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Contrastive analysis of English fan and professional subtitles of Korean TV drama

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We compare fan subtitles and subtitles produced by professionals in order to detect what concepts each of them foreground, and how they differ in register and in translation strategy. Differences are systematically explored with the help of corpus-assisted discourse analysis to contrast two sets of English subtitles from 26 Korean dramas and 451 episodes – fan subtitles from *Viki* and professional subtitles from *Netflix*. Results reveal that professional translators show more target text orientation, whereas fan translators position themselves and their readers as expert members of their community, aiming for access to the source text. We find no clear difference in register, but professional subtitles are more concise, whereas Viki subtitles are longer and employ, e.g., hedges and disfluency markers.

Keywords: fan translation, domestication, foreignization, cultural ambassadors, corpus linguistics, viki.com

1. Introduction

The modalities of subtitle translation from the spoken source dialogue to the written target text include well-known constraints (time, space, reading speed, etc.; see, e.g., Díaz Cintas 1999; Díaz Cintas & Remael 2007; Gottlieb 1992), which lead to particular effects on language including levelling out, i.e. the loss of variation present in the source text. Fan subtitles have been shown in qualitative studies to stand out as being more source-text oriented and thus to prioritize facilitation of access to source text and culture over aesthetic concerns and readability of the target text (see Section 2.2). Our previous work (Locher & Messerli 2020) has confirmed this tendency also for fan subtitles of Korean Television Drama on *Viki*, a streaming platform that distributes Korean and other Asian videostreams to an international audience. We noted such effects as comments by subbers to explain Korean cultural practices as well as an appeal to common ground by borrowing Korean terms.

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Starting from our qualitative work and from the hypothesis that fan subtitles and professional subtitles are systematically different, our study employs corpusassisted discourse analysis to contrast two sets of English subtitles from 26 Korean dramas – fan subtitles from *Viki* and professional subtitles from *Netflix*. We complement quantitative measures with a qualitative exploration of examples in context, which allow us to illustrate some of the patterns we have identified based on our contrastive corpus-based study design.

In order to explain how we arrive at these overall results we introduce the background of our research paradigm in Section 2. Section 3 explains our data and methodology, Section 4 presents and discusses the results of our corpus-based comparisons, complemented

with illustrative examples in context. Section 5 summarizes our findings and provides an outlook.

2. Research context

2.1 Online fan discourses on Korean television-drama

The study we present here is situated in the context of our research into Korean television-drama practices on *Viki* (Locher 2020; Locher & Messerli 2020, 2023, in press; Messerli & Locher 2021), which we outline in this section, and more broadly within pragmatic and linguistic research into fan subtitling, which we address in Section 2.2.

Korean television-drama series, the part of Viki we are interested in, are licensed and made available to Viki's viewers just like other series are streamed from platforms such as Netflix or Disney Plus. However, rather than creating a fully professionalised framework in which viewers are strictly consumers, Viki's commercial side (owned by *Rakuten*) is paired with a community space that not only invites viewers to exchange their views in discussion forums, write reviews about episodes or voice their impressions while they are streaming in so-called *timed comments* (Dwyer 2012, 2017, 2018; Locher & Messerli 2020, 2023, in press), but also to contribute to the internationalisation of Korean television-drama more directly, by contributing fan subtitles in English and many other languages. These subtitles, made by the community for the community, are written by teams of fans who translate the Korean spoken dialogue either directly or via English as a pivot language. Before the writing of subtitles in a specific language, other members will have done the segmentation based on the dialogue, moderators will oversee the distribution of tasks, while more peripheral viewers like ourselves, interacting more casually with Viki as a platform, will simply watch (as paying members or as non-paying viewers accepting commercial interruptions of video streams) or contribute their comments to the series they engage with. Figure 1 illustrates these community roles in the shape of a hierarchy of concentric circles. It is important to note, however, that any individual viewer can oscillate between roles at different points in time or even occupy several roles at once.
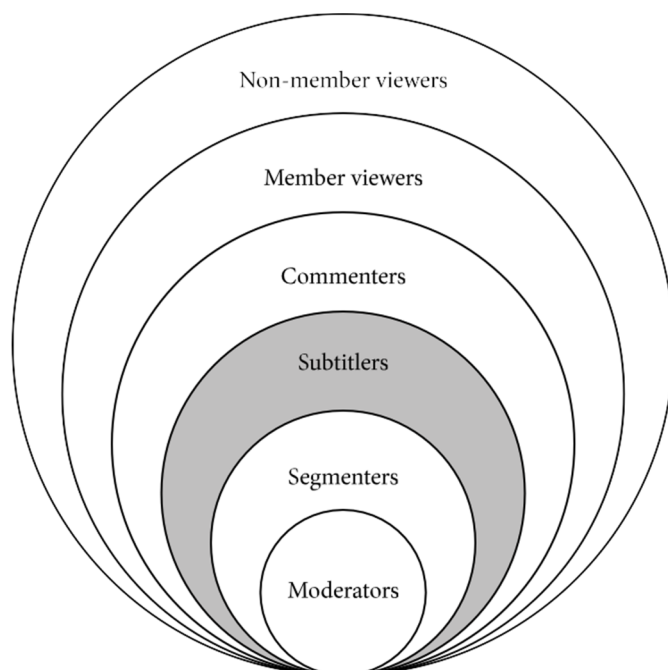
Figure 1. Community membership on Viki (focus of this study highlighted in grey)

In this context, the subtitlers of Viki can be understood as expert fans who typically understand the spoken dialogue in Korean and arguably position themselves as knowledgeable in Korean television-drama and/or Korean linguaculture. The fact that they self-select as fansubbers can be seen as a motivational (rather than linguistic) authorisation strategy in the sense of Bucholtz and Hall (2005).

The role of Viki's fansubbers and the texts they author are thus negotiated in interaction with other community members, necessarily with moderators and segmenters who make it possible for fansubbers to share their work in the first place, and more visibly with commenters who often make reference to subtitles themselves or the fact that their viewing depends on them (Locher & Messerli 2020, 2023). The collaborative surroundings in which fan subtitles exist also extend to translation, where sense-making is not limited to subtitles and the multimodality of the videostream, but is enhanced communally by start p. 224 means of the accompanying comments (Locher & Messerli 2020, 2023, in press; Messerli & Locher 2021). However, it is nonetheless important to highlight the privileged position fan subtitles have in the cross-linguacultural communication that takes place as part of the international distribution of Korean television-drama, since even for the collaborative sense-making in the timed comments, the subtitles in English and other languages serve as the basis for many discussions.

