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Goal on concise standard language

Paraprofessional subtitlers' translation microstrategies in intralingual subtitles

Abstract

This paper focuses on translation microstrategies in intralingual Finnish-Finnish subtitles, specifically omissions and in-word reformulation, done by paraprofessional subtitlers, and the translation strategies these microstrategies represent. Paraprofessional subtitlers refer to employees within the organization who are not trained or paid for their subtitling services but take them on alongside their other professional duties. The study data consisted of 20 minutes of video material with 225 subtitle lines, in which there were 255 omissions and 147 in-word reformulations. Most of the omitted elements were particles or pronouns, and most of the in-word reformulation concerned the word form or diphthongs and vowel sequences. The aim for standard language was the most prominent translation strategy employed by the paraprofessional subtitlers. The study sheds light on accessibility services produced by non-professionals, and in practice can help to formulate guidelines, workshops and tools for paraprofessional subtitlers.

1 Introduction

The European Directive on the accessibility of the websites and mobile applications of public sector bodies (Directive (EU) 2016/2102) was to be applied by law in 2020 for all websites of public sector bodies in the member states. In Finland, the directive was enacted as *Laki digitaalisten palvelujen tarjoamisesta* (306/2019). Among other requirements, this new legislation stipulates that all videos published on the public online platforms of governmental entities must be subtitled in the spoken language.¹ Next, the EU will implement the Directive on the accessibility requirements for products and services (Directive (EU) 2019/882), extending accessibility requirements to commercial operators, such as online stores and banking services. This will result in significant challenges for organizations in complying with the new legal obligations.

¹ With the exceptions of (1) live video content, (2) video as a media alternative for text (i. e. the video presents no more information than is already presented in text) and is clearly labelled as such, (3) videos published before 23.09.2020 and (4) live recordings available for less than 14 days (*Laki digitaalisten palvelujen tarjoamisesta* 306/2019).

This article sheds light on how organizations respond to these legal requirements in practice. It examines intralingual subtitles – subtitles in the language spoken in the video – produced by university academic staff focusing on 1) what kind of microstrategies (Zethsen 2024) the subtitlers enforce in intralingual subtitles, focusing on omissions and in-word reformulation, i. e. linguistic reformulation taking place within the word and 2) what kind of translation strategies they represent. Thus, the article aims to answer the following research questions:

- (1) What kind of omissions and in-word reformulation do paraprofessional subtitlers apply to spoken language material when converting it into subtitles?
- (2) What kind of translation strategies can be identified for omissions and in-word reformulation by paraprofessional subtitlers?

The analysis starts with a grammatical analysis of the enforced microstrategies, and then observes the translation strategies used from this grammatical perspective. The focus is on linguistic reformulation as a unique feature of intralingual subtitling. The data of this article consist of a total of 20 minutes of subtitled video material, spoken and subtitled in Finnish by employees of Tampere University and the 225 subtitle lines in them. The data and methods will be introduced in more detail after a look at the theoretical framework of the study.

At the time of the study, the Tampere University established practice was that *staff members create subtitles themselves for the videos they produce*. Non-professional subtitling in university settings has previously been studied, e. g., in Spain by Talaván and Ávila-Cabrera (2017), focusing on 'social subtitling', interlingual subtitles produced by students. The chosen practice at Tampere University made subtitling *paraprofessional*; like in paraprofessional translation, the subtitles in the present study are conducted by employees representing a variety of academic fields and not explicitly trained in subtitling (see Koskela/Koskinen/Pilke 2017).

Subtitling has traditionally been considered to be a task for language professionals, as it requires expertise in, e. g., editing, spelling and understanding the content (see for example Neves 2008: 135; Gottlieb 2008b: 211; Zárata 2021: 13–15); as Neves puts it:

Subtitling requires more than language transfer, it needs language processing. Messages will need to be decoded and re-encoded, perhaps in another mode or in another linguistic system. (Neves 2005: 150–151)

For example, at the Finnish national broadcasting company Yle, intralingual subtitles are only produced by language professionals (Kokkola 2021). This prompts us to ponder the *quality and characteristics* of subtitles generated using the paraprofessional approach.

Intralingual subtitles are significant both linguistically and from the perspective of accessibility: Subtitles of poor quality do not make the video more accessible, but can instead hinder and obscure the understanding of the message. Accessibility is a prominent issue for society providing equal opportunities for individuals to participate and thus ensuring integration and inclusion. On a wider scope accessibility-related research is

already rather abundant: from the perspectives of people working in and with accessibility in the field of computer science, see e. g. Inal et al. (2020), on user perspective by evaluating the accessibility of government websites Paul (2023), or on creating heuristics for accessible data visualizations Elavsky, Bennet and Moritz (2022). On the field of linguistic accessibility, the first handbook on easy language was recently published (Lindholm/Vanhatalo 2021). Accessible subtitling has also been studied (see for example Tamayo/Chaume 2017 on subtitling for children; Agulló/Atamala 2019 on subtitling a virtual environment; Zárata 2021 on Portugal), but so far, less research has been conducted on paraprofessional subtitling. Research emerges as a valuable tool for gaining an idea of what kind of resources would be needed to achieve equality through accessibility.

