Effects of the digital subtitling software on the subtitling process:
A survey among Finnish professional television subtitlers

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1 Introduction

The field of subtitling is constantly changing, but recent transforms with the digitalisation of the whole of Finland have been especially massive. The final analogical television broadcasts were ended by the end of February, 2008. Because also subtitles are to be provided in the digital format, there have been profound changes in the primary working tool of a subtitler, the subtitling software. Until recently, subtitling was largely done with ScanTitling, a MS-DOS-based computer programme. However, digital subtitling software was introduced gradually, until in early 2007, it was taken into use in also the last subtitling agencies. With the help of this new software, subtitlers are able to work from anywhere in the world. This creates new possibilities for freelance subtitlers, but also threats, since fees in the Nordic countries are different from, say, India.

Traditionally, subtitling and translation on the whole have been largely studied by comparing the source text to the target text – the end product. The focus has been the quality of the end product, and the responsibility and ethics of translators have been emphasised (Abdallah 2007: 275). Research on subtitling has mostly regarded subtitles as source materials, studying linguistic and translational issues and largely ignoring the specialised areas of interest in this field (Jääskeläinen 2007: 117–118). The working realities of subtitlers have also been written about and researched (see e.g. Gottlieb 2004, Luyken 1991, Ivarsson 1998), often at a pragmatic level (see e.g. Díaz Cintas 2007, Gouadec 2007), perhaps partly because subtitling, along with the technological tools and aids, is constantly evolving, and because the working methods and processes are different on each continent, and in each country. The subtitling process, especially from the professional subtitler’s point of view, is quite little researched. Research has much relied on comparing less experienced subtitlers to experienced ones, stressing that experienced subtitlers are better and more effective in their work than novice subtitlers. This is true in most cases, since human beings tend to develop their skills as they gain experience in the field they are practising. However, perhaps not everything that novice subtitlers do is for the worse. Could it be that
experienced subtitlers could benefit from the fresh studying experiences and technological skills that novice subtitlers may possess? This is one of the issues discussed in this research, as are professionalism and the skills required of translators.

It is assumed here that the translators’ basic skill set consists of translator education, gained experience in the field, and effective usage of tools and aids – one of these tools being the digital subtitling software. Attitudes towards subtitlers, from both the point of view of subtitlers and the viewing public, and the subtitling process are discussed and studied. Process-oriented translation studies have been largely based on TAP researches, whereas translation and subtitling processes have not been distinguished from each other. Yet, while subtitling is regarded to be a specialised form of translation, the translation process is also a phase in the overall subtitling process. There is practically no research on the Finnish subtitling process, and thus there is virtually no theoretical framework around it, either. The processes of translation and subtitling, along with their interconnections and differences, do deserve further research, and these are discussed in the analysis (chapters 4 and 5). In chapter 4, a survey among professional television subtitlers is presented. The survey is conducted by a questionnaire with questions on the working environment of professional television subtitlers in Finland, and on the subtitling process along with the effects of the digital subtitling software on it. The answers gained from the professional television subtitlers’ point of view are then classified and analysed. The cognitive translation process and the translation phase of the subtitling process are challenging to separate from each other, but they can and in some cases even should be distinguished from each other, studied and researched separately. Since translation processes are largely cognitive processes taking place in the translator’s mind, the presupposition is that these processes cannot be profoundly changed by the tools used. This will be investigated as professional subtitlers ponder upon the effects of the tools used on their translation and subtitling processes. It may be the case that since the translation process is intertwined with the translation and subtitle preparation phase of the subtitling process, translators
and subtitlers experience difficulty in distinguishing between them. First, let us start by discussing translation and subtitling research in Finland.
2 Translation and subtitling research and education in Finland

According to Vehmas-Lehto (2008: 35), translation studies were originally developed to meet the society’s needs, and communicative translation theories highly improved the quality of translations. Translation research has helped in educating translators by focussing the attention towards translation problems, and the education of translators has reached a high level. However, according to Jääskeläinen (2007: 116–119), audiovisual translation being familiar to all Finns, it is still an area receiving surprisingly little research. At least part of the blame lies in translation studies: some theories in the field of translation studies have not fully appreciated subtitling since subtitles simply cannot preserve all the qualities of the source text. Many basic questions concerning subtitling still remain unanswered. Jääskeläinen (ibid.) points out that especially theses having to do with subtitling have usually not much to do with actual issues concerning audiovisual translation. Instead, research is done on culturally bound sayings, allusions or wordplay. In other words, subtitles are used as research material, but they are not the actual focus of research. Jääskeläinen (ibid.) points out that production and distribution companies entering Finnish markets may have little knowledge of the nature and requirements of high quality subtitling, and this along with the aim to save costs leads to hiring people with limited skills in subtitling. All this suggests a lack of understanding of the field: subtitles are not merely marginal helping texts. This, in turn, leads to fluctuating subtitle quality, and undermines the reputation of the whole profession. Jääskeläinen (2007: 116–119) lays the blame on translation studies: scholars and other experts should make it publicly known that subtitling is an important professional field that must not be sacrificed to save costs. Vehmas-Lehto (2008: 35) claims that the whole of translation research has failed to make itself known to the public, and consequently, the status of translators has not risen in the society as it should. Vehmas-Lehto (ibid.) adds to the burden of translation researchers by pointing out that as translation education is currently being integrated into language education all over Finland, it must be concluded that translation researchers have not succeeded in making themselves understood even in universities. Vehmas-Lehto
(ibid.) emphasises the fact that it is surprising that this integration in language studies is happening even though Finland is one of the top countries of translator education and translation research, with internationally praised translation researchers. Vehmas-Lehto (2008: 36–37) claims that translation research being in bloom all over the world, it remains to be seen whether it will do so in Finland in the future and demands that translation research and teaching be continued so that future researchers will be able to make their voices better heard and to improve the status of translation research.

Vertanen (2007: 322) claims that the public image of audiovisual translation in Finland is tragicomic, and the viewing public seems to share the opinion that subtitling can be done by anyone else than professional subtitlers. However, the everlasting paradox in subtitling is that “perfect” subtitles are not meant to be noticed at all. Instead, they follow the pace and rhythm of the dialogue so naturally and beautifully that the viewer gets the illusion of fluently understanding the original dialogue. Jääskeläinen (2007: 119) seems to share this view: a well prepared set of subtitles is read automatically, and combined with reasonable language skills manages to create the illusion that the viewer’s language skills are better than they actually are. This opinion is supported by viewers claiming that they do not require the subtitles at all, but still enthusiastically commenting on errors found. (ibid.). Jääskeläinen (ibid.) justifiably asks how these errors can be found if the viewers do not follow the subtitles. However, one must ask whether it can be presumed that these “error-spotters” and “non-readers” belong to the same group of viewers. Vertanen (2007: 322–323) points out that snickering about errors or making vague remarks about how terrible subtitles are do not help in improving the status of subtitling. The status will be improved only when the public realizes how demanding audiovisual translation is and how much education and skills doing it according to high standards requires. As long as money is among the primary criteria for competing in the field of subtitling, a relatively small number of subtitlers are able to diminish the reputation and achievements of all subtitlers by continuing to offer poor quality services at low rates. Vertanen (ibid.) aptly claims that only if subtitling is powerfully researched and results are brought to the viewing public and organisations operating in the media business,
viewers and organisations realise that subtitling quality matters. Fortunately, the rapidly developing digital technology helps subtitlers by providing tools for more effectively producing high quality (*ibid.*). According to Laine (2007: 269), the fee paid for subtitling commissions depends upon the client, which poses quality-related problems. For subtitlers and also other translators, the fee tends to be a measure of importance and respect. Thus, commissions from clients who pay low fees may be consequently done quickly in order to make way for the more profitable and therefore more important commissions. This might affect the quality of subtitles or translations, and it would profit all if businesses and organisations (including television networks) understood this (*ibid.*).

Gambier (2007: 73) claims that during the past decade, television, film, and video translation have been much researched, but admits that there are very few organised researches considering the production and reception of translations and their cultural and linguistic effects. Gambier (2007: 87) reports that the number of pro gradu theses having to do with audiovisual translation has increased, and that during 2000–2003 in four Finnish universities offering translation studies (Helsinki/Kouvola, Joensuu/Savonlinna, Tampere, and Turku) over 40 pro gradu theses were prepared on this topic. Unfortunately, the total number of theses prepared in these universities is not mentioned, and thus one cannot judge whether the percentage of theses dealing with audiovisual translation is considerable or moderate. Jääskeläinen (2007: 117), however, manages to shed more light on the matter and reveals that in Savonlinna, no more than 6 (six) per cent of all pro gradu theses finished by 2004 had to do with audiovisual translation.

Eskelinen (2008: 45) focuses on another responsibility of universities besides translation research. According to him, the demands towards educational institutions, teachers, and students who graduate from these institutions, are constantly changing. According to Kudashev and Pasanen (2005: 75), when educating and teaching translators and interpreters, the aim is to train them to be critical, independent and responsible experts in languages, communication, and cultures. In addition to different exercises that train the student for scientific work, such as the pro gradu thesis, students do translation and interpreting exercises
during their studies. They are trained in searching for information and in utilising different sources of information (ibid.). Also Krajka (2006: 67) comments on the essential nature of the competence to use Information and Communication Technology (ICT) tools required of future translators, and on the necessity to take into consideration when planning translator education. However, Eskelinen (2008: 45) ponders upon how it can be made sure that students really receive current and up-to-date skills needed in the profession. He points out that currently the task of also universities is to educate and train translation experts who have the skills to meet the needs of businesses and organisations – which were, according to Vehmas-Lehto (2008: 35) among the very reasons why translation studies were created in the first place. One might go as far as to claiming that the basic meaning and original aim of translation studies were temporarily forgotten.

2.1 Professionalism in translation: ability, competence, and expertise

How can professionalism in translation be evaluated? This task is not straightforward. In literature, professionalism and expertise of translators often include the concept of quality, which is not easily measured. In this study, it is assumed that the overall professionalism of translators broadly consists of education, gained experience, and effective usage of tools during the course of work. In articles and studies concerning translation, translations made by inexperienced and experienced – or professional – translators have been compared (Englund Dimitrova 2005; Jakobsen 2002). It is natural that in every profession, be it a doctor or a painter, knowledge and skills are on a different level at the start of one’s career than after decades of gained experience. However, by comparing the experienced and the less experienced professionals, the process of learning and increasing one’s expertise can be investigated. Perhaps among the most comprehensive, yet generalising, definitions for professional translators is made by Shreve (1997: 125): “professional translation is a form of constructed translation that can be acquired by only undergoing certain kinds of deliberately sought out communicative experiences”. According to Gouadec (2007: 87), all translators have excellent language and writing skills, as well as an interest in anything technical, and all translators are thorough, methodological, inquisitive,
and patient, good at networking, at the cutting edge of information technology, and all translators specialise in some field. These statements would seem reasonable, had Gouadec not made drastic generalisations – translators are individuals instead of clones or robots with similar properties.

Englund Dimitrova (2005: 10–13) differentiates between translation ability, competence and expertise. She claims that anyone with knowledge of the source and target languages has translation ability; i.e. they can perform the basic translating, but do not necessarily reach high standards or even correct translations. Translator competence can be further developed from the basis of translation ability. By getting feedback and practising translation, and comparing translations, one can gain a translator's competence. Englund Dimitrova (ibid.) makes an overview of characteristics usually required from professional translators and suggests that professional translators usually translate texts for a certain communicative purpose. For this, translators need competence in the source and target languages, as well as knowledge of the two cultures along with their pragmatic, stylistic, and text-linguistic similarities and differences. In addition, translators often need some special field of skill or interest, as well as tools and aids, such as dictionaries, encyclopaedia, term banks, or parallel texts (ibid.). Englund Dimitrova (2005: 16) suggests that “training and/or experience will not always result in competence, and competence can be found in individuals without specific training and/or experience”. She assumes that expertise is a subcategory of translator competence, and suggests that expertise has been studied in cognitive psychology, for example with the help of think-aloud-methods. According to Englund Dimitrova (2005: 17), experts possessing a deep knowledge of their trade are able to access and categorise their knowledge more effectively than non-professionals or less experienced test subjects. Translators are able to gain and develop competence by performing translation tasks, by repeating the experience, by getting feedback, and by monitoring themselves (Englund Dimitrova 2005: 235).