2.2 Fan subtitling and pragmatics

In addition to the vertical positioning of Viki's fan subtitles presented in Section 2.1, these community subtitles also exist horizontally within the paradigm of audiovisual translation (AVT) practices and more specifically fan AVT. While much more thorough accounts of such non-professional translational work have been provided in the literature (e.g. Dwyer 2018), we will offer here only a selective presentation.

Academic study of fan subtitling and more broadly non-professional AVT practices only started in the late 1990s and initially had a strong focus on subtitling of Japanese anime (Díaz Cintas & Muñoz Sánchez 2006; Dwyer 2018; Ferrer Simó 2005; Pérez-González 2007; Venuti 2008). Bearing in mind that bias towards anime, the reported characteristics of fan subtitles – typographic variation (font, typeface, colour, etc.), cultural references, borrowings, non-traditional placement of subtitles, subtitle length, variation during film credits, translation errors, etc. (Ferrer Simó 2005; Lu & Lu 2021; Pérez-González 2007) – are worth revisiting.

In line with these characteristics, fansubbers are thought to have more artistic-aesthetic freedom and to expand their translational practices to include comments as a form of explicitation for the target audience, making sure that subtitles facilitate understanding of the spoken dialogue in its linguacultural context. This role of the fansubber can be further explained through the particular demands target audiences may have for community subtitling. The goal is often quick production (e.g. Vellar 2011) and audiences have been found to request subtitles that are not primarily oriented towards a target culture, or to refrain from adding vulgar language not present in the spoken dialogue to subtitles (Cubbison 2005). Fan subtitling has also been thought to be influenced by the community context in which it arises. Fan groups have been understood as early adopters to new online affordances, fan subtitles as prime examples of participatory culture and user generated content (Lee 2011; O'Hagan 2009, 2012), and fan translation as a collaborative practice of problem-solving and textual poaching, i.e. members of the fan community appropriating the series they love start p. 225 (Innocenti & Maestri 2010; Jenkins 1988).

Without attempting to arrive at a profile of a typical fan subtitler (but see Luczaj & Holy-Luczaj's 2017), we can summarise for fan subtitlers that they work from within a fan community and design target texts for that same community, they typically work quickly and collaboratively, and they can be regarded as viewers and fans who are at the same time language and culture experts (see Figure 1). Fansubbing as an AVT practice can be conceptualised as a collaborative problemsolving task that does typically not earn its translators money, but may give them social and cultural capital within the community. Fan subtitling has been described as typically freer in form and content and more prone to errors. Finally, fan subtitles as texts can be generally assumed to be subject to more variation in terms of aesthetic and linguistic features than professional subtitles and to show the features reported above (see, e.g., Massidda 2015; Orrego-Carmona 2019; Pedersen 2019; Wilcock 2013).

While these assumptions about agents, processes and products of lay subtitle translation are a good starting point for our study, it is important to note that few systematic comparisons of fan and professional subtitling have been conducted. Most of the existing research is either based on introspective, anecdotal theorisation, or on small-scale qualitative case-studies whose status as samples for the population, i.e. the genre of fan subtitles, often remains unclear. These case-studies have shown many interesting patterns for specific language and fan subbing in general (see, e.g., Ameri & Khoshsaligheh 2019; Bold 2012; Lee 2011; Liang 2018; Locher 2020; Lu & Lu 2021; Massidda 2015; Orrego-Carmona 2019; Pedersen 2019; Tang 2014). However, with the exception of Wilcock (2013), whose findings will be outlined next, no systematic contrastive studies based on bigger data have been conducted, and for English in particular, more research of fan subtitling outside of anime fan communities needs to be done.

Since Wilcock's (2013) MA thesis is – to our knowledge – the only systematic, corpus-assisted comparison of fan and professional subtitles, we will conclude this section with a summary of its main findings. In their thesis, Wilcock (2013) created a corpus of English subtitles for three French films, comparing professional DVD subtitles and fan subtitles in terms of broadly formal-aesthetic and linguistic features. The findings are that fan subtitles are around 20% longer on average than professional subtitles and are thus subject to less reduction. In terms of linguistic features, professional subtitles showed more lexical variation (measured by means of ratio, TTR) and more instances of the particle *huh*, whereas fan subtitles had more *ah* and *oh*, some false starts (whereas there were none in the professional data), and more personal pronouns and appellative constructions. Finally, further characteristics of fan subtitles where translator notes and cultural references, which were often not adapted to the target culture. These linguistic differences are understood by Wilcock (2013) as evidence that fan subtitles contain more of the oral quality and of the content of film dialogues.

When moving on to our own empirical contribution to the comparison of fan and professional subtitles, it is important to reiterate and foreground some aspects of the particular production context of the Viki fan subtitles we study, since – as Massidda (2015) already shows – fan subtitles from different sources may exhibit different characteristics. Dwyer (2018) understands Viki as a trailblazer in the reshaping of fan subtitling and the gradually dissolving boundaries between professional-commercial and fan-community spaces. Rather than reiterating the important ideological changes in the subtitling landscape, of which Viki is an important example, we add here our own observations as to some select characteristics of Viki fan subtitling that may well impact aesthetic and linguistic properties of its target texts.

In the case of Viki, the platform distributes authorship and control over subtitles to teams of fans with different tasks (moderators, segmenters, fan subtitlers). While subtitle creation is thus entirely done by members of the fan community, it is nonetheless important to note that the distribution of Viki subtitles takes place in a centralised fashion – viewers can choose which

subtitles (if any) they want to display when streaming an episode, but the Viki system as a gate keeper controls what is offered as a choice, much like Netflix and other fully commercial platforms do. Other types of fan subtitle distribution, e.g. creating SRT-subtitles and sharing them via different webpages and P2P-sharing, are quite different as they are created without pre-assigned hierarchical control in the form of moderation and segmentation. Finally, within the Viki-sphere, individual subtitles in a particular language for a particular episode monopolise communication with the target audience rather than being in competition with alternative versions produced by other fans (see Volk et al. 2010).