2 Intralingual subtitling

The term 'subtitles' is used to describe snippets of written text shown on top of video footage, normally near the bottom of the frame (Pérez-González 2020: 31). In intralingual subtitling, also known as subtitling for the d/Deaf² and hard of hearing (SDH) (Zárata 2021) or (closed) captioning (CC) in the US (Neves 2008), the subtitles are composed in the same language as the video audio (Pérez-González 2020: 32; for more information on terminology, see Neves 2019: 82–84). Traditionally, intralingual subtitling has also included descriptions of the soundscape, as the main target group are the d/Deaf and hard of hearing, but they are also used by people with normal hearing, for example in noisy settings, learning a new language (Díaz Cintas/Remael 2014: 14–16; Neves 2008: 131–132) or just as a comprehension aid (Gernsbacher 2015). To fit the strict time and space constraints (see Gottlieb 2008b: 209–210) and to be understandable to the reader in written form, speech present in the audio needs to be edited and formatted to the subtitles (Neves 2005: 150–151, 2008: 135–136). Though there has also been advocacy for more verbatim subtitles as they are sometimes perceived as more 'equal' compared to edited ones (see Neves 2005: 140–151), editing the subtitles does make reading them easier and faster, and helps getting meaning across more clearly (Neves 2008: 137; Romero-Fresco 2009).

Intralingual subtitling falls under *intralingual translation*, also known as reformulation, rewording or paraphrasing, while also being a practice of intermodal transfer (Whyatt 2017: 176, 182; see also Jakobson 1959/2000). Contrary to *interlingual* translation, in intralingual translation the language between source and target text does not change, and the translation happens between e. g. linguistic registers or modes (Gottlieb 2008a: 56–58). In present translation studies, there is a wide consensus that subtitling for the d/Deaf and hard of hearing produces intralingual or interlingual translation (Neves 2019: 83). Furthermore, in accordance with Petrilli's (2003: 19–20) tripartitive typologization of

2 In the spelling 'd/Deaf', the term 'Deaf' with a capital D refers to people who consider themselves part of a linguistic and cultural minority (Deaf community), have a strong Deaf identity, and do not see deafness as a disability (Zárata 2021: 21–22).

intralingual translation (*diamesic*, *diaphasic* and *diglossic*), intralingual subtitling is seen as *diamesic intralingual translation*, as it consists of translation between the written and oral mode (see also *intersemiotic* or *intermodal translation* in Jakobson 1959/2000), whereas *diaphasic* concerns of translation between registers and *diglossic* between dialects (for a more extensive typology, see Gottlieb 2008a or Hill-Madsen 2019: 544). Tiittula and Voutilainen (2016: 49–51) describe transferring speech to writing as *intralingual intersemiotic translation*, as linguistic material inevitably changes in the transfer in aspiration for understandable target text. Thus, intralingual subtitling can indeed be seen as a part of translation studies and benefit from the same terminology and methodology.

2.1 Paraprofessional translation and translation strategies

Since recent and upcoming legislation (Directive (EU) 2016/2102 and Directive (EU) 2019/882), the public and legally binding demand for intralingual subtitles has increased tremendously and will continue to increase in the following years. One means to answer to the growing demand of intralingual subtitles is to use *paraprofessional subtitling*, meaning utilizing employees within the organization who are not trained or paid for their subtitling services, but who take them on as a part of or alongside their other professional duties. The term *paraprofessional translation* (see Koskela/Koskinen/Pilke 2017) has been used to describe similar activity in a translational setting; translating or interpreting done in a professional environment as a part of other professional duties, but not by trained translators or interpreters. Tyulenev (2014: 75) uses the term *paratranslator* to describe, for example, a journalist preparing news reports based on foreign sources, and thus translating the source information in the process. Paraprofessional subtitling is not to be mixed with *amateur subtitling*, *non-professional subtitling* or *fansubbing*, which are also not done by subtitling professionals, but do not happen in a professional setting and are done by volunteers on their free time (see for reference Secară 2011; Pérez-González 2012; Tyulenev 2014: 75; Orrego-Carmona/Lee 2017).