Shreve (1997: 120) considers translation competence broadly, as being a subcategory of communicative competence, and that it is: “knowing about
translation and about knowing how to do translation”. He suggests that these skills mean the ability to produce well-formed, referentially accurate texts that are appropriate in their cultural contexts. Kussmaul (2007: 26) discusses the creativity of translators, and agrees that translation is not completely free of the source text, but that the skopos theory has proven the link between the source and target texts subordinate. Kussmaul (ibid.) suggests that the looser the link, the more room the translator has for being creative. He comes to the conclusion that a creative translation is able to bring something new to the target text, but simultaneously needs to be appropriate for the task or purpose at hand. Fraser (2000: 115) has come to the conclusion that professional translators have a higher self-esteem than non-professionals. They take fewer looks at the dictionary when translating, and they tend to have a higher tolerance towards the ambiguity and uncertainty of the source text. Professionals are more aware of the meaning and the intended usage of the text, which means that they are more likely to create more usable and acceptable texts than non-professionals. Kovačič (2000: 98–99) claims that professional subtitlers have learnt how to routinely translate the text and simultaneously cut it directly into chunks that fit one subtitle. Englund Dimitrova (2005: 135) argues that a clear correlation is seen between faster performance of a translation task and professional experience. Her research subjects were translation students, language students, and professional translators. It is perhaps no surprise that professional translators were the most efficient in their work, but what is unexpected is that translator students were slower in their work than language students. Englund Dimitrova (ibid.) has noticed that translator students have become aware of translation issues and sensitive to problems, and therefore spend more time in solving them than language students. Tirkkonen-Condit (2000: 123) suggests that “proficiency in translation involves tolerance of ambiguity and uncertainty”. Tirkkonen-Condit (2000: 125) assumes that translation is goal-oriented action that can be described as problem solving. Wilss (2007: 163) agrees and suggests that uncertainty largely influences the quality of translators’ work. Context and contextual matters are important in communication and translation, and Wilss (2007: 165) claims that translators are aware of the fact that sensitivity to context is among the most important criteria of intelligent
translator behaviour. The level of competence is then determined by the translator’s ability to cope with uncertainty and to choose the appropriate problem-solving strategies. Fraser (2000: 112) suggests that professional translators are able to follow a translation brief or assignment more effectively than less professional translators, including students. Thus, professional translators produce translations that better meet the required criteria than those of students. The ability to assess translations on a broader level, and linguistic and cognitive skills keep developing during the career, enabling translators to develop a deeper understanding of the criteria connected with the acceptability of the text. These consist of more than only lexical and semantic factors (ibid.). Fraser (2000: 117) spells out the translators’ skill set, which she claims having been largely ignored in literature about translation. She (ibid.) says that translators need excellent linguistic skills such as textual skills, but also non-linguistic skills such as inter-cultural skills, research and terminology skills, IT skills, and project management skills. Fraser (2000: 117) also mentions attitudinal skills that cover the translator’s readiness to “take pains over details and professional pride and pleasure”, and she suggests that a successful translator should possess the skill of either applying already existing translation theories or of formulating their own working theories. In addition, Helin (2008: 137) points out that an audiovisual translator or subtitler must be able to edit spoken language into a textual form so that subtitles give the viewer the illusion of spoken language and differences of idiolects. The subtitler should be able to balance between different language forms and styles, to reduce and to condense the spoken language in a way that conveys the essential message to the viewer, taking the cultural context into careful consideration (ibid.).

2.2 Tools and aids from the pencil and paper to the digital subtitling software

The time of pencil and paper is over, and translators have moved on to using computers and sophisticated specialised software. Díaz Cintas and Remael (2007: 70) suggest that the computer has changed the whole world of translation in
general and claim that programs or software designed for subtitling have contributed to the fact that the impact of computers on subtitling has been even greater than on “general translation”. According to Gouadec (2007: 265), translators require a workstation that includes a “top of the range” computer which should be changed or at least upgraded regularly in order to keep up with progress in the industry and software requirements. The required software, such as word processing software or subtitling software, can be acquired. A scanner and printer are needed, should one require printing out scripts or one’s drafts or finished translations. Gouadec (2007: 264) suggests that an external backup device, such as an external memory card or hard drive is essential in order to maintain one’s work, for example during the almost inevitable case of computer breakdown. A broadband Internet connection is needed for receiving and returning the translated materials, and for searching for background information and contacting clients, colleagues and specialists. Gouadec (2007: 268) says that the Internet provides translators with almost unlimited resources of search engines and terminology databanks, and translators can contact forums and mailing lists concerning any issues. Multi and monolingual dictionaries, encyclopaedia, Wikipedia, Urbandictionary, Answers.com, and Onelook, as well as glossaries or terminology lists and phraseology concerning technology, medicine, legal terminology, natural sciences and nature, or military technology, to name but a few, can be found in the Internet. Kudashev and Pasanen (2005: 79–80) point out that when using Internet sources, the translator should pay very careful attention to their quality: whether they are published by an official organisation, whether the sources are visible, whether they are current, and whether the style and professional quality of these sources are adequate.

Díaz Cintas and Remael (2007: 70–71) suggest that the recent shift from analogical to digital technology has had a great effect on the profession of subtitling. Subtitlers’ workstations earlier required a VCR player, the computer, a television monitor, and a computer with subtitling software, but currently all of the work can be done with one computer that plays the digitised video file, runs the digital subtitling software or because of the high costs of subtitling software, at least a word processing programme (ibid.). Gouadec (2007: 273–276) claims
that empty translation memories are not worth the expenditure of time or money, but instead, extensive memory databases should aim to be acquired. Translation memories require specialised software applications, and being an automatic processing system, the software of this kind tends to have formatting problems. According to Gouadec (ibid.), translators are able to use specialist software such as digital subtitling software in order to detect segments and time codes, to generate the subtitles, to run simulations, and to even burn the subtitles in the video image. In subtitling, the use of machine translation seems currently almost unthinkable. However, Díaz Cintas and Remael (2007: 71) suggest that machine translation has gained increasing attention in the field of subtitling, and companies have started to investigate the possibilities of machine translation, but adequate linguistic quality that will satisfy viewers has apparently not been achieved. Díaz Cintas and Remael (ibid.) claim that in AVT (audiovisual translation), because of the special characteristics of the trade, automation cannot be used. Unfortunately, these scholars fail to illustrate which special characteristics they base this claim upon. It seems reasonable that digital subtitling software might in the future include machine translation or at least translation memory properties and scripts could be partially or completely translated with the help of these software or properties. However, scripts and dialogue lists contain a considerable amount of errors. Since the source text consists primarily of sound and image, the reviews, final touches, subtitle breaks, and captions remain the subtitler’s responsibility – even if the machine translation software includes extremely sophisticated voice or sound recognition properties. Still, the translator or subtitler will be required to view the whole programme in order to make sure that the meaning and context are correct. Carlson (2005: 238) points out that language technology attempts to imitate human language with the help of computers that lack human knowledge of the world and human consciousness of context – even the most comprehensive dictionary or grammar cannot feel, remember, or understand like a human being. However, Gouadec (2007: 279) suggests that information technology has had, and continues to have, a great impact on the trade, and that changes are beginning to create a gap between those reluctant to adapt to change, and those who are willing and able to embrace the rapidly changing technological and digital tools and aids. Gouadec (2007: 280) claims that those able to adapt to the technical development
will be eventually rewarded in terms of added value and remuneration. Also Díaz Cintas and Remael (2007: 72) emphasise the fact that even though developing technology has made the life of translators and subtitlers easier in some ways, it has changed their working profiles. Socio-cultural and linguistic competence, as well as subject knowledge, are not enough to effectively operate as a subtitler. Now subtitlers are also expected to master the rapidly changing and developing field of information and communication technology along with the constantly evolving software and hardware. (ibid.)
3 Subtitling as a specialised form of translation

Subtitling is a specialised field of translation that takes into account several aspects that are not present in other fields of translation. Because in subtitling the translated text is presented to the viewer simultaneously with the original text, subtitles and subtitlers receive direct criticism, and subtitling can be regarded to be “vulnerable translation” (Díaz Cintas & Remael 2007: 55–57). Immonen (2005: 171; 2008: 8) suggests that “words without the image are nothing”. To the same effect, Gottlieb (2004: 17–20) claims that evaluating the translational qualities of subtitles is not quite straightforward. If the dialogue is transcribed and the subtitles are compared with the transcription, one does not have adequate tools for judging the translation. When comparing subtitles to translations of literature where one compares just one written text to another, the evaluator of the subtitles has to take into consideration the four synchronous polysemiotic characteristics of television: image, sound, dialogue, and subtitles. In addition, time and space are essential in subtitling. Therefore, when evaluating the quality of subtitles, one should concentrate on whether or not the subtitles convey the basic meaning of the original. Since subtitling retains the original version, viewers with the slightest knowledge of the source language are free to criticise the translation. Subtitles represent only the lexical and syntactic features of the dialogue, and viewers can seek further information from the visuals and sounds, such as the prosodic features of the speech. Body language and tone of voice help the viewer in understanding the meaning of the words even if his cultural background is different from the one on the screen. (ibid.) Also Helin (2008: 135) points out that no matter what the viewer’s native language is, also extra-linguistic conclusions are made according to the image and sounds. The intonation of utterances and the tone of the dialogue are taken into consideration. This is why the subtitler should know the culture of the target language so well that he or she is able to convey the information that the viewer needs in the subtitles.
3.1 Speech into writing – diagonal translation

According to Gottlieb (2004: 15–16), the subtitler translates speech into writing, and subtitling is making and conveying uttered messages (speech, signs, and captions) in a different language in filmic media (cinema, television, video, laser disk and DVD) into one or more lines of writing that is or are presented on the screen, synchronised with the uttered message. In Figure 1, Gottlieb (2004: 17) illustrates how spoken communication is distinguished from written communication.

![Diagonal subtitling: from foreign language to domestic writing (Gottlieb 2004: 17)](image)

Figure 1: Diagonal subtitling: from foreign language to domestic writing (Gottlieb 2004: 17)

Figure 1 shows that during a speech situation, the communicators are in direct contact with each other. They share a situational context, and speakers can draw conclusions based also on non-verbal factors. In written communication, the situation is different. The sender of the message is not present, and thus the conclusions are made by the reader alone, mainly on the basis of the text. Gottlieb (2004: 17–19) explains that in diagonal subtitling, subtitlers must transform the unruly spoken language to cleaner written text. If the subtitler copied the characteristics of spoken language to the subtitles, readers would have difficulties in understanding the message. So, when the translator prepares subtitles, he attempts to translate speech acts into written texts. However, Remael (2001: 18) claims that film dialogue, even when masquerading to be everyday speech, has mainly for dramatic reasons structures that resemble those of writing, and thus film dialogue does not possess the structure of ordinary conversation. Díaz Cintas
and Remael (2007: 61–63) distinguish between two forms of speech: scripted and spontaneous speech. They suggest that scripted dialogue can be well structured, whereas natural speech can also be well-structured but seems less clear-cut on the surface, with hesitations and false starts. According to this view, natural speech is rarely rendered in film dialogue as it is.

As in all translation, the translator is forced to prioritise. In subtitling, prioritising and condensing are even more crucial than in literary translations. The characteristics of different media and different types of discourse mean different opportunities for the translation. As Gottlieb (2004: 17–19) puts it: “The constraints of an audiovisual context are different from those of the patient, yet impotent paper”. Since in subtitling the focus tends to be on the speech acts, the visual effects bear more importance than only the lexical elements. This means that the subtitler has a certain amount of freedom in the linguistic sense – viewers are able to see and analyse the situation and context of the speech act in question. At the same time, one should bear in mind that to the viewer, hours spent pondering the wording do not mean a thing. Only the end results are what matters (Gottlieb 2004: 17–19). Gottlieb (2004: 20–22) points out that some condensing of the text follows directly when translating speech into writing. According to his calculations, as much as 50 per cent of the original dialogue may be sacrificed in order to follow the so-called “speed limit” of television. However, Gottlieb (ibid.) does not declare subtitling as a reductive translation mode, but claims that younger people are able to follow subtitles with quite an intense rate, while in order to maintain the attention of what he calls the slow-reading, poorly educated viewers that he claims to form a substantial amount of heavy users of television, the subtitler should try and condense the message. Gottlieb’s failure to state the bases of his claims lessens the credibility of this statement. In Finland, it is primarily the elderly who are considered to be heavy users of television, not so much poorly educated viewers (Järvinen 2008: 33). This only partly supports Gottlieb’s claims, since the elderly may have problems with following subtitles, but this is not so much relevant to their level of education than for example their eyesight.
Gottlieb (*ibid.*.) and Ivarsson (1998: 29) suspect that digital technology offers more freedom of choice. Someday, slow-reading viewers will be able to choose a simpler version, whereas fast readers may enjoy a complete version of subtitles. Gambier (2007: 94–95) points out that audiovisual media are linguistically important, especially in conveying linguistic norms – much similarly to the position schools and literature held in earlier days. Gambier (*ibid.*) suggests that subtitled television programmes can be regarded to maintain, even to improve, reading skills, and simultaneously, to help viewers acquire foreign languages.