2.3   Research questions

Based on the existing research and our interest in the audiovisual translation of Korean television-drama on Viki, we thus ask:

1. When comparing fan subtitles and professional subtitles of the same Korean television-drama episodes, what are the differences, if any, in terms of relative "aboutness", i.e. what concepts do amateurs and professionals foreground in contrast?

2. Are there any systematic register difference between fan and professional subtitles and if so, what are they?

3. What differences, if any, are there in terms of translation strategy and source/ target text orientation between fan and professional subtitles?

3.   **Data and method**

3.1   Data

Our analyses are based on two corpora, which we have created ourselves and call KSUBV-B[1] (Viki) and KSUBN (Netflix). As Table 1 outlines, each of the two corpora contains subtitles from the same 451 episodes of 26 Korean televisiondramas. As the names of the two collections indicate, KSUBV-B contains fan subtitles made by the Viki community and distributed through Viki, whereas KSUBN contains professional subtitles from Netflix.

Table 1: Viki and Netflix corpora of English subtitles

	KSUBV-B (Viki)	KSUBN (Netflix)
K-dramas*	26	26
Episodes	451	451
Words	2.69 mill.	2.34 mill.

* The titles of the dramas are: bad guys, because this is my first life, birth of a beauty, bride of the water god, cheese in a trap, doctor stranger, heirs, I hear your voice, kill me heal me, masters sun, oh my ghostess, one more happy ending, pasta, pinocchio, producer, rooftop prince, secret garden, strong woman do bong soon, that winter the wind blows, the girl who sees smells, the greatest love, twenty again, uncontrollably fond, W, you're all surrounded, you're beautiful

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[1] While KSUBV-B is the sample of KSUBV that matches KSUBN, we also created a different sample from the same corpus, KSUBV-A, to compare it to a matching set of timed comments.

The KSUBV-B corpus is sampled from KSUBV, our multilingual corpus of Viki subtitles (see Locher 2020) – KSUBN was collected from Netflix in 2021 using Google Chrome's Developer Tools. Given the public, non-personal, and anonymous nature of the data, we deem it ethically sound to analyse it without conceivable harm to the authors of either set of subtitles and with the potential benefit of better understanding one's own translation practices. In terms of copyright, we follow the following principles. Subtitles are derivative works under Swiss law as specified under Art. 3 of the Federal Act on Copyright and Related Rights (Copyright Act 1992/2022). The systematic scholarly analysis of the corpora which we specify in Section 3.2 is governed by Art. 24d of the same copyright act, which allows reproduction, copy and storage of legally accessed works for the purposes of scientific research.

The two corpora were designed with comparability in mind and contain dramas streamed on Viki as well as Netflix. The reception situations – accessing, streaming and reading subtitles – are similar on Viki and Netflix, which eliminates some of the differences that exist, for instance, in Wilcock's (2013) comparison of subtitles for DVD and for streaming. Nevertheless, there is a clear difference in length, which can also be included as a first finding (2.69 million words in Viki versus 2.34 million words in Netflix): Our data corroborate Wilcock's (2013) finding that fan subtitles are noticeably longer than professionally produced ones.

3.2 Methodology

We analysed our corpora with R (R Core Team 2022) and quanteda (Benoit et al. 2018). Tokenisation was done with SpaCy (Honnibal & Montani 2022) and based on the "en_core_web_sm" English language model. This resulted in English as well as Korean compounds including spaces and hyphens being tokenised as multiple words. In order to address our research questions (see Section 2.3), aiming for a contrast of (1) aboutness, (2) register and (3) translation strategies, we first established the positive and negative keywords in KSUBV-B, which tell us what words fan subtitles use statistically more often than equivalent professional subtitles. Rather than juxtaposing the subtitles to a corpus of general English or to other English subtitles, which would give us an idea what Korean televisiondrama subtitles in general are about, we focus here on the effects of authorship as a variable and thus directly contrast the two sets of subtitles, one made by amateurs, one by professionals, but both produced from identical source texts.

Following the critical review of keyness measures in Gabrielatos (2018), we rank keywords by effect size (measured in %DIFF, the per cent difference between normalised frequencies), since we are not only interested in establishing beyond doubt that the difference we find is not due to chance (as would be the case if we used a significance measure, such as log likelihood), but focus on particularly salient differences in word frequencies. This will tell us what aspects of the episode are fore or backgrounded in fan and professional subtitles, respectively. We looked at the twenty highest-ranking positive and negative keywords that appeared at least once in either corpus and manually established topoi.

In a second step, we use a corpus-driven approach to register based on Biber (1988) to identify systematic differences along the involvement – information axis. We first conducted a comparison of n-grams (2-,3-,4-,5-, and 6-grams), since they have been shown to be indicative of register differences (Biber et al. 2004). We then manually coded search algorithms in R, adapted to our purposes, that tagged the corpora in terms of the register features specified in Biber's (1988) description of Dimension 1 (see also Dayter & Messerli 2022). The features, whose presence may suggest more involvement, informality and casualness are:

- first and second person pronouns

- wh-questions

- general emphatics

- imperatives

Features that point towards information, formality and ritual are:

- average word length (AWL)

- lexical density

- subtitle complexity measured in average subtitle length (ASuL)

- general hedges

- nominalisations

- suasive verbs

While the corpus-based and -assisted methods let us arrive at robust and relatively unbiased results regarding existing differences between our sample of fan and professional subtitles, we complement them with illustrative examples that contextualise these established patterns.

4. Results of the contrastive corpus analyses

4.1 What fan and professional subtitles are about: Keyness

We start our exploration of differences between fan-made and professional subtitles of Korean television-drama by focusing on what could be referred to as relative aboutness, which means that our interest is not in what each of the set of subtitles is about in an absolute sense, but within the specific context of translating Korean television-drama. By identifying what terms fan subtitles and professional subtitles make comparatively more or less use of, we establish what each of the two translator groups foreground, given that they have identical source texts for their translation.