On translation strategies, Hill-Madsen applies Chesterman's (1997: 89) definition – linguistic behaviour of translator formulating the target text that is directly observable by comparing the source and target texts – to intralingual translation, stating that in intralingual translation “strategies may likewise be regarded as the changes observable between source and target text, only without the intervening switch in languages” (Hill-Madsen 2015: 90). Hill-Madsen (2015, 2019) uses the term (*lexical*) *strategy* to describe deeper level changes done by the translator manifested in text (i. e. decrease-in-technicality, see Hill-Madsen 2015), and *shifts* to describe visually observable changes in lexis and grammar (see also Bakker/Koster/van Leuven-Zwart 2008; Hill-Madsen 2021). Zethsen (2024) however uses the term *microstrategy* and adds that ‘shifts’ tend to refer to linguistic change, whereas ‘microstrategy’ refers to translation tools and practices. Though her data are mostly from expert-lay (diaphasic) intralingual translation, Zethsen (2024) argues that widely the same microstrategies used in interlingual translation can be used for intralingual translation, and only the degree and frequency differ. Further-

more, Schjoldager (2008: 89–112) lists twelve microstrategies for interlingual translation, of which six are present in this study: *deletions* (here: omissions), *substitutions*, *additions*, *paraphrasing* (changes in word order and sentence structure) and in-word reformulation, which could be seen similar to Schjoldager's *oblique translation*. In this article, the term *microstrategy* (as per Zethsen 2024) will be used for changes done by the subtitler, e. g. omissions, and *translation strategy* (where Hill-Madsen 2015 uses *lexical strategy*) for factors that can be seen to influence the use of the microstrategy.

2.2 Aspects of spoken and written Finnish

As this paper concerns spoken Finnish marked down in a written form, a few words need to be said on the differences between spoken and written Finnish. As a Finno-Ugric language, Finnish has a rich case system of (at least) fourteen grammatical and semantic cases (see Huumo/Jaakola/Onnikki-Rantajääskö 2023: 10–37), wide verb conjugation including agreement of person, and a wide use of case endings, suffixes, and clitics, but no articles (Karlsson 2018: 6–8, 100–115). Spoken colloquial Finnish differs from the written standard both in grammar and pronunciation (Karlsson 2018: 443–455). These result in a plethora of different spoken language phenomena; ingovernance of plural (*ne tulee* cf. *ne tulevat*, 'they come'), the use of passive verb form instead of 1st plural (*me mennään* cf. *me menemme*, 'we go'), leaving out the possessive suffix (*meidän kirja* cf. *meidän kirjamme*, 'our book'), and pronouns used like articles (Hakulinen 2003; Tiittula/Nuolijärvi 2013: 56–57) to name a few. Also, though grammatically highly similar, in situations where spoken language tends to favour the use of pronouns (Hakulinen 2003), written language norms guide on using full lexical phrases (ISK 2004: 24–25). Similarly, though present also in written Finnish, particles, a heterogeneous group of words that are syntactically optional and bring an implication to the content (VISK 2008: §792, §794), are used a lot more in spoken Finnish and for several different tasks (Tiittula/Nuolijärvi 2013: 46–50). (For grammar in colloquial Finnish, see Karlsson 2018: 443–455.)

3 Data and methods

The research data were gathered through a survey conducted as part of the Opetext³ project examining the approaches and attitudes regarding accessibility and subtitling as a task among Tampere University staff members. The survey data will be analysed elsewhere and not be covered in this article, which focuses on audio-visual data provided by the volunteer respondents. The participants of the survey were provided with the option to provide their contact details for submitting subtitling material for the study. The present analysis addresses the video material obtained from four volunteer respondents (all who provided some data). The respondents and data providers work at the university

³ The Opetext project is a part of project DARE – Dynamics of language awareness and ideologies in reflective processes, which investigates language awareness and ideologies of professionals. See (DARE s. a.).

in pedagogical and administrative expert tasks outside the language and communication studies, i. e. there are no respondents representing linguistic professionals such as communications experts or academic staff in linguistics. The approximately 4.5-hour video data were pseudonymised upon collection by using numerical identifiers instead of the respondent's names as file names. It was not possible to anonymise or pseudonymise the actual video material at the analysis phase, and the respondents had been informed of this in advance in the privacy notice of the study.

Due to the extensive volume of the video material, it was not possible to analyse all the collected material. For the study data to represent both different video types and creators as equally as possible, the first and last two minutes of one of each subtitler's video were included in the data. An exception to this were the videos by subtitler 2: they submitted videos on two different topics done in differing style, from which the first and last two minutes of one video from each topic were included. By taking this kind of informed sample of the data, it was possible to get as comprehensive a representation as possible of different subtitled videos on different topics.

Thus, for subtitlers 1, 3, and 4, four minutes of subtitled video material each was analysed, and for subtitler 2 eight minutes, resulting in a total of 20 minutes of analysed material. The 30–76 subtitle lines, containing 241–276 words, occurring in these four minutes were extracted. Even though eight minutes of data from subtitler 2 was studied instead of four, the distribution of the subtitle lines between the subtitlers was quite equal in amount (see Table 1). The final data of the study consisted of the total 225 lines studied and the corresponding video.