According to Gambier (*ibid.*), no research has been able to prove the link between viewed subtitled programming and non-existent illiteracy, but hypotheses and tests have been made to prove that it is possible to acquire utterances and accents from subtitled programming.

### 3.2 The subtitling process

Gouadec (2007: 13) claims that translation is divided into three phases that are pre–translation (anything that happens before the translation material reaches the translator; estimates, contracts, and preparation of the material to be translated), translation, and post-translation. Translation, he (*ibid.*) continues, is further divided into three stages: pre-transfer, transfer, and post-transfer. Pre-transfer includes everything that leads to translating, such as preparation of the material, searches, and charting the terminology. Transfer means shifting to another language-culture combination, and post-transfer includes quality control and upgrading, formatting, and preparations for the delivery of the translation. (Gouadec 2007: 13.) However, Gouadec (*ibid.*) claims that subtitling is post-translation (*sic*), and thus according to him, the integration of the translated material, as in simulation of subtitles, is not translating. This view is challenged in this research, since in Finland subtitlers translate and prepare subtitles; even cue, at least partially simultaneously. Subtitling may be seen as a specialised form of translation. Subtitling and translating are often talked about synonymously, and subtitling is seen as a sub-concept of translation (Abdallah 2007: 287). However, it is essential to recognise that translation is also a phase in the overall subtitling process. Subtitlers usually carry out their tasks in a specific order. According to
Luyken *et al.* (1991: 49), subtitles are prepared as follows: Registration of programme information, verification of dialogue list (or transcription), production of a time-coded working copy, cueing, adaptation or translation or subtitle composition, insertion onto a working copy or a master copy, review, correction, approval, and transmission. This method can be called the pre-cueing method. However, the phases listed above are not all relevant to the Finnish television subtitler, and the steps are usually not even followed through in that order in Finland. The process can be undergone as follows: The subtitler receives a video file of the programme and a manuscript, watches the programme, and translates and prepares the subtitles. Then the subtitles are cued. After this, subtitles are reviewed and corrected, and delivered to the translation agency, after which the agency delivers the subtitles to the television network. In pivot subtitling, the translator in, for example Sweden has prepared the Swedish subtitles. The subtitler in, say, Finland, receives the video image, the previously cued Swedish subtitles, and prepares Finnish subtitles that fit the cueing framework of the original subtitles. Subtitling can also be done so that one subtitler watches the programme, reads the manuscript, and prepares the subtitles, but does not do the cueing phase. He or she sends the subtitles as a text file by e-mail to a second subtitler, who transfers the subtitles to the subtitling software. Then the second subtitler does the cueing phase of the subtitling process, watching the programme. Finally, the finalised and cued subtitles are sent to the broadcasting company or television network. In other words: the first subtitler produces the Finnish subtitles, and the second subtitler does the cueing process, making the needed alterations. Thanks to recent changes in the subtitling trade, subtitlers are not tied down to one workplace, and not even to only one working process – they are able to largely choose their working methods and the order they work in. Alternative working methods are for instance the previously mentioned pre-cueing, and cueing and translating simultaneously or in parts. These are discussed further in section 5.2.
3.3 Television subtitlers in the Finnish economy

Digital television broadcasts in Finland started in September, 2001 (Vertanen 2007: 309). By the beginning of March, 2008, the last analogical television broadcasts also in the cable networks ended, and the Finnish television network industry was digitalised. This meant that also subtitlers and subtitling agencies needed to adapt to the situation, and new digital subtitling software was assessed, chosen, and taken into use. Some agencies require that the subtitler rent the software through them, but few agencies require that the subtitler only work for one agency. Since subtitling can now be done from start to finish with one computer, provided it has the subtitling software, the new situation has offered a new freedom of location for subtitlers. The subtitling trade is largely freelance-based, and agencies do not always hire subtitlers on a regular basis, but rather when needed. From the point of view of subtitlers working for the public sector, i.e. YLE (The Finnish Broadcasting Company), the situation seems to be good. According to Vertanen (2007: 320), audiovisual translation is work that cannot be shifted to low-cost countries, since it should be done by Finnish professionals living in the Finnish culture, sensing the development and changes in the Finnish language, following the Finnish media, and being conscious of how things are naturally communicated to Finnish viewers – taking the source culture into consideration. Sadly, the current situation of subtitling in Finland can be seen as less optimistic. Laine (2007: 267) makes an overview of the situation of television subtitlers in Finland at the end of the year 2007. YLE and MTV3 (a private, commercially funded television network) use their own subtitlers and freelancers, whereas Nelonen (Channel Four Finland) and other networks buy subtitles from private subtitling agencies. According to Laine (ibid.), the subtitlers of YLE and MTV3 have negotiated the Yhtyneet contract, which provides them with better fees and working conditions than those working for the private sector. Due to the digitalisation of the whole of Finland, there are more channels and television networks than ever before requiring subtitles. Abdallah (2007: 272–288) broadly discusses the overall quality of translation and the working conditions of Finnish subtitlers. According to Abdallah (2007: 272–273), in the public sector, the working conditions of translators are excellent because there the translation
quality is holistically and clearly defined. The whole organisation and its resources are committed to producing high quality and translators have a solid status in the organisation of YLE. They are able to largely influence their own working conditions, work processes, deadlines, and fees. However, in the private sector, companies have outsourced their translations, making subtitling agencies intermediaries between the subtitler and the client. Differences between the quality criteria of these parties have made defining quality and evaluating the ethical qualities of the business more complicated than before.

According to Abdallah (2007: 274–276), the increased power of large subtitling agencies in Finland as well as in other parts of Europe has had a profound effect on subtitling. The changed situation requires taking into consideration the whole chain of the subtitling process (the client, the subtitling agency, and the subtitler), and the rights and responsibilities of all links in the chain. Traditionally, translations have been evaluated on a textual level, comparing the source and target texts. Abdallah (ibid.) questions if it is even possible to attempt to continue producing high quality if the new requirements of the business are taken into consideration; some subtitling agencies demand that subtitles be made with hectic deadlines and on top of it all pay low fees when they should be paying extra because of the urgency. Agencies of this kind hire inexperienced subtitlers who preferably study translation since translation students can be regarded to produce relatively reliable quality, and those having already gained experience in the field are understandably reluctant to work under the conditions these agencies offer. Abdallah (2007: 276–277) draws attention to what many novice subtitlers have to face when they first enter the field: the conflict between what they were taught during their courses about subtitling and translation, and the realities of the working life. In the real world, several drafts of the work cannot be done if one wishes to meet the agreed deadlines and thus gain more work assignments in the future. Translators are taught to be modest and humble, and even underestimate their own skills. During their studies, it is stressed to them they must take total responsibility for the translations they produce. They are taught to take translating seriously, even emotionally (ibid.). However, according to Abdallah (ibid.), these basically positive aspects may be the very things that make novice translators
gullible targets in the sometimes cruel current working environment. Thus, some agencies have taken advantage of their strong position in the field by gradually lowering the fees of subtitlers and tightening the schedules and deadlines. This cannot be regarded as sustainable development. *(ibid.)*

Fortunately, this is not the whole picture of the field of subtitling. Subtitlers do need networking skills to be able to compare subtitling agencies and to find those that are worth working for in the long term. In fact, it is not by default only the subtitling agency that makes the fees low and deadlines tight. It shares the responsibility, since if deadlines are frequently pressed, the subtitling agency must have failed to communicate the importance of schedules and deadlines to the client, and further to the production companies. If fees paid to the subtitling agency are low, they cannot pay adequate fees to subtitlers, and the vicious circle is created. The problem is one with a wide scale: The changed digital situation around the world has enabled companies from cultures with no real interest in the Finnish language and with limited knowledge of subtitling to enter the Finnish market. The Finnish market being rather a small one, it would be unrealistic to claim to be among the priorities of large overseas production conglomerates. If and when these companies do not have profound culturally based history and experience of subtitling, as people in the English and German speaking countries rarely do, they are unable to grasp the effects of subtitling on schedules when programmes are produced. The optimistic aim of bringing programmes to be freshly broadcast in Finnish television simultaneously, or even earlier, than in the country in which they are produced, causes problems in schedules when production companies fail to deliver the materials to the subtitling agency as agreed, for the agency to have enough time to delegate the work to subtitlers, and subtitlers have enough time for doing their work. As the delivery of materials (the programme and its manuscript) is delayed, a domino effect is created in the schedules of the subtitling agency, the subtitler, and the television network. Since, naturally, subtitles need to be ready before the programme is broadcast, the subtitler is too often the one who stays up all night translating. This type of sacrifice deserves to be well compensated, and the burden of the costs should be stretched further to the parties originally responsible for the delay, so that finally
also large overseas production conglomerates realise that the effects of their seemingly small errors seriously affect their budgets and productivity in the long term. Even though they may not have any real interest in the Finnish language, they do understand the language of money.

Also Abdallah (2007: 278–280), pondering upon reasons that have lead to the current situation in Finland, points her finger at translation studies. According to her, translation researchers cannot only keep describing what is happening in the field of translation, but they should also comment on the issues described above and aim to find solutions to problems1. Abdallah (ibid.) suggests that in translation studies and among translators, two main modes of thinking can be found. First, those who emphasise the responsibility and duties of translators in a traditional way, and secondly, those who think of the field in a more pragmatic sense and appreciate the recent changes in the field, and feel that translators should be able to hold their own instead of complying with the clients’ and partners’ demands. Abdallah (ibid.) claims that the fact that many translators share the traditional way of thinking and accept all the responsibility of the translation is among the very reasons for the poor status of translators in the economy. According to Abdallah (ibid.), the responsibilities of translators should be redefined. She claims that SKTL (The Finnish Association of Translators and Interpreters) cannot keep on only protecting the interests of subtitlers covered in the Yhtyneet contract and working for YLE and MTV3, but that since changes have been prominent during the last decade, the new challenge is to get also subtitlers working in the private sector to join SKTL (ibid.). Knowledge is power, and if subtitlers know each other and their rights and responsibilities, the whole field benefits – subtitlers work in better conditions, have more time for doing high quality work, and receive better fees. The rights and responsibilities of all links in the chain should be clearly defined, and according to Abdallah (2007: 286), this means ethics. When all links

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1 Taking action is essential. Lively discussion in also other media than the field of translation is needed in order to gain public interest, since few laymen read professional translators’ magazines or translation literature. The issue was discussed by Abdallah and Tiina Tuominen in YLE’s television news broadcast 18.4.2008, and it must be hoped that the discussion continues.
of the chain are aware of the boundaries of their responsibilities, the quality of subtitles rises from the ashes of the world that used to be.

In the meantime, however, more trivial matters deserve research. It should be recognised that the main working conditions have undergone a profound change, as the primary working tool of the Finnish television subtitler, the subtitling software, has been digitalised. To avoid misunderstanding, the agency that subtitlers participating in this survey work for is among the pearls of the private sector and encourages open communication among peers and colleagues. The working conditions in this agency are, however, not the focus of this research. This research is done on professional subtitlers working for the subtitling agency as freelancers or subcontractors and their views on the effects of the digital subtitling software on their subtitling process.
4 Research: television subtitlers

Finnish television subtitling has gone through profound changes because of the digitalisation of Finnish television. Nevertheless, professional television subtitlers have been little interviewed during the past years, perhaps due to the hectic nature of the working environment, which derives partly from this massive digitalisation. Some, albeit little, research has been done, and interesting quantitative studies on Finnish subtitlers and their salaries have been published (Paljakka 2007: 4; Väre 2007: 9). Jääskeläinen (2007: 116–117) suggests that the lack of research in subtitling is largely due to a vicious circle: the field of subtitling is little researched even though it would provide researchers with endless possibilities for study. Theses written with subtitling in mind often concentrate on linguistics and traditional translational aspects rather than focus on the issue of subtitling itself, at least partly because doing research, not to mention a pro gradu thesis, on a field so largely untapped is rather like shooting in the dark. This pro gradu thesis is a start in the mapping of this uncharted territory, and tackles issues that are crucial but still largely missing from the subtitling research of today. Both professional subtitlers and researchers, not to mention translation students who are interested in subtitling, are in need of research that is also bound to the reality of subtitling in today’s Finland. This is an up-to-date research of the current situation in the field, and opens up some of the countless possibilities for further research of the subtitling process. Linguistic traits are an essential aspect in translation studies, but only analysing the text is a rather limiting method when studying subtitling, where the image and soundtrack are crucial elements. As Immonen (2005: 171; 2008: 8) suggests, “words without the image are nothing”. Extra-linguistic information seen and heard on the video file complements the subtitles and makes them understandable – this aspect is missing altogether when reading subtitles printed on paper (ibid.). For this research, information concerning subtitling and the subtitling process is thus gathered from subtitlers with different levels of experience, in order to get a fuller view of the field.
4.1 Research subject: professional Finnish television subtitlers

The research subjects of this research are Finnish television subtitlers working for one of the leading television subtitling agencies in Finland. These subtitlers work mainly on a freelance basis, some as entrepreneurs or subcontractors. Few subtitlers are directly employed by television channels; it is more common to work for a television channel via a subtitling agency (Laine 2007: 265–267). There has been a profound change in the primary working tool of a subtitler: the digital subtitling software (the hardware utilising the subtitling software is the computer) is now available. With the help of this new software, subtitlers are able to work at home, or as Gouadec (2007: 103) puts it, as remote translators. Subtitlers are able to live all over Finland and anywhere in the world, since distance working has become possible. In the subtitling agency that the participants of this survey work for, the digital subtitling software was taken into use a year before this research. All subtitlers participating in this research have not yet taken the opportunity of leasing or buying some digital subtitling software for themselves, but for various reasons choose to do the cueing phase of the subtitling process at the subtitling agency.