Table 2 indicates the twenty highest-ranking positive keywords in KSUBV-B, the Viki fan subtitle corpus, based on the effect size measure %DIFF, when compared to KSUBN, the Netflix professional subtitle corpus. Keywords are typically sampled before qualitative analysis, but there are no clear guidelines in the literature when it comes to defining cut off points between those keywords that are still included and those that are not considered for further analysis (see, e.g., Rayson & Potts 2020). The distribution of the roughly 7'000 positive and 9'800 negative keywords that we find based on %DIFF is such that there is no clearly definable point where values would drop off and no patterns of repetition, where many very similar words would occur below a certain threshold. For a manageable sample size and an unbiased selection of keywords, we therefore limited ourselves to the twenty keywords with the greatest effect both for positive as well as for negative keywords (Tables 2 and 3).

Grouping the resulting forty keywords manually, we arrived at five clearly distinguishable topoi: food; Korean names; address and reference terms; disfluency and discourse markers; credit to subtitle authors. We will now discuss each topos separately.

Table 2: Positive keywords in Viki fan subtitles based on %DIFF

Rank	Keyword	n KSUBV-B	n KSUBN	%DIFF
1	subtitles	1869	2	81229.7
2	noona	635	1	55164.2
3	pd	512	1	44459.5
4	nim	340	1	29490.3
5	gook	600	2	26009.1
6	unni	537	2	23267.6
7	rangers	144	1	12432.3
8	ahh	143	1	12345.3
9	sunbae	943	8	10158.7
10	uh	234	2	10082.5
11	dimensional	106	1	9125.2
12	sensory	90	1	7732.7
13	byeon	79	1	6775.4
14	wh	68	1	5818.1
15	ooh	63	1	5382.9
16	oppa	1061	18	5029.9
17	shik	55	1	4686.7
18	ugh	104	2	4425.6
19	sheesh	38	1	3207.1
20	joon's	101	3	2830

Table 3: Negative keywords in Viki fan subtitles based on %DIFF

Rank	Keyword	n KSUBV-B	n KSUBN	neg. %DIFF*
1	mun	1	118	13458.5
2	gyung	6	649	12328.6
3	translation	4	366	10413.6
4	hun	5	447	10172.3
5	byun	1	79	8977.3
6	jun's	1	77	8747.5
7	guk	12	580	5453.6
8	ramyeon	1	48	5415.3
9	parvenu	1	44	4955.7
10	uk	3	128	4802.5
11	tteokbokki	1	42	4725.9
12	li	9	365	4559.9
13	jun	56	2185	4383.3
14	reverend	1	39	4381.2
15	donggeul	1	37	4151.4
16	ju	18	609	3787.5
17	youn	1	31	3462
18	pilseung	1	30	3347.1
19	yun	10	289	3220.7
20	omelet	1	27	3002.4

*negative %DIFF values are calculated by inverting corpus of interest and reference corpus and calculating %DIFF scores. This can be done since in our example negative Viki keywords are identical to positive Netflix keywords.

Food

Among the negative keywords that indicate patterns characteristic for the Netflix subtitles, we identify three food items: *ramyeon* (the Korean version of ramen noodles), *tteokbokki* (Korean rice cakes), and *omelet*. When looking at examples in context, several patterns and possible explanations for the keywords emerge. First of all, in the case of *tteokbokki* and in particular *ramyeon*, the professional Netflix subtitles appear to adhere more consistently to one of the available standardization forms when it comes to the Romanisation of Korean in the English subtitles, with Viki fan subtitles containing variants like *Tteokbokgi* or *ramyun* (which do not adhere to current Romanisation systems). Rather than treating these as mistranslation, we assume that there is either a tighter control in the professional subtitling context regarding spelling variation, more frequent use of professional

translation tools that include some form of controlled vocabulary, or there are quite simply fewer translators involved compared to the collaborative team-translation that is the norm for Viki, and there is thus less idiosyncratic variation. In other words, it is likely that these food terms are only keywords in their specific written variants, whereas the lexemes may be of similar frequency in both sets of subtitles.

A somewhat similar pattern can be observed for the term *omelet*, which we illustrate with Examples (1a/b) and (2a/b):

(1a) How about an omelet for breakfast? (KSUBN, *My Love from the Star,* ep11 sub0144)

(1b) How about fried egg roll for breakfast? (KSUBV-B, *My Love from the Star,* ep11 sub0126)

(2a) Do you like omelet? (KSUBN, *My Love from the Star,* ep11 sub0213)

(2b) Do you like folded egg? (KSUBV-B, *My Love from the Star,* ep11 sub0195)

In each of the examples above, (a) is the subtitle in the Netflix corpus, which contains *omelet*, one of the food-keywords we established. Examples (1)–(2) (b) are the subtitles the Viki corpus contains at the same corpus location. Instead of *omelet*, these subtitles contain *egg roll* (1b) or *folded egg* (2b). It appears in these cases that the professional translators chose to domesticate the respective egg dishes to a generic omelette (or rather the American English spelling *omelet*), whereas the fans on Viki opted for multi-word terms that are less frequent in English, but refer to more specific dishes in their Korean linguacultural context. The fan subtitles accordingly exhibit more lexical variation in this case, which adds to the evidence that they orient more strongly towards the specific cultural context of the source text.

Korean names and parts of names

While food items appeared exclusively as keywords of the Netflix subtitles, a different pattern is visible for the second category, *Korean names and parts of names*. Another category that is of unambiguous cultural relevance, the use of Korean proper names, is typical for fan subtitles when it comes to the syllables *nim, gook, byeon, shik* and *joon's*. However, in general such names are a defining characteristic of the Netflix subtitles, with fourteen of the top twenty keywords falling into this topos: *mun, gyung, hun, byun, jun's, guk, uk, li, jun, donggeul, ju, youn, pilseung* and *yun*. It is important to note here that we used a standard English model ("en_core_web_sm") to tokenise our corpora. That is why the lists contain full names like *donggeul* and *pilseung*, but also single syllables that either present a monosyllabic name or are part of a two syllable name (*gook/guk* or *byeon/byun*), and start p. 233 even syllables separated with a hyphen (e.g., -*nim*, which can be both a part of a name and a honorific morpheme). As two-syllable Korean names in Romanised form can be spelled as one word, as two syllables combined with a hyphen or as two separate syllables, the keyness list in Tables 2 and 3 needs to be carefully assessed.