Subtitler	lines (n)	lines %	words (n)	words %
Subtitler 1	51	23 %	376	23 %
Subtitler 2 (1)	37	16 %	241	15 %
Subtitler 2 (2)	30	13 %	338	21 %
Subtitler 3	76	34 %	323	20 %
Subtitler 4	31	14 %	348	21 %
total	225	100 %	1626	100 %

Table 1: Data of the study: Amount, distribution and length of subtitle lines studied

This study focuses on microstrategies enforced by the subtitlers, i. e. linguistic reformulation, as it was abundant in the subtitles of the data and does not depend on the subtitling software used. While reformulation can be seen as a vital part of any form of translation (Jakobson 1959/2000), it is the essence of intralingual translation and subtitling. In interlingual subtitling, reformulation is intertwined with other translation practices; in intralingual subtitling, with the transfer from one language to another lacking, it is widely visible.

Upon data collection the usage of automatic speech recognition (ASR) tools in producing the subtitles was not inquired. Afterwards the confirmation of ASR usage was received from three of the four subtitlers. Some of the reformulation, especially in-word

reformulation of single sounds, may thus be automated solutions made by ASR. Though it can be argued that regardless of the reformulation being produced by human or ASR, the human subtitler plays an active role in the production of subtitles and is assumed to revise and approve the subtitling solutions, working with ready-made output affects the decisions of the humans working with it (see Krings 1995/2001: 165–166; Koponen 2016: 13–15). Building solely on subtitle data, this study focuses on the subtitles as the end product. From that perspective, reformulation solutions in subtitles can be examined with the uncertainty of whether they were produced manually or with the help of ASR. However, when covering reformulation strategies in which the role of ASR could potentially be significant, it will be discussed.

The conducted study falls under the translation process study umbrella, with a product-oriented view on the units of translation: the translation units are seen as linguistic entities (Saldanha/O'Brien 2013: 119). The speech of the video clips was transcribed and then the data was analysed using the so-called 'coupled-pairs method' from the field of translation studies (Toury 2012: 115–129), meaning a manual, comparative analysis of source and target micro-segments, in this case lexical items of the video audio and the subtitles. To conduct the analysis, the source text (transcription of what is spoken) and target text (subtitles) were aligned so that target segments aligned to the source segments from which they are derived (see also Hill-Madsen 2015). After tabulation, the elements that had been reformulated in the subtitle lines, as well as the elements added to the lines, were marked up.

The total number of entries, i. e. all the reformatted elements, was 460, the total number of words being 1626. These reformulation elements were then categorized into six categories representing the microstrategies (see Schjoldager 2008: 89–112; Zethsen 2024) exercised: omissions, additions, substitutions, in-word reformulation, and changes in word order and sentence structure. The implemented microstrategies were analysed qualitatively and examined what language features – such as words, sounds and structures – were reformatted, and the elements were classified according to these features. The transcript was compared with the corresponding line containing the reformulation, and it was analysed which strategies could be seen to affect the produced changes.

4 Results

A total number of 460 omissions, substitutions, additions, in-word reformulations and changes in word order and sentence structure occurred in the data. The distribution of these elements by microstrategy is summarised in Table 2.

It was possible for several different microstrategies to take place in the same subtitle line, hence the "lines" $n=275$ instead of the total number of lines in the dataset $n=225$. There were 56 lines that did not contain any type of reformulation. Omissions, i. e. elements that appeared in speech but had been removed from the subtitles, occurred by

Microstrategy	n	%	lines in which present (n)
omission	255	55 %	125
in-word reformulation	147	32 %	100
substitution	28	6 %	22
addition	15	3 %	13
word order	9	2 %	9
structure	6	1 %	6
	460	100 %	275

Table 2: Distribution of reformulation in the data by microstrategy

far the most: 55 %, 255 times in 125 lines. In-word reformulation occurred the second most: 32 %, 147 times in 100 lines. The distribution of these microstrategies between the subtitlers is displayed in respective tables 3 and 5 in the following chapters. Other microstrategies of reformulation were significantly less present, only 12 % of all microstrategies.

The following analysis is structured according to findings summarised in Table 2. The two most common types of microstrategies in the data, omissions and in-word reformulation, are discussed, as they covered almost 90 % of all reformulation. At first a specification on how much and what kind of linguistic elements the reformulation concerns is presented. The analysis is then deepened by looking at the linguistic setting in which the reformulation takes place, i. e. what kind of translation strategies can be seen motivating the use of these microstrategies. The analysis is complemented with examples, in which 'Xa' is what is said and 'Xb' what is subtitled, and **bolding** marks omitted elements and underlining reformulation.

4.1 Omissions

As indicated in Table 2, the most common microstrategy employed in the subtitles was omissions (55 %). By omission I refer to a microstrategy in which a linguistic unit in spoken material was not written to the subtitles, i. e. omitted rather than reformulated. The distribution of conducted omissions by subtitler is presented in Table 3.