4.2 Research method: questionnaire

As Hirsjärvi & Hurme (2004: 27), among others, point out, the research problem naturally determines which method is used. Qualitative research brings out the research subjects’ notions of situations, and gives a possibility for taking their past and development into consideration (ibid.). The aim of the questionnaire used in this study is to gather information about the working reality of today’s Finnish television subtitlers, instead of studying a specific translation and its linguistic traits. Interviewing 60 subtitlers or more would not prove to be profitable and would consume a considerable amount of time from the interviewees’ professional lives. Furthermore, since the researcher has not had training as an interviewer, the interview might prove to produce irrelevant data (Hirsjärvi et al. 2004: 36). However, one of the disadvantages of a questionnaire-based survey is that the ready-made answer choices do not always provide a suitable option for
Each participant (Hirsjärvi et al. 2004: 37). Thus, the option of putting in additional information and comments at any phase of the questionnaire should be added (Hirsjärvi et al. 2004: 36). Since this research aims to obtain a view of the working life of television subtitlers in today’s Finland, and their experiences on the recently introduced subtitling tool, the digital subtitling software, a questionnaire-type survey with open-ended questions that allow subtitlers to type in additional information or comments wherever they see fit, is the appropriate method of gathering data. This questionnaire is to be a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods – an interview conducted with the help of a questionnaire. With open-ended questions, these in some cases lengthy and deep answers will be thoroughly analysed and classified, these classifications being based on answers gained with open-ended questions, not so much on multiple-choice questions. The answers are classified by the researcher, and after classifying them into different categories, the percentages are calculated. The decision to choose the subtitlers working for one subtitling company as the research subjects is based on the fact that such a judgement sample of a group of subtitlers, working for the same agency, and largely having a similar education, is a considerably homogeneous group, and thus we may safely say that the opinions of a sample of approximately 30 subtitlers will effectively represent subtitlers’ current working reality.

Thus, the survey was conducted by a questionnaire (Appendix 1), the preparation of which started in the autumn of 2007. The focus of this research is the subtitling process, and the effects of the digital subtitling software on it from the professional subtitler’s point of view. Since subtitlers are nowadays able to live anywhere in the world, thanks to the new possibilities of distance working, email is a practical way to conduct a survey.

Professional and non-professional translators have been compared (Jakobsen 2002: 191), and it seems to have been established that in order to gain good translation quality, the optimal combination of translation studies and professional experience is needed. However, one does not necessarily become a competent translator even after having completed translator education, and in contrast, the professional level of competence can be achieved with no translation education at
all (Englund Dimitrova 2005: 16). This paper does not as such focus on comparing experienced and less experienced translators. Subtitlers studied in this research work for one of the leading subtitling companies in Finland, and can be thus regarded as professional translators. However, some degree of comparison cannot be avoided, since some participants have over twenty years of experience in the field, while some of them are only starting their careers. In this research, the line between inexperienced and experienced can be basically drawn at 5 years of experience, but each answer is analysed separately. This research does not focus on the end product, such as the quality of a specific translation, but emphasises the translation and subtitling processes as experienced by currently practising subtitlers.

4.3 The research process

It was decided that a mixture of quantitative and qualitative methods be used, and a questionnaire (Appendix 1) mainly consisting of open-ended questions in Finnish be planned, created, and sent by email to subtitlers in early winter, 2008. The questionnaire is constructed in a process-oriented manner, having questions with guidelines for the subtitlers to follow, to make filling the questionnaire as easy as possible, which would in turn increase their motivation in filling it up and returning it.

The questionnaire is divided into six sections which are further divided into subsections. Section 1 of the questionnaire seeks background information such as sex, place of residence, and age of the respondents. Then follow questions about experience: how long the respondents have been working as translators, and whether or not they practise subtitling full time. The next questions are about education: how many study credits they have done on translation studies, and at which university or other institution they have studied, and if they have not done translation studies, how they were qualified for this profession. Then their native language is asked, as well as the language pairs in which they work. The last background question is about their status as translators: whether they are freelancers or for example entrepreneurs.
Section 2 has questions on the translation and subtitling phases of the subtitling process, and the subtitlers’ working methods. It is explained to respondents that in the questionnaire, it is presumed that the steps or phases in the subtitling process are as follows: Receiving the material to be subitled, watching the video file, translating and preparing the subtitles, cueing, making revisions and corrections, and finally, returning the finished subtitle file to the subtitling agency (adapted from Luyken et al. 1991: 51). In section 2.1, open-ended questions are asked about how the subtitler receives the translation materials (video file and manuscript, if the manuscript is available). In sections 2.2 and 2.3 of the questionnaire, multiple-choice questions on subtitlers’ translation and subtitle preparation phases are asked. Even though the questions in this section are mainly multiple-choice, it is encouraged that subtitlers add information whenever they feel the need for this, by for example adding which dictionary or encyclopaedia they most frequently use. Also, every multiple-choice question has the possibility to add an answer that would not fit in the choices offered in the questions. In order to gain answers that could be successfully contrasted, analysed, and compared with and to each other, and since it is presumed that the phases of translation and subtitle preparation in the subtitling process are largely intertwined, and cueing is probably most frequently done after translating, it is considered necessary to ask about the phases of cueing and the translation or preparation of subtitles separately. In section 2.2 of the questionnaire, subtitlers are asked how they usually watch the video file for the first time: if they watch the video file and simultaneously follow the script and mark subtitle breaks, if they watch it without a script, or in any other manner. The questions in section 2.3 of the questionnaire concentrate on translation tools and aids during translation and the preparation of subtitles: dictionaries, encyclopaedia, library, Google or other search engines, specialised glossaries, contacting specialists, visiting the Internet discussion forums, asking colleagues for advice, reading professional magazines, newspapers and literature, and following the discussions in the field by for example news groups or mailing lists. The subjects are, again, able to add additional information on for example which dictionaries they most frequently use, or if they use any tools or aids not mentioned in the multiple-choice questions.
After enquiring about translation tools and aids, some facts concerning translation and preparation of subtitles are asked about. This section can be regarded to consist of two subsections: external and internal aspects concerning translation and the preparation of subtitles. This is not explained to the respondents, in order to not to intervene with spontaneous results. External aspects are for example the manuscript (or script), the video file, and their trustworthiness. It is further asked whether the subtitlers translate heeding mainly the manuscript, whether they trust scripts, whether they mainly watch the video file or mainly look at the script, and whether they type the translated text directly into the digital subtitling software or into, say, a Word file. The internal aspects have more to do with whether the subtitlers spend time in pondering their solutions, or usually take whatever solution first springs into mind, if they intentionally translate speech into written text (subtitles), if they intentionally analyse the source text before translating, if they intentionally pay attention to the style and stylistic features of the source text, if they intentionally aim at creating a similar or appropriate style using specific stylistic features, and which features these are, and if they usually read their text through before they start the next step in the subtitling process, i.e. the cueing phase.

In section 2.4 of the questionnaire, it is enquired whether or not the subtitlers do the cueing phase themselves, and where this takes place. The next few questions are about reductions or changes in the subtitles, which can also be regarded as a part of the revision and corrections review phase. In section 2.5, it is asked whether the subtitler reviews the whole programme or perhaps only parts of it during or after the cueing phase of the subtitling process. In the last part of the translation and subtitle preparation phase, section 2.6, it is asked how the subtitlers return the finished subtitle file to the subtitling agency. In section 3, subtitlers are asked to roughly estimate the duration of their subtitling process: how long it usually takes for them to preview, to translate and to prepare the subtitles, to gather background information, to cue, and to review the subtitles, making corrections and alterations to the subtitles.
Section 4 has questions on the professional identity and attitudes on being a subtitler. These questions are aimed to reflect the subtitlers’ professional attitudes as well as their professional identity. In this section, it is again stressed that respondents are able to put in additional information and comments on each answer field. First, it is asked whether the subtitler is proud to practise the profession of subtitler, and what the reasons for this are. It is then enquired if they feel that they have developed in their profession during their career, and in what ways.

Section 5 of the questionnaire concentrates on the recently changed subtitling tool, the digital subtitling software, and the subtitlers’ views on it. Since subtitlers currently use different types of digital subtitling software, it was challenging to attempt to plan questions that would cover every possibility and every aspect. First, it is asked in the questionnaire whether or not the respondent possesses or has rented some digital subtitling software. Next, the reasons for not possessing or renting the software are enquired about, whereafter questions are asked about the effects of the digital subtitling software and translation materials on the subtitler’s translation and subtitling processes. Then, subtitlers are asked to estimate whether the digital subtitling software has had any effect on the time spent on gathering background information for translations. After this, more technical data is gathered: It is asked how reliable the digital video material has been in use, and whether the digital image has been easier or more difficult to use than analogical materials – the VHS tapes. Then, it is asked if the respondents’ working methods have changed because of the digital subtitling software, and if so, in what ways. This is followed by questions about when the digital subtitling software was taken into use: subtitlers are asked whether they experienced problems when taking the software into use, and if they are satisfied with the software they currently use. Next, it is asked whether the respondents have noticed changes in the quality of their own subtitles, or in the subtitles of others, that are directly or indirectly due to the digital subtitling software.

The questionnaires were sent in early winter 2008 to 56 Finnish television subtitlers working for a specific subtitling agency. The subtitlers were encouraged
to fill out and return the questionnaires within a week as email attachments. It was not necessary to reveal one’s name in the questionnaire, but it was pointed out that full anonymity could not be reached because of the means of returning the questionnaires as email attachments. The subtitlers were promised that the results of this survey would be solely used for the purpose of this study. It was stated that quotations from answers would be included in the research, but without names, and in such a manner that no one could be recognised by their answers. It was possible, if not strongly recommended, to add information to any part of the questionnaire, and the space for the open-ended questions was not limited. The subtitlers were encouraged to ask for further information, should any questions arise in their minds before, whilst, or after filling the questionnaire. The final encouragement for filling it was that a lottery with a surprise prize was to be given among all that filled out and returned the questionnaire. The following day after the email with its attachment (Appendix 1) were sent, the first answers were received. Three days after the first email, a reminder was sent to everyone, in order to ensure that the questionnaire was not forgotten in the challenges of the hectic working environment. This reminder prompted an increase in returned responses. And again, when the final deadline of returning the questionnaire was at hand, many questionnaires were again received. Yet another reminder of the pending survey was sent, and even more answers were indeed received. After the final deadline, another email was sent to ensure that everyone would return the questionnaire, even though the so-called final deadline was over, and most of the research material now gathered. After this strong encouragement and several reminders, 57 per cent of questionnaires were returned: 32 answers from a total of 56 requests were received. The received questionnaires were recorded, saved, and back-up copies were made. Then the questionnaires were manually calculated and read through several times. Questionnaires were carefully classified, calculated and analysed step by step, phase by phase, with the help of MS Excel (Appendix 3). After the finished calculations, the written analysis could begin. It was established that the amount of data gathered was so large that not everything would be included in the final analysis. Therefore, only the most fruitful results are analysed in Chapter 5.
5 Results

This research dives in the turbulent waters of Finnish subtitling of today, with special regard to the recently changed tool, namely the digital subtitling software, from professional subtitlers’ point of view. Not all respondents filled out the whole questionnaire (Appendix 1), but rather parts of it. The majority of the returned questionnaires, however, contains a considerable amount of useful information (for calculations, see Appendix 3), and answers will be quoted and commented. As some aspects gain rather similar answers from different subtitlers, this analysis helps us to make some conclusions of the working methods of television subtitlers in today’s Finland.

