks

In this pro gradu thesis I have explored the problematics of translating humour in television and tried to identify some of the norms that influence subtitlers' decision-making in Finland, using both extratextual and textual sources. The results, indeed, yield some insight into how subtitlers operate in the audiovisual medium and what kind of translational patterns emerge, when two versions of the same film are compared to each other.

It would have been interesting to study how the Finnish audience react to humour in subtitlings, but that would have been clearly outside the scope of this study. Nevertheless, I hope this study could be useful to subtitlers in their everyday work and, in one way or another, also contribute to our understanding of how humour functions.

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