While spelling variation due to different Romanisation is again observable in the two keyword lists (*gook/guk, joon's/jun's*), Examples (3a) and (3b) illustrate that there are also further differences in usage. Whereas Netflix likes to use Korean personal names, Viki seems to lean more strongly towards other means of making reference to the fictional characters. In the examples from *Doctor Stranger*, the character called *Dr. Mun* in the

Netflix subtitles is referred to as *Professor Moon*, or simply as *professor*, which in fact mirrors what the original does in Korean.

(3a) KSUBV-B, *Doctor Stranger*, ep03 sub354–362; min. 31.13	(3b) KSUBN, *Doctor Stranger*, ep03 sub312–318
Should we call **Professor Moon**? There's nothing else we can do. What's expire? **Professor**? I can't do it! Don't you know I'm banned from medical treatment? Hey, Kim Chi Gyu, if the patient expires, Han Jae Joon is the one on duty. It's the new chief of the Cardiothoracic Department, Han Jae Jun's fault. Hang up! Pro...**Professor**. Ah!	Should we call **Dr. Mun**? We have no other choice. What's expire? **Dr. Mun**? I can't! Don't you know I can't see patients now? Kim Chi-gyu. If he expires, it's Han Jae-jun's fault. It's the new chief Han Jae-jun's responsibility! Don't call me! Wait, **Dr. Mun**! No, he hung up.

The example thus not only illustrates that Netflix subtitles appear to be more likely to make use of personal names to refer to characters on screen, but also that one of the strategies employed by Viki translators is to use functional terms, such as reference to titles or professions, to point to the same referents (Koh 2006). This ties in with the second topos we had established.

Address and reference terms

A clear tendency is visible for the category of address and reference terms, such as kinship terms or work/seniority related terms and honorifics (see Koh 2006). As positive keywords in KSUBV-B appear *noona, unni, oppa, sunbae and -nim*,[2] whereas negative keywords in this category are *parvenu* and *reverend*. While terms borrowed from Korean and pointing to the interpersonal relationship between characters are almost entirely absent in the Netflix subtitles, they are used in Viki's fan subtitles to encode an important relational aspect of the Korean televisiondrama narratives. Of the 333 instances of *-nim* in Viki 282 are honorifics (e.g. *Hyung-nim; Sunbae-nim*). The additional information about Korean interpersonal hierarchies such terms make reference to requires at least some knowledge of Korean culture, and one result of using such specialised Korean terminology is thus also to position not just the subtitlers, but also the subtitle reading viewers as experts or developing experts in Korean linguaculture. This shared expertise by subtitles and their readers inevitably also contributes to a sense of community, an in-group of those who have understood an important part of Korean communication that may go unnoticed by readers of Netflix subtitles.

The keywords that characterise Netflix subtitles are two specialised target language terms that each only appear once in the Viki subtitles. *Parvenu* appears frequently in the drama *The Heirs. Reverend*, on the other hand appears exclusively in the address term *Reverend Mother* in the Netflix subtitles of the Korean television-drama *You're Beautiful*. Instead, the Viki subtitles choose the term *Mother Superior*.

Together, the positive and negative keywords in this category paint a clear picture: Whereas fan subtitlers borrow select Korean terms to refer to specific Korean

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[2] *Noona* and *unni* both mean 'older sister', *oppa* translates as 'older brother', *sunbae* translates as 'senior' and *-nim* is a honorific morpheme, roughly corresponding to 'respected' (see Koh 2006).

linguacultural interpersonal relationships, which requires expert knowledge from their readers to position the characters and their interaction, professional Netflix subtitles attempt to render similar relationships in target language expressions. This is an indication of differing strategies when it comes to sourceor target-language orientation, with Viki subtitles providing access to the Korean cultural text by means of borrowing, whereas Netflix subtitlers create more independent target texts that domesticate terms for Anglophone readers.

Disfluency markers

Disfluency markers exclusively occur as positive keywords and are thus characteristic of Viki fan subtitles in our comparison. The terms *ahh, uh, wh* (used as a false start before, e.g. *what*), *ooh, ugh* and *sheesh* occur only once or twice in the entire KSUBN corpus, whereas they are used dozens of times in the Viki subtitles (see Table 2 above). Disfluency markers are typically associated with (conceptually) spoken language (see, e.g., Crible 2017), and given the intersemiotic transfer that is entailed in subtitling as a process, including such elements of speech in writing is another form of source-text orientation. Whereas Netflix subtitles in this category include few elements of spoken language, Viki fan subtitles appear to encode more items uttered in the spoken dialogue, thus performing spokenness in written subtitles. This finding is in line with previous findings on fan subtitling. Bruti and Zanotti (2016: 252), for instance, treat interjections and discourse markers as key oral features and find that non-professional subtitle translators "pay particular attention to discourse particles and orality markers in general." Bruti and Zanotti further position this difference along the domestication/foreignisation axis (see also Lefevere 1975; Venuti 2008), with non-professional subtitling creating distance between source and target cultures (foreignisation) and foregrounding access to the source culture.

Credit to subtitle authors

The last topos we established includes keywords that identify subtitle authors. Netflix subtitles include a credit in the last subtitle of each episode, as shown in Example (4), where the translator of the first episode of *Birth of a Beauty* is named. Because of this pattern, the term *translation* is characteristic of Netflix subtitles.

(4)   Subtitle translation by Sian Choi (KSUBN, *Birth of a Beauty,* ep01 sub736)
(5)   Subtitle translation by: Charmy, Stefanie Elalouf (KSUBN, *Twenty again*, ep04 sub814)

Together, the last lines of the episodes in KSUBN also show that each episode is attributed to a single subtitler identified by first and last name, with only one episode where *Charmy* is credited together with a named translator (Example (5), above). The individuals credited for the translation appear to sometimes translate all episodes of a drama, but often also only part. For example, the eleven episodes of *Bad Guys* in the corpus are translated by four different individuals.

In contrast, positive keywords of KSUBV-B in this category are *subtitles, dimensional, sensory*, and *rangers*. These keywords confirm that Viki subtitle translation is done by teams named in every episode while team member names are usually only given in the last episode. Some episodes in the Korean televisiondramas are identified with the phrase "Subtitle brought to you" – as in Example (6).