5.1 Background and demographics

Questions on background and demographics are the focus in section 1 of the questionnaire (Appendix 1). The average respondent is a Finnish 32-year-old female with 5.8 years of experience in subtitling and a yet unfinished Master’s degree in English translation, which she has studied 4–6 years, but has plans to follow through with a University degree. Her working language pair is English into Finnish, and her native language is Finnish.

Fifty-seven (57) per cent of questionnaires were returned. 14 men and 18 women returned the questionnaire, which means that 56 per cent of the respondents are female. The ages of the respondents vary between 23 and 60. The median age is 29 years, and the average age 32 years. 47 per cent live in Helsinki, 12.5 per cent live in Turku, 9 per cent live in Kouvola, and 6 per cent in Kuusankoski. Other places of residence mentioned are Elimäki, Tampere, Espoo, Vantaa, Klauskala, Kirkkonummi, Loviisa, and Savonlinna. 78 per cent of the respondents are full time subtitlers, and 22 per cent are part time subtitlers. 84 per cent of the subtitlers are freelancers, and 16 per cent are entrepreneurs; the majority of them work as subcontractors for the subtitling agency.
5.1.1 Education and experience

As many as 84 per cent of the respondents study or have studied translation, and 22 per cent study or have studied philology. Only 25 percent have a Master’s degree, 75 per cent of these in translation studies, and 25 per cent in English philology. 44 percent are still studying, and plan to finish their studies with a University degree. 12.5 percent are Candidates of translation studies, whereas 19 per cent finished their studies without any degree. Of full time subtitlers, 28 percent are still studying, whereas 57 per cent of part time subtitlers are still studying. From these results, it can be concluded that a finished University degree is not necessary in order to gain access to the field. However, since 84 per cent have studied or still study translation, it can be concluded that a certain level of knowledge on translation is appreciated in the recruitment process. As 44 per cent of the respondents are interested in completing their unfinished studies, it can be the case that people who are studying translation and are especially interested in subtitling require specialised support in preparing their pro gradu thesis on this still partially uncharted research territory (see Jääskeläinen 2007: 127). It must also be asked how successful one can be in their university studies if one simultaneously practises full time subtitling. 43 per cent of those willing to finish their studies with a degree are studying at the Department of Translation Studies, Kouvola. 36 per cent have studied for 4–6 years at the Department of Translation Studies, and 7 per cent have studied there for 7 years or more. 21 per cent are studying philology at the University of Helsinki. 29 per cent are studying translation at the University of Turku. 14 per cent are studying English language in the University of Vaasa.

Experience as translators among the respondents ranges from three months to 28 years, and the average experience is 5.8 years. The median experience is 3 years. Although there are many among the respondents that can be considered very experienced, changes in the subtitling industry are forcing some subtitling agencies to hire subtitlers with little or no working experience.
5.1.2 Native languages and working language pairs

The native language of 91 per cent of the respondents (100 per cent of those who answer this question) is Finnish. 9 per cent of the respondents fail to answer this question for an unknown reason. 94 per cent of the respondents say that English into Finnish is among their language pairs. 53 per cent say that Finnish into English is one of their language pairs, even though the native language of these subtitlers is Finnish. 31 per cent say that their only language pair is English into Finnish, and the rest have one or more language pairs in addition. 13 per cent translate from Swedish into Finnish, and the language pairs of 6 per cent include Italian into Finnish, German into Finnish, Spanish into Finnish, or Finnish into Spanish. The language pairs of 3 per cent of the respondents are French into Finnish, Portuguese into Finnish, Russian into Finnish, Dutch into Finnish, Greek into Finnish, Finnish into Swedish, Finnish into French, Finnish into Italian, Finnish into Portuguese, and even English into Italian. These can be regarded as surprising results because Finnish is the native language of all those who answered the native language question, as previously mentioned, and it is usually the aim to translate into one’s native language. Exceptions to this have been seen, because native translators who are able to translate from Finnish to foreign languages cannot easily be found in Finland – especially those who are able to do the subtitling process. However, all this might change because of the possibilities offered by distance working from all over the world.

5.1.3 Attitudes on the profession

Let us take a look at the profession of subtitling from the practising or professional subtitlers’ point of view, and first examine section 4 of the questionnaire (Appendix 1). The subtitlers are asked some questions on their attitudes towards their own profession. 28 per cent of the respondents have a neutral attitude towards their own profession, or are not proud of their profession at all. A unifying factor among these respondents is that all of them have less than 5 years of experience. Here are some of their comments.
Enpä erityisemmin. Työ siinä missä muutkin.
(Male, 4 months of experience)

En osaa sanoa. Periaatteessa kyllä, mutta toisaalta en toitottaisi asiasta.
(Male, 7 months of experience)

Enpä juuri, koska tekstittäminen on melko epäkiitollinen ammatti siinä mielessä, että tekstitysten haukkuminen tuntuu joskus olevan suomalaisten kansallishuvia, oli siihen syytä tai ei.
(Female, 1 year and 4 months of experience)

En tunne ammattiylpeyttä siinä mielessä, että kokisin ammatin olevan huomattavasti muita tōitä arvokkaampaa tai että olisin korvaamaton ihminen koneen ääressä. Työkoraali on silti kohdallaan, sillä pidän työstäni ja tunnen jonkinlaista tyydytystä, kun näen käännöksen tv-ruudulla ja totean sen sujuvaksi ainakin omasta mielestänä.
(Male, 1.5 years of experience)

En oikeastaan. Tämä on työ muiden joukossa.
(Female, 2.5 years of experience)

Tunnen ylpeyttä työstäni, en ammatistani. AV-kääntäjien julkinen kuva on hieman huono eräiden väärän ammatin valinneiden vuoksi.
(Male, 3 years of experience)

These answers reflect neutral and modest attitudes towards the profession. Some seem to have no opinion on this, or comment that being a subtitler is a job among all others. The most inexperienced subtitlers even imply keeping their profession to themselves. Their low self-esteem as subtitlers can be regarded to be at least partly caused by the criticism that subtitles have received in Finland. The male respondent who has 3 years of experience in the field says that the public image of subtitlers is poor because of some who have chosen the wrong profession. The fact that 28 per cent of subtitlers are even ashamed of their profession is a matter that requires attention. Developing a healthy professional self-confidence and identity is essential. Being part of a group that directly, or indirectly at the very least, affects Finnish viewers’ language and reading skills, deserves higher esteem. Subtitlers that are not proud of their profession may tire themselves under what they think is the shameful burden of subtitling. The business of translating
and subtitling has much to do with passion: the desire to maintain good Finnish and to create beautiful language for others to enjoy.

Fortunately, 72 per cent of the respondents are proud of their profession. 43 per cent among these have less than 5 years of experience, and 57 per cent have 5 years or more. Very different reasons for being proud are discovered. Among the respondents are those who regard their profession as important in terms of the society:

Olen ylpeä, että saan tehdä työtä, joka on tärkeää tiedonvälityksen ja kielenoppimisen kannalta sekä huomattavasti vaikeampaa kuin monet uskovatkaan. En elättele merkityksestäni tai kyyystäni liikkoja kuvitelmia, mutta olen tyvyväinen ollessani pieni ja melko tarkasti toimiva ratas jonkun muun kulttuurikoneessa.
(Male, 2 years and 7 months of experience)

Kyllä. Työ on arvokasta. Suomalaiset eivät pystyisi nauttimaan tv:n katselusta ilman meitä.
(Female, 20 years of experience)

Tunnen. Koen työni mielekääksi ja yhteiskunnan toiminnan kannalta tarpeelliseksi.
(Female, 2 years of experience)

Tunnen, koska pyrin ylläpitämään oikeakielisyyttä parhaani mukaan, vaikka se välillä tuskallisen turhauttavalta tuntuukin.
(Male, 5 years of experience)

Tunnen. Olen suomen kielen ammattilainen. Tunnen ylpeyttä siitä, että osaan käätää ja ajastaa tv-ohjelmia.
(Female, 7 years of experience)

Tunnen ammattiylpeyttä ja pyrin tekemään nimenomaan suomennoksia. Toimin niiden katsojien apuna, joiden kielitaito ei riitä alkukielisen tekstin seuraamiseen.
(Female, 28 years of experience)

These respondents acknowledge the fact that subtitles enable viewers who have little or no skills in foreign languages to understand and to follow programmes that they could not follow without subtitles. As professionals in the Finnish language, these respondents aim to maintain linguistic correctness. Some say that
subtitling is creative and offers refreshing variety. Some enjoy, even love, their work.

Tunnen, koska se on mielenkiintoinen ja vaihteleva työ.  
(Female, 3 years of experience)

Kyllä, koska työ on vaihtelevaa ja luovaa.  
(Female, 5 years of experience)

Totta kai. Rakastan työtäni ja pyrin tekemään sen niin hyvin kuin deadline, palkkiotaso (ja ohjelman taso...) antavat myöten. Koen olevani oikealla alalla.  
(Female, 6 years of experience)

The respondent with 6 years of experience implies, despite of loving the profession, that not all work assignments receive similar attention, but that attention given to work assignments depends on the fee as well as the quality of the programme to be translated (see also Laine 2007: 269). The morals and ethics in translating are every subtitler’s responsibility. Can it be reliably concluded that work assignments that are better paid for are carried out according to higher quality standards? One strong argument against this is that all the text a subtitler produces is a “calling card”. The subtitler’s name catches many employers’ eyes, not to mention laymen and viewers. If one’s name is seen after poor, hastily prepared subtitles, one’s reputation as a subtitler suffers considerably, especially so in a market area as small as Finland. This will in turn gradually lead to being driven to doing lower fee subtitling for the rest of one’s career. In addition, the subtitler’s name is usually accompanied by the name of the subtitling agency (when the subtitler works for an agency), and thus the last subtitle (“Suomennos: N.N. / Subtitling Agency”) also serves as a calling card for the agency. Can agencies or subtitlers afford to compromise their reputation with poor quality? Some subtitlers say that they are mainly proud when they succeed in their work:

Silloin kun olen mielestäni saanut aikaiseksi hyvän käännöksen.  
(Female, 1 year of experience)

Tunnen ylpeyttä lähinnä silloin, kun onnistun tekstittämään oikein hankalan ohjelman.  
(Female, 8 years of experience)
The level of expertise can be read between the lines here: the female subtitler with one year of experience implies that she is not always capable of producing a good translation according to her own standards, whereas the female subtitler with 8 years of experience implies feeling proud where there is extra challenge in the work assignment and she still succeeds in meeting the requirements. The following should, however, preferably be the case after each work assignment. This answer implies that the subtitler has a healthy professional identity:

Joo. Olemme etuoikeutettua ja harvalukuista joukkoa. Lisäksi tiedän olevani työssäni vähintäänkin kohtuullisen hyvä.
(Male, 11 years of experience)

Some refer to the large audience, which is for them a reason to do their job properly. However, let us hope that the size of the audience is not their main reason for making high-quality subtitles:

Tunnen, koska pidän työstäni ja haluan tehdä sen hyvin, etenkin kun tiedän että työni jälki on yleensä erittäin laajasti näkyvillä.
(Female, 3 years of experience)

Kyllä. Tekstittäjän käännökset saavat harvinaisen suuren yleisön, ja mielestäni tv-tekstittäjän vastuu äidinkielestään on siksi suurehko. Pidän myös tietynlaisena kunnia-asiana sitä, etten ruututekstissä tingi äidinkielestäni mediumista huolimatta.
(Male, 2 years of experience)

The male subtitler with 2 years of experience implies that in some cases, the quality of subtitles be compromised due to the medium. Some, especially very experienced subtitlers, are proud of their profession, but do not always appreciate the attitudes of others – especially laymen without any knowledge of the trade:

Tunnen. Minusta tämä on aliarvostettu ammatti, eikä sen vaatimuksia ymmärretä. Kääntämistä pidetään helppona, "ymmärtäään jokainen englantia ja äidinkieltaan", mutta jos työn tekee hyvin, jälki voi olla todella hienoa.
(Female, 1 year 8 months of experience)

Tunnen. Toisinaan sapettaa sanoa, että olen tv-kääntäjä, koska hyvin usein keskustelu ajautuu siihen, millaisia virheitä ruudussa näkyy… Sanon aina, että mekin olemme vain ihmisä.
(Female, 10 years of experience)
According to these results, developing a positive professional subtitler’s identity takes longer for others, while others manage to develop this already during their studies. It is interesting to note how the last two experienced subtitlers imply a change in the appreciation of the profession during their careers. This is perhaps partly because organisations such as SKTL promote the profession of translators. The other interesting detail is that subtitlers seem to grow a thicker skin as their experience grows. At the beginning of their careers, they may even be ashamed of their profession, whereas after having 5 years of experience, they tend to not worry about the public opinion. It is only natural that viewers, relatives and friends wish to comment on subtitles when finding out one is a television subtitler. As painful as hearing comments on subtitles on television and DVDs may be, viewers and acquaintances who can be considered laymen when it comes to subtitling, are those whose opinions are the most valuable to professional subtitlers. After all, laymen are who subtitles are prepared for – not colleague subtitlers or other language professionals.