The elements omitted from the lines were categorized into seven grammatical categories (VISK 2008), which correspond mainly to word classes, and are presented in Table 4. Phrases or clauses cover words that can be seen omitted as one unit, one micro-segment. If calculated separately, a total of 305 words were omitted from the subtitles. In addition to lexical omissions, false starts (*hy-*, *si-*, n=11) and hesitation marks (*aa*, *öö*, n=14) were omitted from the subtitles but will not be discussed further here. While hesitation marks streamline speech production and make speech easier to understand for the listener (Tiittula 1992: 60–65; Tiittula/Voutilainen 2016: 40), in writing these elements change meaning and cannot thus be written as they appear in speech (Tiittula/Nuolijärvi 2013: 28).

Subtitled	lines (n)	lines %	omissions (n)	omissions %
Subtitled 1	51	23 %	79	31 %
Subtitled 2 (1)	37	16 %	69	27 %
Subtitled 2 (2)	30	13 %	42	16 %
Subtitled 3	76	34 %	8	3 %
Subtitled 4	31	14 %	57	22 %
total	225	100 %	255	100 %

Table 3: The distribution of omissions (n=255) by subtitled

Omitted element	n	%
particle	110	43 %
pronoun	84	33 %
adverb	21	8 %
adjective	13	5 %
phrase or clause	12	5 %
substantive	10	4 %
verb	5	2 %
	255	100 %

Table 4: Omitted elements (n=255) in the data

Particles had been omitted 110 times, 43 % of all omissions. In Finnish, particles are a heterogeneous group of words that are syntactically optional in terms of sentence structure and bring an implication to the content (VISK 2008: §792, §794). Of the particles omitted, 47 were conjunctions, which link sentences and parts of sentences together (Karlsson 2018: 406) and are typically abundant in spoken Finnish (Tiittula 1992: 57). Most of the omitted conjunctions are coordinating conjunctions (*eli*, 'so', *ja*, 'and', *mut(ta)*, 'but', 37 occurrences; example 1).

- (1a) **Eli** voisi oikeastaan sanoa, että **tää** aineistojen
 [So it could be said, that **this** data]
- (1b) Voisi oikeastaan sanoa, että aineistojen
 [It could be said, that data]

Planning particles, which are empty expressions used by the speaker when planning the next utterance (Karlsson 2018: 411) were removed the second most, 17 times, tone particles 14 times, and utterance particles 12 times. Other particle types had been omitted from subtitles to a significantly lesser extent, 1–7 times, respectively.

Pronouns had been omitted 84 times, covering 33 % of all omissions. Of pronouns, subtitlers had omitted demonstrative pronouns by far the most, 54 occurrences, 64 % of

pronominal omissions (see example 1, *tää*, 'this'). Personal pronouns had been removed the second most frequently, 29 %, 24 occurrences (see example 2, *me*, 'we').

- (2a) **Mutta me** hyvin nopeesti päästään tätä kautta sitten niihin opetusmenetelmiin.
[But this way we very quickly then get to those teaching methods.]
- (2b) Pääsemme hyvin nopeasti tätä kautta niihin opetusmenetelmiin, -
[This way [we] very quickly get to those teaching methods, -]

Being a 'pro-drop language' (see Heinonen 1995), it is not always necessary to use a personal pronoun as a subject in Finnish, as the verb agrees with the subject in person and the subject can thus be understood from the verb form (Tiittula/Nuolijärvi 2013: 57). In example 2, with the omission of the subject pronoun (*me*, 'we') the verb form is also reformulated from passive (*päästään*) to first-person plural (*pääsemme*) to convey the subject. The use of passive form instead of the first-person plural is common in colloquial Finnish (see Helasvuo/Laitinen 2006: 176–179; VISK 2008: §1326). The usage of personal pronouns is far more present in spoken Finnish than in written language (Heinonen 1995; Helasvuo/Laitinen 2006: 179–183). Other pronoun types had been removed significantly less, in only a few cases.

The rest of the omitted elements account for 24 % of all omissions. Adverbs were omitted 21 times: 17 occurrences were typical adverbs describing time, habit, or quantity. Adjectives were omitted from subtitles 13 times. Phrases or clauses had been removed from subtitles 12 times. They consist of a group of words acting as a unit, which can be considered to have been omitted as a unit, one micro-segment. At least three consecutive, contiguous words, all omitted, form an omitted phrase or clause. Nouns had been omitted 10 times: most of them independent words, some modifiers of a compound word that had not been repeated in subtitles. Verbs were removed from the subtitles the least, only five times.

4.2 In-word reformulation

The second prominent microstrategy implemented is in-word reformulation, which appeared in 100 lines, a total of 155 times in 147 lexemes in the data. In-word reformulation is a unique feature of intralingual subtitles as there is no translation between languages. The distribution of conducted in-word reformulation by subtitler is presented in Table 5.