(6)   Subtitle brought to you by Heirs Team @viki.com (KSUBV-B, *Heirs*, ep01, sub383)

The remaining three keywords are all parts of translation team's names: *The 7-Dimensional Team, The Sensory Team*, and *Joseon Power Rangers Team*. The teams are often credited in the last subtitle of an episode, but also at times at the beginning and at several points throughout an episode. For instance, the *Joseon Power Rangers Team* is credited 145 times in 20 episodes of *Rooftop Prince*. This means that subtitling teams are more foregrounded in Viki than in Netflix. In fact, our research on the timed comments accompanying the videos shows a great awareness of the subtitling process by the viewers in comments on missing subtitles but also encouragements for and thanks to the subtitling team (Locher & Messerli 2020). Together, the positive keywords in the Viki corpus thus evidence collaborative translation with more prominent identification of subtitle authorship.

4.2 Register-differences

The keyword analysis in Section 4.1 already pointed to some differences in terms of register, evidenced by the disfluency and discourse markers that characterise Viki fan subtitles. Compared to the professional Netflix subtitles, fan subtitles thus appeared to contain more features of spoken language.

We complement this finding with a comparison of the ten most frequent ngrams (2-,3-,4-,5and 6-grams) in KSUBV-B and KSUBN. Table 4 juxtaposes the most frequent patterns in the Viki fan subtitles on the left and the Netflix professional subtitles on the right, highlighting in bold those patterns that occurred in the highest ranking n-grams in the Viki corpus, but not in the Netflix corpus. Since many of the four-, five-, and six-grams are substrings of one particular sentence ("Timing and Subtitles brought to you by The Glamorous Team @Viki"), we decided to summarise all these sister n-grams as one n-gram and instead include the next most frequent n-gram in the table.[3]

Generally, we see very similar patterns in the contrasted lists of the ten most frequent n-grams in each list, with bigrams largely consisting of verb phrases with subjective personal pronouns. It is notable, but unsurprising due to the limitations in terms of text length that govern subtitling, that in both sets of subtitles, contractions are frequent elements of biand trigrams. As we indicate above, the references to subtitling teams we observed before are also apparent in n-grams (see sections for four-, five-, and six-grams). This confirms the pattern we have already established based on keywords in Section 4.1, i.e., the subtitling process is foregrounded rather than hidden in Viki subtitling with collaborative subtitling teams crediting their own efforts in the subtitles. While more differences appear in the six-grams, they seem to indicate different phrasing rather than a meaning difference between the two corpora. In sum, apart from the reference to subtitling teams in Viki, we cannot report on any notable differences in n-grams and find no additional support with his method for possible register differences.

Table 4: N-grams in fan and professional subtitles (differences KSUBV-B in bold)

	2-grams		3-grams	
	KSUBV-B	KSUBN	KSUBV-B	KSUBN
1	I'm	I'm	I don't	I don't
2	don't	don't	What are you	I can't
3	It's	It's	I can't	I'm sorry
4	are you	I'll	I'm sorry	What are you
5	I'll	are you	don't know	I'm not

	KSUBV-B		KSUBN	
6	I do	I do	Why are you	I didn't
7	**it's**	can't	I'm going	Why are you
8	**going to**	You're	I didn't	don't know
9	can't	you're	I'm not	I'm going
10	you're	That's	are you doing	are you doing

4-grams

	KSUBV-B	KSUBN
1	4-grams within "Timing and Subtitles brought to you by The Glamorous Team @Viki"	I'm going to
2	I'm going to	I don't know
3	I don't know	What are you doing
4	What are you doing	don't want to
5	don't want to	I don't want
6	I don't want	What do you mean
7	What do you mean	I don't think
8	are you going to	are you talking about
9	I don't think	Do you want to
10	I don't have	I don't have

5-grams

	KSUBV-B	KSUBN
1	5-grams within "Timing and Subtitles brought to you by The Glamorous Team @Viki"	I don't want to
2	I don't want to	What are you talking about
3	What are you talking about	What are you doing here
4	are you going to do	won't be able to
5	won't be able to	I don't know what
6	**What are you going to**	You don't have to
7	I don't know what	You don't need to
8	**I'm not going to**	I don't think I
9	I don't think I	are you going to do
10	What are you doing here	What's wrong with you

6-grams

	KSUBV-B	KSUBN
1	6-grams within "Timing and Subtitles brought to you by The Glamorous Team @Viki"	What are you going to do
2	**What are you doing right now**	do you think you're doing
3	**That's what I'm saying**	I have something to tell you
4	**It's been a long time**	I don't think I can
5	I have something to tell you	I won't be able to
6	I don't think I can	What do you think you're
7	I won't be able to	are you doing this to me
8	**If you don't want to**	Why didn't you tell me
9	**you won't be able to**	I don't want you to
10	Why are you being like this	I don't want to see

The second method we used to establish register differences aimed at linguistic features previously found to be indicative of more informal or more formal registers by Biber (1988), as explained in Section 3.2. Tables 5 and 6 provide a comparative overview of the ten features in Biber's Dimension 1 we compared in KSUBV-B and KSUBN. All differences are significant (measured with Wilcoxon rank sum test), but a more important measure is effect size measured with Vargha and Delaney A. As an effect size estimate between 0 and 1, A indicates that the respective feature is approximately equal in its distribution in both datasets when it is at a value of 0.5, whereas A< 0.5 indicates higher values in Viki and A> 0.5 means higher values in Netflix.