5.1.4 Professional development: self-reflection

Let us yet continue for a while in section 4 of the questionnaire, where also the subtitlers’ views on their professional development are focussed on. Respondents
are asked to compare their current situation to the situation that they were in at the start of their careers. They comment on if their working methods have changed in any way (for example become more effective, faster, or slower). 81 per cent feel that they have become faster and more efficient in their work. However, it is interesting to note that 6 per cent consider themselves slower than when they started their careers:

“Yksinkertaisten” ohjelmien työstäminen on nopeutunut, mutta vastaavasti ”monimutkaisempien” ohjelmien työstöminen (sic) on vapaaehtoisesti hidastunut, eli olen valmis uhraamaan enemmän aikaa asioiden selvittämiseen.
(Male, 1 year of experience)

Luulen, että työni on hidastunut. Toimitan tekstiäni pidemmälle ja pohdin varsinkin tekstin sujuvaa etenemistä enemmän kuin aloittaessani.
(Male, 2 years of experience)

These subtitlers have 1–2 years of experience. It can be the case that as these subtitlers were starting, they lacked the patience for working meticulously and slowly in order to achieve results that are similar or nearly similar to experienced subtitlers. Also, these subtitlers are at a point in their careers in which their working processes will start to be enhanced again, but the quality of their work will remain high. Experienced subtitlers, who have become faster and more efficient in their work, emphasise the impact of the technological development during their careers and their overall professional development, whereas inexperienced subtitlers – especially those with 5 years or less experience – tend to mention more specific points about their professional development:

(Male, 4 months of experience)

Tekstittäjänurani alussa tein kakkoskäännöksiä Wordilla, mikä oli hidasta ja kömpelöä. Tekstin muotoilun osalta työskentely on tehostunut ja nopeutunut, mutta toisaalta nykyään ajastan työni yleensä itseltä, joten aikaa kuluu kuitenkin enemmän.
(Female, 1 year and 4 months of experience)
(Female, 3 years of experience)

Olen ehdottomasti entistä nopeampi ja uskoakseni myös taitavampi käyttämään kieltä ja selvittämään tietoja.
(Male, 5 years of experience)

(Female, 7 years of experience)

Olen nopeampi ja tarkempi. Kun tekniset ja repliikkien ulkonäölliset seikat ovat automaattisesti ”näpissä”, oikolukuun jää enemmän aikaa. Myös repliikkijaon tekeminen on helpottunut, mikä nopeuttaa kääntämistä.
(Male, 7.5 years of experience)

Olen nykyään selvästi nopeampi etenkin ajastusvaiheessa. Alkuaitokoina kuva tuli videolla ja se hidasti sekä katseluvaihetta että ajastamista.
(Female, 8 years of experience)

Nopeutunut. Työvälineet ovat parempia ja rutiini auttaa arvioimaan repliikkien keston ja tiivistämään.
(Female, 20 years of experience)

Muistellessani urani alkuaikojen mieleen, miten valtavasti työni on muuttunut näinä vuosina. Aiikoinaan minullakin oli puimurilta kuulostava sähkökirjoituskone ja ruutuvihko, johon laskin repliikkien pituudet. Internetin vaikutus on ollut erittäin merkittävä. Ennen suhteettoman paljon aikaa kului puhelimessa, kun yritti selvittää eri alan asiantuntijoilta, mitähän mikin tarkoittaa. Lisäksi kirjastossa kului paljon aikaa ja tuttavia tuli vaivattua koko ajan; ”onkohan täällä nyt oikein”.
(Female, 20 years of experience)

Työskentely on nopeutunut. ”Apteekin hyllylle” on kokemuksen myötä kertynyt kaikenlaista. Mitä enemmän on vuosien mittaan joutunut pohtimaan ja miettimään, sitä enemmän on keinoja ja ratkaisuja, jotka nyt vain ”juolatavat mieleen”.
(Female, 28 years of experience)
As can be seen in the last comments, the constantly developing working tools, as well as the natural development of one’s routines, enhance subtitlers’ working processes, leaving more time for the translation and subtitle preparation phase, and consequently enabling a more effective creation of high-quality subtitles. In addition, gained experience gives subtitlers more patent answers that one is able to use in future occasions, and thus the subtitler does not have to invent everything all over again in each project. Experienced subtitlers see a wider horizon since they look at matters from further away than inexperienced subtitlers, having experienced a longer timeline in their careers. Experienced subtitlers acknowledge the fact that tools cannot change the basic work, and that even the most complete mastery of tools does not compensate the shortcomings in overall translational skills.

5.2 The subtitling process

Let us return to the beginning of the questionnaire (Appendix 1). Sections 2 and 3 of the questionnaire focus on the subtitling process. As previously mentioned, the whole process of subtitling includes receiving the translated materials, viewing the video file, translating and preparing the subtitles, cueing the subtitles, reviews or corrections, and returning the subtitles to the subtitling agency. All respondents to this survey receive and return the material to be translated similarly: by email or directly from or to the subtitling agency. The process of actual subtitling is what is interesting in terms of this research, meaning that the phases of receiving and returning the materials and finished subtitles are excluded here. In order to establish whether or not the digital subtitling tool, the subtitling software, has an effect on the subtitling process, it is necessary to establish if subtitlers have differences in their processes of subtitling and translation.

5.2.1 Previewing

There are differences already in the first phase of the process – the previewing of the video file. 56 per cent of subtitlers view the video file before they start to
translate it. This is a good decision in order to gain an understanding of the plot and style of the programme (Ivarsson 1998: 81). However, according to some subtitlers, a full preview does not always seem necessary. As many as 34 per cent of subtitlers see the video file for the first time when they already start to translate it. This is the case for example in a longer series that is already familiar to the subtitler, and which has rather short episode duration (15–30 minutes or so). However, 38 per cent of the subtitlers print out the manuscript and mark subtitle breaks on the script while viewing the video file. 31 per cent of subtitlers keep the manuscript and video file simultaneously open on the computer screen, but do not mention marking the subtitle breaks on the manuscript. However, 19 per cent say they print out the script and make notes on it while viewing the video file – again, no mention of subtitle breaks. 9 per cent preview the video file without a script. 6 per cent view the video file throughout the whole translation process, 3 per cent cue while watching (the pre-cueing method), and 3 per cent keep the script and video file on the computer screen, marking the subtitle breaks on the script while viewing the video file.

Printing out the script and marking the subtitle breaks on it while watching can be said to be the traditional method, and this is the method that subtitlers-to-be are taught at the Department of Translation Studies, assuming that the situation has not changed since 2007 (see Helin 2008: 134). Feeling the need for printing out the script is understandable, since human physiology poses its limitations, and the eye has some problems in detecting spelling errors and seeing the text when the text is presented on a computer screen. However, this might be changing as people are adapting to the changed working environment. A mix of the traditional and the electronic method in this phase of the subtitling process is keeping the script and video file simultaneously on the computer screen, marking the subtitle breaks on the script while viewing the video file. This means that the subtitler does not need to print out the script at all. Besides ecological factors – saving paper and ink – this method does not differ much from the traditional method of printing out the script and marking the subtitle breaks on it as viewing the video file.
5.2.2 Translation and preparation of subtitles

The second phase of the subtitling process is the phase of translation and preparation of subtitles. In this research, the cognitive process of translating is not the focus. It does not directly affect the factors that can be considered to be external to the process of translating. However, tools and materials used when translating affect the translation process. This will be further discussed later on. In order to see the effects of the digital tools used in subtitling, let us examine which other aids and tools subtitlers frequently use while translating. When translating and searching for background information for translations, subtitlers are asked whether they use these aids frequently, or in at least half of their work assignments. 94 per cent use bilingual dictionaries, whereas 69 per cent use monolingual dictionaries. 69 per cent use English monolingual dictionaries. 25 per cent use Finnish monolingual dictionaries. Also German and Spanish monolingual dictionaries are mentioned – 3 per cent of the respondents use them. The low percentage of users of Finnish monolingual dictionaries is worth pondering upon. Synonyms, antonyms, and comparisons between them are an effective way of enhancing one’s vocabulary. There are also other, more natural, ways of enhancing vocabulary, such as reading literature in Finnish from all periods of history. It is at any rate remarkable that only 25 per cent of subtitlers – all translating from foreign languages into Finnish – mention using Finnish dictionaries. This is a point worth concentrating on in the education of translators, including subtitlers.

100 per cent of the respondents use Google. 78 per cent frequently use Wikipedia or other Internet-based encyclopaedia, such as Urbandictionary, Answers.com, or Onelook. 25 per cent use specialised glossaries or terminology lists concerning economics and technology, medicine, legal terminology, natural sciences and nature, and military terminology. No one currently uses translation software. As translation technology is a growing field, this tool might be taken into use also in the field of subtitling in the near future. Perhaps corpora or translation software that could be accessed and updated by subtitlers working for a specific subtitling agency would prove to be useful. Only 16 per cent of the respondents frequently
visit the library for background information. This can be regarded to have lessened during the past years considerably because of the Internet, since it provides translators with some rather reliable sources. However, some situations, such as nature documentaries, still send the subtitler to the library. According to the results, the fields of expertise that require visits to the library are natural sciences and nature, technical data and terminology, Shakespeare’s sonnets, history, and sports. 34 per cent contact specialists during their research for background information. Some know specialists, while others contact them by the Internet, telephone, or email. 56 per cent consult their colleagues by email, face to face, by telephone, or by Messenger (Internet-based live chatting). 31 per cent read professional literature, professional newspapers or magazines (Kääntäjä, Kielikello or Hiidenkivi). No respondent mentions Kajawa, the magazine of the translators’ union (KAJ). Only 16 per cent of subtitlers say they follow the general discourse of the translation profession via newsgroups and mailing lists such as Translat.

Next, subtitlers comment on the phase of subtitle preparation. 50 per cent translate from the script, based on the subtitle breaks marked down while viewing the video file. 28 per cent look at the video file and the script equally while preparing subtitles. 28 per cent mainly look at the video file, but also glance at the script. One of the subtitlers decides to make a long comment on this phase, since his style is irregular compared with other subtitlers’ and he seems aware of this:

Useimmiten käyn tiedoston läpi käsikirjoituksen kanssa ja merkiten siihen korjaukset, puuttuvat repliikit ja repliikkien alkuajat (ei kuitenkaan varsinaista repliikkijakoa). Sitten käännän tekstin käsikirjoituksen mukaan, usein kuitenkin videotiedostoon palaten. Äskettäin tein kuitenkin pitkän sarjan, jossa oli järkevämpää vain pitää käsikirjoitus ja tiedosto auki koneella yhtä aikaa ja käänä suoraan tiedostosta käsikirjoitus tukena. (Male, experience of 2 years 7 months)

This subtitler goes through the video file with the script and marks down corrections, missing dialogue, and in-times for subtitles, but not the actual subtitle breaks. Then he translates according to the script, but takes many glances at the video file. However, he mentions having translated a long series that required
keeping the script and video file on the computer screen simultaneously and translating directly from the video file, with the script as a reference. This is not the traditional method, since the subtitler seems to skip the whole phase of marking down the subtitle breaks. It is interesting to note that this subtitler is unable to estimate the duration of his translation process, a topic which will be further discussed in section 5.2.5.