The reformulation was classified into nine grammatical categories presented in Table 6 below. A single word was sometimes reformulated in more than one way, resulting in $n=155$ instead of $n=147$ words containing reformulation. In-word reformulation concerned usually just one or two characters in a word, and it did not change the word to another. If the reformulating was so substantial that the word changed to another, I have classified it as a substitution (see Table 2).

Subtitler	lines (n)	lines %	words with in-word reformulation (n)	words with in-word reformulation (%)
Subtitler 1	51	23 %	53	36 %
Subtitler 2 (1)	37	16 %	41	28 %
Subtitler 2 (2)	30	13 %	25	17 %
Subtitler 3	76	34 %	6	4 %
Subtitler 4	31	14 %	22	15 %
total	225	100 %	147	100 %

Table 5: The distribution of words subjected to in-word reformulation (n=147) by subtitler

Reformulated element	n	%
word from	30	19 %
diphthongs and vowel sequence	28	18 %
number	24	15 %
apocope	24	15 %
case	19	12 %
person	17	11 %
tempus and modus	9	6 %
possessive suffix	4	3 %
	155	100 %

Table 6: In-word reformulation (n=155) in the data

Word form was reformulated 30 times (19 %). Word form reformulation covers reformulations that are not related to diphthongs (combinations of two vowels occurring in the same syllable), apocope (omission of one or more sounds or syllables from the end of a word), or other categorised features. Of the individual words, the demonstrative pronoun *tämä* 'this' (*tää* → *tämä*, example 3) or the verb *olla* 'to be' (*oon* → *olen*) were most often reformulated to correspond to the standard language norms (see Karlsson 2018: 448–450).

- (3a) Kiitos kun katsoit tän videon
 [Thank you for watching this video]
- (3b) Kiitos kun katsoit tämän videon!
 [Thank you for watching this video]

A common object of reformulation of the word form was also writing the *d* sound in subtitles to comply with standard language norms, even if it was missing from the speech (*lähetään* → *lähdetään*, 'let's leave'). Dropping the *d* is widely common in all spoken Finnish (see Karlsson 2018: 448), but not approved in the standard language.

Diphthongs and vowel sequences had been reformulated 28 times (18 %). Finnish has 16 diphthongs (see Karlsson 2018: 21–22) and the use of vowels is rich. In spoken

Finnish, diphthongs ending with the sound *i* are commonly pronounced without the *i* sound (see example 4 *tavotteena* → *tavoitteena*, 'as the goal'; VISK 2008: §24; Karlsson 2018: 446).

- (4a) Lisäks tavotteena on osata ennakoida ja toimia niin, että
[Additionally the goal is to know how to prepare and act so, that]
- (4b) Lisäksi tavoitteena on osata
ennakoida ja toimia niin että ...

Vowel sequences representing as long vowels are typical for colloquial Finnish language, as the long vowel pronunciation is commonly found in all dialect areas (e. g. *ea* in *nopea* coll. *nopee*, 'fast;' see example 2; VISK 2008: §26; Karlsson 2018: 446). However, both diphthongs and vowel sequences in subtitles had as a rule, although not always, been reformulated to conform to the norms of standard language, i. e. written with the *i* or the *a* sound.

Apocope, meaning here the spoken omission of one or more sounds or syllables at the end of the word, was reformulated 24 times. *Dropping the postverbial i after the sound s* is a wide-ranging phenomenon in spoken Finnish (VISK 2008: §37; Karlsson 2018: 444–445), and it accounted for half of the apocopes in the data. When reformulating the apocope, the final sound or syllable not pronounced from the word was added to the subtitles to comply with standard language norms (see example 4, *lisäks* → *lisäksi*, 'additionally'). Apocope is an integral colloquial phenomenon and is not known in standard written Finnish (VISK 2008: §37).

Number of a word had been reformulated 24 times, 14 times from plural to singular and 10 times from singular to plural. Case of a word had been reformulated 19 times, often associated with other rephrasing. For example, due to the rich Finnish class system, omissions sometimes required changing the case of the remaining words. Person form of a word had been reformulated 17 times, each of them a verb; in Finnish, the person is marked in the verb form by three persons in the singular and plural, or the passive form (for verbal person marking and conjugation in Finnish, see Helasvuo/Laitinen 2006). 16 of these cases consisted of changing the passive form to the first-person plural (*päätetään* 'is decided' → *päätämme* '[we] decide'). Though the passive form is widely used in colloquial Finnish instead of the first-person plural (see Helasvuo/Laitinen 2006: 176–179; VISK 2008: §1326), it was written in the subtitles in the standard, first-person plural form. The reformulation of the passive form is also supported by the fact that the first-person plural pronoun was often removed from the subtitles (see example 2). Without changing the personal form of the verb, the subject would not be indexed at all in the subtitles (see Helasvuo/Laitinen 2006; Karlsson 2018: 452).