Table 5: Features associated with involvement, informality and casualness, (sorted by Vargha and Delaney A decreasing, >0.5 means lower in KSUBV-B and higher in KSUBN)

	Wilcoxon rank sum		Vargha and Delaney A	
	W	p	A estimate	effect size
first person pronouns	4.1215e+10	<0.0001	0.6554748	small
imperatives	3.8879e+10	<0.0001	0.6183173	small
second person pronouns	3.6523e+10	<0.0001	0.5808511	small
wh-questions	3.4246e+10	<0.0001	0.5446428	negligible
general emphatics	2.9704e+10	<0.0001	0.4724079	negligible

Table 6: Features associated with information, formality and ritual, (sorted by Vargha and Delaney A increasing, <0.5 means higher in KSUBV-B and lower in KSUBN)

	Wilcoxon rank sum		Vargha and Delaney A	
	W	p	A estimate	effect size
Average subtitle length (ASuL)	3.682e+09	<0.0001	0.05855675	large
average word length (AWL)	1.997e+10	<0.0001	0.3176013	medium
general hedges	2.2157e+10	<0.0001	0.3523819	small
nominalisations	2.7795e+10	<0.0001	0.4420445	negligible
lexical density	2.9987e+10	<0.0001	0.4769066	negligible
suasive verbs	3.4369e+10	<0.0001	0.5465912	negligible

In five features – suasive verbs, wh-questions, emphatics, nominalisations, lexical density – we found that the differences between professional and fan subtitles were negligible when looking at effect sizes. The other features consist of first and second person pronouns as well as imperatives, which can potentially be indicators of more informal text types – and hedges, average word length and average sentence length, rendered here as subtitle length, which may indicate more formal registers. The pattern in these five features is clear, with the two informalityindexing features significantly more frequent in the professional Netflix subtitles, whereas the features associated with formality are all associated with Viki's fan subtitles.

While this would at first glance indicate that Netflix subtitles could be more informal, and Viki more formal, finding no effect size difference for half of the features we compare already indicated that there is no clear register difference between the two types of text, and we find that there are more plausible explanations for the significant differences. One likely underlying cause for some of the differences is simply brevity. There is unambiguous evidence that Netflix subtitles are shorter in terms of words per subtitle and also in terms of average word length (Table 1), which indicates that Viki fan subitles are subject to less reduction than the professional subtitles. This can be understood in terms of register, with Viki fan subtitlers making the choice to write longer subtitles and Netflix professional subtitlers following traditional subtitling norms more closely. Possibly as a consequence of this tendency towards brevity, it appears that Netflix subtitles also include fewer hedges and favour shorter and more direct expressions including imperatives.

When it comes to the difference in personal pronouns (first and second person), we can see that Netflix subtitles contain a higher proportion than Viki fan subtitles. We

hypothesize that this can be explained with Viki staying closer to the Korean original. Korean is reported to be able to drop pronouns in many instances where context makes clear who is meant and also to avoid first and second personal pronouns for politeness reasons (Brown 2011: 41–42; Kiaer 2018: 107). In addition, Examples (7–9) below can anecdotally illustrate some patterns concerning personal and possessive pronouns. In Example (7), Netflix subtitles uses "my brother" where Viki chooses the name "Hyung"; in Example (8) a directive is realized as "sit down" in the Viki subtitles, whereas Netflix subtitles put "Go back to your seat"; in Example (9), Viki subtitles only employ the first person pronoun I in "I enjoy watching the trial", when Netflix subtitles include a second person pronoun as well as a second person possessive in "Thank you for letting me watch your trial". A tentative interpretation of the phrasing in (7a)–(9a) may be that Netflix subtitles are more target oriented. On the other hand, (7b) and (8b) in particular opt for a rendering in English that arguably sounds uncommon. In order to establish whether this anecdotal finding is robust and holds true systematically, we would require a different research design based on a reliable measure of idiomaticity as well as a more elaborate contrastive corpus design. With the simple time alignment our current corpus architecture follows, we have no good way to quantify the difference between translation choices beyond the measures we have included here.

(7a)   The last words **my** brother said to me
the day **I** left to study abroad
were easy, short,
and honest. (KSUBN, *Heirs*, ep01 sub001-004)

(7b)   The day **I** left to study abroad, the farewell said by **Hyung**
to me was simple, short, and honest. (KSUBV-B, *Heirs*, ep01 sub025-026)

(8a)   Go back to **your** seat now. (KSUBN, *I am not a Robot*, ep01 sub022)

(8b)   Hurry up and sit down! (KSUBV-B, *I am not a Robot*, ep01 sub020)

(9a)   Thank **you** for letting **me** watch **your** trial, Mr. Cha. (KSUBN, *I Hear your Voice*, ep03 sub001)

(9b)   **I** enjoyed watching the trial, Lawyer Cha. (KSUBV-B, *I Hear your Voice*, ep03 sub001)

4.3   Differences in translation strategy

At the end of Section 4.2 we established that we can provide good explanations for some of the larger differences (in particular the length of subtitles), whereas we can only explain smaller differences qualitatively and anecdotally. The same holds true for a more contextualized understanding of the overall difference in translation strategy between fans on Viki and professionals on Netflix. Nevertheless, the differences our corpus-based research design has shown between fan and professional subtitles point to different translational aims that each of the two sets of translators may follow. We have seen that Viki fan subtitlers are willing to borrow kinship and address terms, for instance, thus requiring more knowledge about Korean linguaculture, whereas Netflix subtitles employ more first and second person pronouns to arrive at perhaps more idiomatic written renderings of conversations in English.

In order to complement our vertical findings of patterns across the corpora, embedded in the macro-context of subtitles of the same type, with a reading of horizontal patterns within the immediate context of the subtitles that come before and after them, we conclude this section with a final, longer example that allows to highlight further differences.

Example (10) below juxtaposes the Viki and Netflix subtitles of the beginning of the drama *You're all Surrounded*, with characters talking during a frantic car chase.

	(10a) KSUBV-B, *You're All Surrounded*, ep01 sub1–16	(10b) KSUBN, *You're All Surrounded*, ep01 sub1–22
1	What is that car doing?!	What are they doing?
2	Step on the pedal, please! PLEASE!	Come on, faster!
3	It's not like you're driving a tractor! Hey, to the left. Step on it!	This is as slow as a tractor. Go left.
4	- It's over there, over there! - Step on it! - What the heck are you doing?!	Go faster. There they are! Over there!
5	Ah, move out of the way!	Change lanes. Gosh. What are you doing?
6		Change lanes!
7	Aish...	Darn it.
8	- Whoa, bus! - Geez, this is too much.	There's a bus! I can't believe this.
9	Get out of the way! Aish...	Get out of the way! Darn it!
10	Ah, this is giving me a headache. Stop the car, you b*stard!	Seriously? My gosh.
11		Stop the car!
12	Son of a b*tch. Get out of the car!	Get out!
13	Hey, hold on for a sec...	Get out! Wait.
14		Wait, he's still outside.
15	-Awww! -Ouch! -Hold on tight!	Hold on!
16		Gosh.
17	Go slowly! Slowly!	Go slower!
18	Over there, over there!	
19		Hey!
20		Be careful!
21		There they are!
22	Hey, stop the car, you bastard! Stop the car, you bastard!	Pull up over there. Pull over, you scum!
23	- Stop the car, you bastard! - Geez, you bastard!	Pull over, you punk! Pull over!