16 per cent translate from the script, but have marked challenging parts on it previewing the video file. 16 per cent translate from the script, but re-check the challenging parts from the video file before cueing. 6 per cent translate directly from the video file, and make final adjustments and final subtitle breaks while cueing. 3 per cent mention that they only look at the script while translating. This can be a risky method, because one can forget what exactly happened on the video file. This method requires a thorough previewing phase, with precise notes and comments made on the script concerning references to people, objects, and captions (text that should be shown on the screen etc.). 3 per cent trust the script, but only if previous scripts of the same series have been reliable. 75 per cent do not trust the script at all, because they often contain errors, and especially people’s names and place names are spelled incorrectly. 41 per cent only trust what they see and hear on the video file, and 9 per cent trust the script and video file equally. 3 per cent (5 years or more of experience) say that if the script and video file seem to be in blatant conflict, they trust the video file. However, 3 per cent (less than 5 years of experience) say the opposite: if the script and video file seem be in blatant conflict, they rather trust the script than their own ears. 69 per cent of the respondents type subtitles to a word-processing programme, such as Word, while 34 per cent type the subtitles directly into the digital subtitling software. Since these overlap, some respondents do both. Only 3 per cent say that they mark parts where the video file derives from the script while marking the subtitle breaks. 3 per cent watch a smaller section of the video file and pre-cue simultaneously, and then prepare subtitles and translate the section. 3 per cent pre-cue first, and then translate. According to another 3 per cent, the working method depends on the programme: the more text, the more they are likely to preview the video file. If it is fictive drama, they translate directly without previewing.
When asked about the phase of actual translation, 59 per cent usually use the first translation that springs to mind. However, some subtitlers do make adjustments in the cueing or reviewing phases. 6 per cent of subtitlers say that they do this more and more when in a hurry. 3 per cent of subtitlers sometimes do this, not always. 3 per cent does this in the initial translation drafting phase, and 3 per cent say that when failing to be satisfied with the first solution that springs to mind, they take a break and stop to ponder upon the choice of words.

Kun suomennettava on rauhallisella tempolla puhuttua ”tavallista” kieltä, ensimmäiseksi mieleen juolahtava vastine on useimmiten käypä. Jos en kelpuuta ensimmäisenä päähän pälkähtävää ratkaisua, haen parempaa.
(Female, 28 years of experience)

When the material to be translated is normal everyday language spoken in a peaceful pace, the first thing that springs to mind is usually acceptable. However, if this subtitler does not approve of the first thing that springs to mind, she starts searching for a better one. 28 per cent say they really ponder upon their translations. Some subtitlers ponder upon wordplay:

Sanaleikit ovat kimuranttisia.
(Male, 11 years of experience)

Sanaleikkien (eri toten juonta kuljettavien) sokkelot tai paljon karsintaa ja tiivistämistä vaatava teksti edellyttävät perinpohjaisempaa pohdiskelua kuin selkeä ”leipäteksti”.
(Female, 28 years of experience)

The male subtitler comments that wordplay is challenging, and does not illustrate further. The female subtitler says that especially wordplay that carries the plot, and text that requires a lot of reduction and condensing, require more thorough pondering than everyday speech. However, one subtitler comments that if she does not think of a good solution in the initial translation drafting phase, she starts pondering upon this:
This subtitler says that she ponders upon translations that do not spring automatically to mind when making the first draft of the translation. Thus, this subtitler makes at least two versions of subtitles; first, drafting the initial translation, and then going through the subtitles and making adjustments, which can include some rather radical changes.

63 per cent mention that they translate speech into written text (see Gottlieb 2004: 17; Díaz Cintas et al. 2007: 61–63). 13 per cent, however, claim not making much reduction or condensing compared to the source text. This result is unexpected, since it is difficult to prepare subtitles without considerable reduction or condensing. The Finnish vocabulary consists of longer words than the English language, and reduction and condensing is needed. It would be understandable were these respondents without subtitling education, and thus lacking adequate tools in recognising how much reduction and condensing is done when preparing subtitles (false starts, stuttering, repetition, and other details removed automatically in order to save time and space), but subtitlers having studied translation and subtitling answer in this way. In fact, among these subtitlers, three are experienced (11 years, male, 7.5 years, male, and 28 years, female), and only one is inexperienced (male, 7 months). It is possible that very experienced subtitlers no more notice making reductions and condensing because the process has become automated to them, and alas, the inexperienced male may have problems with reduction and condensing, and his texts may be difficult for those viewers to follow who read rather slowly. However, the male subtitler with 7.5 years of experience does make reductions and condensations by removing names, adjectives, and repetition:

Jos tiivistän tekstiä, ensimmäiseksi lähtevät nimet, turhat adjektiivit ja asioiden toistot.
(Male, 7.5 years of experience)
81 per cent of the respondents do condense and make reductions. Here, various methods for condensing are mentioned. All have the same basic idea: to extract the basic meaning and then to convey it in the shortest and most effective manner by eliminating repetition, condensing sentences, using shortest synonyms, reducing superlatives and exclamations, and removing the unnecessary parts, in short.

Keskityn olennaiseen.
(Female, 3 years of experience)

Pyrin tuomaan asian ytimen esiin ja jättämään turhat epäröinnit ja toistot pois.
(Female, 2.5 years of experience)

Käytämällä mahdollisimman tiiviitä ilmauksia ja lyhyitä sanoja mahdollisuuksien mukaan, jätän pois epäolennaisia asioita ja reaktioita, jotka näkyvät kuvasta.
(Female, 1 year and 4 months of experience)

Aktiiveja passiiveiksi ja kieltoja positiivisiksi.
(Male, 1 year and 1 month of experience)

Lyhyillä sanoilla, karsimalla superlatiiveja ja huudahduksia.
(Male, 11 years of experience)

Poistan juonen kannalta epäoleellisen. Lukunopeus on kuningas.
(Male, 3 years of experience)

The last quotation is the only one where the subtitler implies that he uses the subtitling software as a tool for measuring the need for condensing: the software tells him while cueing when there is need for more condensing. Sadly, not all subtitlers rely on the reading speed limits, but rather stick to their subtitles and translations, and as a result, readers experience difficulties in reading and comprehending the subtitles. It may be the case that the readers of this subtitler’s work do not experience these difficulties.

No respondent reports to intentionally analyse the source text. It can be speculated whether or not the respondents understand that text analysis can also be applied in subtitling – or perhaps they do this automatically and are then unable identify this as a phase in their working process. This is all the more surprising, since 72 per
cent say that they intentionally take the style of the source text and stylistic features into consideration while translating. 84 per cent intentionally aim to create a similar style to their subtitles than used in the source text. When asked about their methods, interesting answers are given:

The female subtitler with 3 years of experience implies using her intuition when creating the style in the text. The second respondent quoted, the male subtitler with 2.5 years of experience, aims to imitate the impression gained of the person that is speaking. The male respondent who has 5 years of experience, uses different registers that are appropriate for each occasion: casual, formal, using first and last names in addressing someone, and so on. However, the first respondent quoted is male, with 2 years of experience, and his answer implies uncertainty in translation, which can affect the quality of his subtitling process (Wilss 2007: 163; Tirkkonen-Condit 2000: 123). He does not dare to make sentences that deviate from general language, since they would, according to him, be based on his way of speaking, and sayings and utterances that would be specific to himself, and thus he is unsure about whether the average Finn would understand these utterances. It is interesting to notice that this subtitler does not rely on his intuition in recognising the difference between his idiolect and general Finnish dialects, or the general Finnish spoken language. Neutral ways of creating the illusion of spoken language can be found, and this is an aspect that might
change dramatically as this subtitler gains experience and, above all, self confidence as a language professional. Too much responsibility cannot be put on the viewer, such as knowing for example Latin or French as part of Finnish basic education, but it is a fairly safe assumption that general Finnish language is well received among the active television viewing population.

38 per cent of the respondents read their finished text before the cueing phase, and 41 per cent make changes in the text before cueing. When asked what kind of changes they most frequently do, some subtitlers make alterations that make the text more smoothly flowing and easily understandable:

   Käännän tekstin, pidän yön välissä ja luen uudestaan. Jos joku kohta tökkää silmään, hion sitä.
   (Male, 7 months of experience)

   Lisään “jouhevuuutta”.
   (Male, 1 year and 1 month of experience)

   Sanavalintamuutoksia, tyyllisesti parempia rakenteita, poistan kömpelyyksiä.
   (Female, 1 year and 8 months of experience)

   Korjailen ”tökkiviä” virkkeitä sujuvammiksi.
   (Female, 3 years of experience)

Few experienced subtitlers answer this question thoroughly; perhaps they do not feel the need for clarifying their methods of correcting and altering their text, or it has become so automated that they do not make a point of it. However, two very experienced subtitlers do tell more of this phase, and report to make technical corrections in this phase:

   Kursiivit ja nostot, teksti muutuu jos siinä prosessissa näen virheitä.
   (Male, 7.5 years of experience)

   Korjaan kirjoitusvirheitä, jaottelen uudelleen.
   (Male, 11 years of experience)

However, one female subtitler with 6 years of experience makes a surprising revelation:
Printing the finished subtitles on paper and checking the text is used as a method of teaching subtitling, since it enables the novice subtitlers to easily spot their errors and to create flowing, high-quality subtitles with few spelling errors. However, few subtitlers do this after entering the field as fully employed professionals because this way of reviewing the text is time-consuming and reduces productivity and effectiveness. Printing out every subtitle sheet prepared – considering a career that has already lasted for six years – takes a considerable amount of paper, and is not ecological. In contrast, 38 per cent do not read their finished text at all before the cueing phase, but make all alterations and corrections when cueing. This is a method that slows down the cueing process, a process that benefits much if it can be done without a pause from start to finish. This makes the cueing process most flowing, and the results of this flowing are also enjoyable for viewers to follow at home.

25 per cent of the respondents make comments that cannot be classified above because they reveal at this point that their subtitling processes differ from the so-called traditional subtitling process:

Yleensä teen ajastuksen ja käännöksen yhtä aikaa, joskus jopa aloitan tekemällä raaka-ajastuksen, eli toimintatapana poikkeaa huomattavasti oletuksestasi. Saatan vielä lukea valmiin tekstin läpi katsottuani sen ensin kuvan kanssa.
(Female, 1 year and 4 months experience)

Katson ensin kuvanauhan ja teen samalla karkean ajastuksen (tyhjät repliikit). Sitten aloitan kääntämisen ja viimeistelen repliikkien ajastuksen sitä mukaa kun käännös etenee.
(Male, 1.5 years of experience)

Kun ajastan ensin valmiit repliikit, niin näen reunaehdot, joihin tekstiin on mahduttava. Toinii nopeassa dialogissa, dokumenteissa on parempi kääntää ensin ja ajastaa sitten. Tarkastan repliikit ja
These reports are illuminating, since they reveal some changes that the new subtitling tool, i.e. the digital subtitling software, has during the past year enabled subtitlers to make in their subtitling process. One does not have to first preview the video image with the help of the printed script, then translate and prepare subtitles, and after that do the cueing phase. If one so wishes, it is possible to pre-cue, meaning cueing blank subtitles, and afterwards write the text to fit these cueing margins. It is also possible to start translating and preparing subtitles while simultaneously viewing the video file – this was a very slow method of working in the VHS age. A female subtitler with 2 years of experience elaborates on her working methods clearly. Her answer is rather long, but because of its illuminating nature, is included here.

This female subtitler is not among the most experienced subtitlers. She translates approximately 100 subtitles at a time and then cues (a programme lasting for one hour usually has 400–500 subtitles, thus, she works in chunks as large as 25 per cent of the file in a one-hour programme). However, she says that in the reviewing phase, she has to correct terms she has translated in different ways in different
sections of the text. She works in chunks because she wants to be able to return to the challenging sections directly, and not at the end of the whole cueing phase.

Kotona ajastamisen myötä käänöksen ei tarvitse olla yhtä pitkälle hiotu siinä vaiheessa, kun siirtyy ajastamaan. Jos olen melko varma, että repliikkijaat ovat käänöksessä kohdallaan, jätän pois vaiheen, jossa vertaan käänööstä kuvaan, ja aloitan ajastamisen.

(Female, 7 years of experience)

This experienced female subtitler has learned how to utilise the new digital subtitling software for her own benefit, and compares the traditional subtitling method to her new working methods. She is nowadays able to work at home, and implies that now the time given for the cueing process is not as strictly limited than at the subtitling agency. It is understandable that at the office, cueing times have to be reserved beforehand, and the subtitler has to be able to predict how long the cueing will take, and it is often the case that the next subtitler already awaits for his or her turn when the mildly stressed subtitler finishes their work. Thus, this subtitler comments that she is in some cases nowadays able to leave out the phase where she compares the text subtitles with the video image before starting the cueing phase. This is a phase in subtitling that is usually used in shows where the action is fast, and dialogue, cuts and scenes flow unevenly, at an intensive rate. This comparing phase helps to create subtitles that are more easily cued.