Tempus (n=8) and modus (n=1) of the verbs had been reformulated nine times. Four times the reformulation concerned the possessive suffix (also: possessive ending), which is a suffix indicating the grammatical person that is the abstract owner of the object denoted by the noun (Karlsson 2018: 220–227). Each time it was added to the noun; it is commonly left out in spoken Finnish (Tiittula/Nuolijärvi 2013: 41; Karlsson 2018: 220).

This usually also involved the removal of the possessive pronoun (*sun kollegat* → *kollegasi*, 'your colleagues'); As with the reformulation of the passive form, the addition of the possessive suffix indicated the possessive nature, allowing the removal of the separate possessive pronoun and thus making the line shorter for the subtitles.

4.3 Reformulation strategies

After a grammar-based analysis, further analysis was conducted on what kind of translation strategies (see Hill-Madsen 2015) could be seen to affect the use of reformulation microstrategies (see RQ 2). For omissions there appeared to be five and for in-word reformulation six strategies, which will next be introduced in detail starting with the omissions.

As summarised in Table 7, the most prominent translation strategy manifesting as omissions can be named as “the aim for standard written language” (n=76, 30 %). This obscures linguistic phenomena that occur only in colloquial speech and are stylistically distinctive or structurally not necessary, such as the article-like determiners (see Hint/Nahkola/Pajusalu 2017) and the subject pronoun. The second prominent strategy is the reduction of listener-centred speech (n=54, 21 %), which includes speech acts clearly addressed to the listener by the speaker, such as explanatory expressions, clarifications and deictic expressions, characterizations and emphasis. These measures typical for spoken language ensure a mutual understanding of the object of attention and the nature of speech (Tiittula 1992: 116–117). However, similar elements rarely appear in written texts, so it is understandable that they have been omitted from the subtitles.

Strategy for omission	n	%
aim for standard written language	76	30 %
reducing listener-centred speech	54	21 %
dividing speech into sentences	45	18 %
reducing speech and conversational phenomena	42	16 %
reducing reiteration	38	15 %
	255	100 %

Table 7: Underlying strategies for omissions (n=225)

The strategy of dividing speech into sentences (n=45, 18 %) includes elements omitted from the beginning of the utterance as well as elements omitted due to sentence division into lines. Most of omitted elements were conjunctions or particles (see examples 1 and 2), the use of which in standard Finnish, especially at the beginning of a sentence, is not as abundant as in speech (Tiittula 1992: 57). A separate strategy from listener-centred speech is the reduction of speech and conversational phenomena (n=42, 16 %). The strategy covers the erasure of linguistic and communicative phenomena related to speech and conversational setting, such as filler and reflection expressions and self-corrections.

In addition to pure word-for-word reiteration, the strategy of reducing reiteration includes, for example, the removal of elements repeated in verb form and reiterative expressions with overlapping meaning. It is therefore perhaps surprising that in the data, reducing reiteration is used only for a small fraction of the made omissions. On the other hand, this can be considered to describe the nature of the material: four out of five videos in the data consisted of (at least to some degree) planned speech, which means that there may be fewer colloquial phenomena, such as reiteration, than in spontaneous speech.

All strategies manifesting as omissions are united by the motivation for standard Finnish and clear, concise language. Condensing the spoken text can be seen as the underlying strategy behind all omissions – by removing elements from speech, it inevitably shortens. Complying to the norms of standard Finnish, eliminating listener-centred speech, speech and conversational phenomena and reiteration, and dividing speech into sentences all make subtitles and their language easier to read and understand for the receiver. Although there were many omissions in the data, they did not have a major influence on conveying the meaning of the content: the message cannot be considered to have changed or truncated.

In in-word reformulation the most prominent translation strategy is the aim for standard language, as seen in Table 8. It means reformulating words from their colloquial spoken form to follow the norms of standard language: this was the main strategy employed for 61 % of the reformulated words. Reformulating with the aim for standard language can be considered as the main strategy of all in-word reformulation, since it covers diphthongs and vowel sequences, apocope, word form, possessive suffix, person forms, tempus, and modus reformulation. However, it is to be noted that it is possible that this kind of reformulation is at least partly produced by the ASR programme used by the subtitler, and thus not originating from a strategy rather than automation. This might be the case especially with reformulation concerning only one sound/letter, such as writing the standard *d*, diphthongs and vocal sequences and apocope.