What we can observe in (10a) and (10b) is first of all a difference in length, with the Viki subtitles using 124 words in the time Netflix subtitles use 88 words. We also observe patterns in line with our quantitative findings when it comes to the use of interjections, where Viki subtitles exhibit more variety, including the expression "aish" (e.g. 10a, line 7), which is borrowed from the Korean original. The Netflix subtitles, on the other hand contain the derogatory terms "scum" (10b, line 22) and "punk" (10b, line 23).

At the same point in the subtitles, Viki repeats the term "bastard" four times (10a, lines 22–23), which also points to a pattern we have not directly established so far: Viki subtitles include repetition where Netflix does not, seen e.g. in "please! PLEASE!" (10a, line 2), "It's over there, over there!" (10a, line 4), and also elsewhere (lines 17, 18, 22, 23). In the same excerpt, Netflix employs similar repetition as well ("Change lanes" on lines 5–6 and "Get out! on lines 12–13), but much less frequently. Another apparent pattern that we have not focused on so far is the use of punctuation, an area that has been studied e.g. by Guillot (2008) as an aspect of orality in subtitling. Based on the convenience sample in (10), we see that Viki subtitles appear to exhibit greater typographic variety, which extends to both punctuation and capitalization.

Broadly speaking, the longer sample we included here can thus provide qualitative evidence for some of the patterns we established while also suggesting exploratively that other differences in professional and amateur subtitling practices in the context of Korean television-

drama have yet to be explored. In particular, this concerns the willingness of subtitlers to employ further borrowed Korean terms, and – perhaps most importantly – the inclusion of translator comments to explain or provide further context to source text items. One reason we have not focused on such comments here – beside the methodological design of the study – is that they go beyond translation proper, which is why they also occur typographically separated by brackets (see Locher 2020). Having laid the groundwork for a more general contrast between the two types of subtitles in this article, we will take up this aspect of fan subtitling as a particular community practice, a display of expertise, in our future research.

5.   Conclusions and outlook

Our study has offered corpus-based and corpus-assisted analyses of two sets of subtitles to identical episodes of Korean television-drama: Viki fan subtitles and professional subtitles on Netflix. Assuming that either of the two sets of translated texts are about the dialogues in the episodes they accompany, we have asked what aspects each type relatively foregrounds – what in particular do Viki fans foreground that Netflix professionals do not, and, vice versa. We addressed this question primarily based on effect-size based keyness and a manual categorization of the most important positive and negative keywords into semantic topoi. These topoi can illustrate in what areas pro and fan subtitles of Korean television-drama differ. The areas we established were *food; Korean names and parts of names; address and reference terms; disfluency markers;* and *credit to subtitle authors*.

One useful explanation for the differences across topoi were the participants of subtitling as a situated communicative practice and more specifically the positioning of subtitle translators. As researchers most interested in the fan practices on Viki, we find that fan translators – in line with the subtitling affordances and processes of their platform – appear to present themselves as expert members of their community and their readers as interested parties exhibiting at least some expertise. Recipients are understood as willing to accumulate knowledge about the linguacultural source space that goes beyond the plot and includes the understanding of interpersonal relationships between characters, and more generally of cultural practices in the Korean television-dramas at hand. Evidence for this appeared in the form of specific dishes where Netflix translators used more generic European references, borrowing of Korean relational terms, and the frequent reference to those subgroups of the community that created the subtitles.

It is hardly surprising that the same positioning as expert community member goes hand in hand with source-text orientation – after all, the interest of the fan community arguably lies in engagement with Korean drama as a type of audiovisual artefact of which each episode is an example. As we have explored also in viewer comments written on the same platform, Viki, fans show that they are knowledgeable about actors, characters as well as aspects of Korean and Korean drama culture in their contributions (e.g. Locher & Messerli 2020). Notably, this orientation towards the source texts does not only entail expertise about culture, but also a similarity in terms of the prototypical conceptual properties of the semiotic context in which these texts exist. Features of orality such as disfluency markers are thus characteristic for fan subtitles and appear as keywords of our Viki subcorpus.

We were interested also in the register of fan and pro subtitles and employed n-grams as well as features along Biber's (1988) Dimension 1, involved vs informational. The result of our comparison of n-grams brought forward as the only difference the ways in which amateur and professional subtitlers acknowledge subtitle authorships. The Biber-based analysis showed that there is no clear register difference that would nicely position e.g. fan subtitles as more involved than professional subtitles. However, we saw that individual linguistic features exhibited differences of measurable effect-size. The most notable of these differences was the length of subtitles, where Viki fans provide longer subtitles and thus also more information

(including the areas we have already established). Professional subtitles on Netflix instead are more concise, which also results in more direct linguistic features (imperatives). The final notable difference we found related to first and second person pronouns, which appear characteristic of the Netflix corpus. Our research design did not permit a clear answer as to what may lead to this difference and a non-systematic look at individual examples in context suggested a range of different patterns that may lead to the effect we measured.

Finally, we were interested more broadly in different translation strategies, understood as including the differences we had already established, but also a more qualitative, contextual understanding of how the two types of subtitles compare. Using one longer stretch of data, we found that while not all differences were visible in one example, some were and no patterns appeared that would contradict our quantitative findings. In addition, we pointed out that some differences, for instance in terms of punctuation and repetition, appeared in this example and could be avenues to pursue in order to establish further differences between amateur and professional subtitling. One final broad observation about this longer Example (10) is an astounding difference between two sets of subtitles that, after all, have as their basis an identical source text and translate into the same target language and for quite a similar audience. Given the existence of many such examples we discovered unsystematically when looking at select episodes, the strength of our method is ultimately not only that we were able to provide empirically sound evidence for the existence of the differences we discussed here, but that it also highlights a lot of similarity which, when simply glancing at select excerpts of subtitles, we would not see.

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