Strategy for in-word reformulation	n	%
aim for standard language	89	61 %
condensation	15	10 %
style	14	10 %
pursuit of agreement	14	10 %
typological error	12	8 %
correction of speech	3	2 %
	147	100 %

Table 8: Underlying strategies for in-word reformulation (n=147)

Condensation covered, for example, writing co-occurring words together without spaces as a compound word or changing the number of a word from plural to singular with no

other visible reason, thus making the subtitle line a few characters shorter. The reformulation of a word's case form resulting from the omission of another word in the subtitles may also be interpreted as a form of condensation. Stylistic factors can be considered to explain almost all changes in modus and tempus: the material consisted of instructional videos, so choosing indicative and imperative over distinctive modal forms can be considered stylistic choices. The pursuit of agreement can be considered to relate closely to the aim of standard Finnish, as agreement is a phenomenon of the norms of standard Finnish (see Hakulinen 2003; Tiittula/Nuolijärvi 2013: 56–57), even though it is not always acted in speech.

There were 12 instances of in-word reformulation that can be interpreted as a typographical error. In these cases, the form written in the subtitles is clearly incorrect compared to both what is spoken and to standard language norms, and the inaccuracy arises from the absence or inaccuracy of a single character. Therefore, it is probably not so much a result of deliberate reformulation but a mistake. However, these presumed misspellings have not been excluded from the data, since their nature cannot be determined for certain. The effect of possible spelling errors on the distribution of types of in-word reformulation has been analysed in my work (Marttila 2022), and their effect did not turn out to be significant. The strategy of correction of speech refers to cases where a word was written to the subtitles in accordance with the standard Finnish word form, instead of the grammatically incorrect form used in the speech.

5 Discussion and conclusion

This article shed light on what kind of microstrategies (Zethsen 2024) paraprofessional subtitlers enforce in intralingual subtitles in the context of Finnish language, focusing on omissions and in-word reformulation, and what kind of translation strategies they represent. The microstrategies employed consist mainly of omissions (55 %) and in-word reformulating (32 %). This is not vastly surprising, since both are quick, straightforward measures to make the subtitles more condensed and in line with the standard language. Given that the subtitlers of the video data are highly educated experts working in a university environment, it is not surprising that they aim for linguistic standardization.

76 % of the omissions concerned particles or pronouns. Though paraprofessionals tended to omit a lot of linguistic content, it did not affect the equivalence between the source and target text. It is important to note that only a few of the omitted elements were semantically significant, such as adjectives (5 %), substantives (4 %) or verbs (2 %), or phrases or clauses (5 %). Thus, it can be argued that paraprofessional subtitlers omitted mostly semantically insignificant elements; as Gottlieb (2008a: 234) puts it: "quantitative reduction in subtitling need not imply semantic or qualitative reduction." Paraprofessional subtitlers' in-word reformulation concerned most (67 %) word form, diphthongs, vowel sequences, number of the word or apocope; utilizing standard spelling makes the subtitles easier to understand. It is, however, possible that some of these changes were made by an ASR software rather than manually by the subtitler.

All the strategies implemented by the four paraprofessional subtitlers can be seen to aim for clear, concise standard language. The most important translation strategies for paraprofessional subtitlers appear to be the aim for standard language, reducing communicative phenomena – such as listener-centred speech and speech and conversational phenomena – and condensation. These emerged as the main strategies behind omissions and in-word reformulation. For omissions, following the norms of standard language and reducing listener-centred speech in the subtitles accounted for 51 % of cases, and for in-word reformulation, following the norms of standard language in 61 % of cases. Though the occurrence of condensation or reducing reiteration were not substantially high on their own, it can be argued that the high number of omissions done from the subtitles tells another story. Condensing can be seen as the underlying strategy for all omissions, as by omitting elements of the speech from the subtitles, the subtitles inevitably become more concise.

Within the scope of this study, it was possible to give an overview of the microstrategies and the translation strategies implemented by paraprofessional subtitlers based on the subtitling data. It was not possible to examine the subtitling process or e. g. the role of automation and ASR in producing the subtitles. In future research, my aim is to focus on the cognitive processes of paraprofessional subtitlers and how they verbalise and explain their decisions by combining subtitling data with multimodal data of the subtitling process, as well as to study the role of automation and ASR in the paraprofessional subtitling process. Professional orientation and attitudes of paraprofessional subtitlers towards subtitling as a task will also be studied. In addition to translation and linguistics, the theme touches on administrative science and business studies. The research on paraprofessional subtitlers' experiences could also benefit from folk-linguistic language awareness research (see Saviniemi 2015). Similarly, a broader review of paraprofessional subtitling as a phenomenon present in society would provide new outlooks of the phenomenon.

Given the tightening of legislation in recent and upcoming years combined with the multimodality of modern society, it is likely that the number of subtitles produced by paraprofessionals will increase in the future. Thus, it is important to know that microstrategies employed by paraprofessional subtitlers – perhaps intuitively – are strongly focused on omissions and in-word reformulation, aimed for concise standard language, and do not seem to affect the message conveyed. In practice this can for one help to formulate guidelines, workshops and tools for paraprofessional subtitlers. Information contributing to accessibility holds significance for society collectively, as accessibility constitutes a communal concern.

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