5.2.3 Cueing

47 per cent of the respondents cue at home, or at least away from the subtitling agency. The reasons for this are various. Many appreciate the flexibility that having the subtitling software at home offers; they do not need anything else than a computer, the Internet, and the subtitling software to be able to prepare and finalise the subtitles from start to finish. Some would not have perhaps started working at home if they had not moved far away from the location of the subtitling agency. However, 53 per cent of the respondents still cue at the subtitling agency. Inexperienced subtitlers (full time and part time) say that their
reason for this is that they have practised subtitling for such a short time that they
do not wish to invest in subtitling software until the future of their career is
settled. Some subtitlers, both experienced and inexperienced, do not wish to spend
all their working time at home, and wish to meet colleagues and other people at
least occasionally.

En ole hankkinut kotiin ajastusohjelmaa, koska en halua täysin
mökkihöperöityä. Kyse ei sinällään ole rahasta.
(Male, 1 year of experience)

However, one experienced subtitler does not wish to spend his time on the
technical aspects of the new subtitling tool:

En omista ajastusohjelmaa, enkä kollegoiden kirjavien kokemusten
valossa ole vähään aikaan sellaista hankkimassakaan.
(Male, 11 years of experience)

Every appliance or digital software requires a certain amount of time when
learning how to use them, not to mention possible technical problems when taking
them into use. Some subtitlers do not wish to wrestle with these issues and spend
time with them when they are able to continue cueing at the subtitling agency.

Although it would be beneficial to make finalised subtitles and then cue them
from start to finish all in one go, this does not always seem possible: 84 per cent
of the respondents make reductions while cueing. They do not make much of this,
but also very experienced subtitlers admit that they need to do this. Respondents
also say that this depends largely on what type of subtitled programme is in
question. However, 13 per cent claim not having to make reductions at all while
cueing. These are subtitlers that can be either regarded to possess a very high level
of routine in their work, or their subtitling process contains a phase that enables
them to fully trust their text and to cue their text from start to finish without
making alterations. All these respondents are female and have 5–20 years of
experience. 72 per cent of subtitlers say that they need to add some subtitles to the
text while cueing. Adding can be considered to be easier than having to reduce the
text still in the cueing phase, since it can sometimes be difficult to be able to
distance oneself from one’s translations. Adding is more simple, and most of subtitlers that answered having to add subtitles are experienced or rather experienced subtitlers. Only 13 per cent say they never have to add subtitles, and only one of these subtitlers was inexperienced. 81 per cent of subtitlers say they have to make corrections in the text while cueing. However, most only correct some spelling errors, especially experienced subtitlers. Two female subtitlers say that they have to correct details that they have misunderstood while translating:

En yleensä. Joskus olen ymmärtänyt jotain väärin.  
(Female, 20 years of experience)

Välillä korjaan tekstiin jääneitä kirjoitusvirheitä. Joskus jonkin asian on myös kääntänyt täysin väärin, koska on ehtinyt käännösvaiheessa unohtaa, mikä tilanne kuvassa olikaan sillä hetkellä meneillään.  
(Female, 3 years of experience)

One of the risks of the so-called traditional method of subtitling is present here. When translating from the printed script, if one does not follow the video file while translating, there is a risk of errors in translation, because of references and details that are seen on the video file, but for some reason are not transcribed on the script. The traditional method is still an effective working method and reduces the risk of other errors, as each phase of the process is usually done in one session. The risk of forgetting what happens on the video file can be reduced by mildly modernising the method (3 per cent of the respondents do practise this method): by keeping the video file on the computer screen while translating, and reviewing a section of the video before translating. This does slow down the subtitle preparation process, but makes the cueing process more effective, as the need for corrections reduces. Other factors that the script often cannot convey are seen in the following comment by one of the subtitlers practising the new, so-called unconventional subtitling methods:

Koska minulla ei, kuten selitin, ole käännöstyöstä irarrilta ajastusvaihetta, tätä on vaikea arvioida. Jos ajattelen niitä ”ongelmakohtia”, joihin ajastettavassa pätkässä palaan, kyse on usein juuri edellä mainitusta ”ylimääräisestä ajasta”, johon mahtuu sittenkin enemmän tekstiä. Monesti myös ”se parempi käännösratkaisu” tuleekin päähän juuri silloin, kun ei katso
repliikin tekstiä, vaan kuuntelee kuvaa (kyllä, puhun tarkoituksella ”kuvan kuuntelemisesta”, sillä ajastuksessa on ääniraidan lisäksi otettava huomioon myös kamerakulmat, leikaukset jne.) ja keskittyy oikeaan ajastukseen.
(Female, 2 years of experience)

Here the benefits of translator and subtitler education are quite obvious: the theoretical contribution of courses teaching subtitling is put to use. This subtitler seems dedicated in her cueing process, and carefully takes into consideration the camera angles, edits, cuts, and scenes, as well as listening to the video file. It can be asked if this is like giving pearls for pigs, and if viewers, who are often not experts in the audiovisual industry, notice such fine-tuned work. 9 per cent of the respondents do not make any corrections in the text while cueing. 66 per cent of these are female subtitlers with 5–28 years of experience, and 34 per cent are male, with approximately 1 year of experience. 81 per cent of the respondents change subtitle breaks still while cueing – experienced subtitlers sometimes divide longer subtitles into two subtitles. In contrast, some inexperienced subtitlers have to combine short subtitles into longer ones, and even make some reductions and condensing still in this phase:

Teen jonkinverran (sic) muutoksia. Yleensä tiivistämistä, koska olen arvioinut jonkin keston kääntäessäni väärin.
(Male, 1 year of experience)

Mainitsemissani ”liikaa tiivistetyissä” kohdissa (ehkä 4–5 krt/ohjelma) sekä harvenmin lisätiivistystä kaipaaissa kohdissa (esim. kahdesta repliikistä yksi, 1–2 krt/ohjelma).
(Female, 2 years of experience)

Judging by the previous answers of experienced subtitlers, reductions and condensing while cueing will decrease as routines and experience increase. Only 3 per cent do not make any changes in the subtitle breaks while cueing, which is probably caused by a very precise translation and subtitle preparation phase.
5.2.4 Revisions and corrections review

41 per cent of subtitlers do a complete revisions and corrections review of the whole subtitled programme, and 50 per cent do a partial review. The 9 per cent discrepancy is due to the fact that not every subtitler is able to answer this section because of their unconventional subtitling process, and one respondent does not cue the text, but sends it so the subtitling agency to be cued. Doing a full revisions and corrections review is common among inexperienced subtitlers, at least partly since routines are not as fully developed and smooth as with experienced subtitlers. Also their self-confidence and assuredness is often not as high as with experienced subtitlers, nor should it be. As long as the cueing process is not fully automated with the help of routines, and is often interrupted because of making corrections and alterations in the text, it is necessary to do a complete review. Experienced subtitlers usually do a partial review in challenging programmes and especially challenging sections. Some subtitlers also mention changes that have taken place because of their professional development:

Teen tarkastuskatselua osittain, kohdissa, joissa tekstiä pitää sovitella lukuajan takia. Alkuaiikoina katsoin aina koko ohjelman läpi.
(Female, 8 years of experience)

One experienced subtitler does such precise and accurate work already in the cueing phase that she does not do the reviewing phase at all:

En lainkaan. Teen niin tarkkaa työtä jo ajastusvaiheessa. Toki katson, että teksti lähtee pyörimään kuten oli tarkoituskin.
(Female, 10 years of experience)

However, not everyone seems to be able to always manage their time as planned, and therefore has to compromise their principles:

Pyrin katsomaan ohjelman kokonaan, mutta harmittavan usein siihen ei jää aikaa.
(Female, 3 years of experience)
Jos aikaa riittää, kokonaan. Jos ei, teen sync modella eli käyn vain läpi jokaisen repliikin. Tarkastuskatselun jälkeen luen Wordilla käänöksen läpi.
(Male, 4 years of experience)

This is mostly a matter of being able to manage one’s schedule, and making sure that one has enough time reserved in the schedule for delays such as getting ill, and other unexpected, but still predictable, factors. Not everything can be predicted, but it is rather rare that someone never gets ill. One subtitler reveals an interesting fact of her working methods:

Ajastamisen päätteeksi. Koska olen veivannut ohjelmaa vaiheissa eteenpäin, on tärkeää nähdä kokonaisuus. Usein silloin vasta huomaa, jos on esim. käyttänyt samasta asiasta eri kohdissa häiritsevästi eri sanaa.
(Female, 2 years of experience)

This subtitler does the reviewing phase after cueing, but has to do so because she translates and cues in parts, and thus it is necessary to see the complete programme because then she often notices having used different terms of the same matter in different sections of the programme. This is one of the biggest risks of this new subtitling method. If one does the cueing process all in one go, this problem disappears – also, one does not then need a complete reviewing phase.

5.2.5 The overall duration of the subtitling process

In section 3 of the questionnaire, respondents are asked to estimate the overall duration of their subtitling process, in other words, how long it usually takes them to prepare subtitles from start to finish (previewing, translating and preparing subtitles, cueing, and possibly reviewing) to a programme that lasts for one hour. It should be noted here that the end result, the finalised subtitles, are not taken into consideration – only the effectiveness or the duration of their preparation.

Not everyone is able to estimate the duration of their subtitling process. The ability to estimate the duration of one’s working processes enables the subtitler to
take on a reasonable amount of work in order to both financially maintain oneself, to finish the work in the agreed time, and most importantly: in the highest quality. If one can estimate how many hours a phase in their subtitling process takes, one does not experience inconvenient surprises, for example having to leave out the planned revisions and corrections review phase. However, two subtitlers fail to estimate the subtitling process completely or partially. One of them is male, with 2 years and 7 months of experience, and the other is female, with 2 years of experience. These subtitlers use some unconventional methods in their subtitling processes, and this may make self-reflection challenging, but all the other respondents (also with unconventional subtitling methods) manage to do so. The average time spent in the whole subtitling process (receiving the materials and returning the finished subtitles excluded) is 16.7 hours. The median time for this whole process is 14 hours. The least time spent is 8.5 hours (a female subtitler with 20 years of experience), and the most time spent is as much as 85 hours (a female subtitler with 1 year and 4 months of experience). That means that the least effective subtitling process takes 10 times longer than the most effective subtitling process.

However, the process of 85 hours seriously deviates from other results. To clarify this, the second least effective subtitling process takes for 24.5 hours (a female subtitler with 1 year of experience), which is almost four times less than this least effective process. Differences between the next less effective processes are not as considerable. The duration of the subtitling process of the third least effective subtitler is 22 hours (a female subtitler with 5 years of experience), and the fourth least effective subtitler takes 19.5 hours to finish her subtitling process (a female subtitler with 5 months of experience). The four least effective subtitlers are female, and have reasonably little experience in the field. However, the next surprises emerge while looking at the next four slowest subtitlers: 18.5 hours (male, 4 years of experience), 18.1 hours (male, as much as 11 years of experience), 17.75 hours (male, 1 year and 1 month of experience), and 16 hours (two female subtitlers, one has 6 years of experience, the other has 7 years). These experienced subtitlers have learned to work with a certain routine, or work at a slow and relaxed pace. It is also possible that they encounter problems with the
digital subtitling software, and this slows down their process. One inexperienced male subtitler in this group spends 2.5 hours in cueing a programme of one hour, and translates this programme for 13 hours. Thus, the long translation phase makes his overall process seem ineffective. For reference, the shortest translation phase is 4 hours (male subtitler with 5 years of experience), but this subtitler spends 2–3 hours in the reviewing and corrections phase. The top 2 most effective subtitlers are experienced ones: First, 8.5 hours (female, 20 years of experience), and second, 8.6 hours (male, 11 years of experience). The fourth most effective subtitler is again a male subtitler with 5 years of experience (9 hours), and the fifth one is female, with 20 years of experience, and her subtitling process lasts for 11 hours. The third effective subtitler with a subtitling process of 9 hours is male, with one year of experience. There are some individuals who already at the beginning of their careers possess an intuitive touch for subtitling, and can with considerable effectiveness learn the tricks of the trade, and rise on the level of experienced professionals. However, this subtitler spends 5 hours in translating a one-hour programme, and cues it in 2 hours. He spends 1 hour in the reviews and corrections phase. Sometimes inexperienced subtitlers, unconsciously aiming to save time, save it from the translation phase of the process. Jakobsen (2002: 191) suggests that expert translators spend a longer time in the reviewing phase than novice translators. As a result, the subtitles of the less experienced subtitlers can be more unfinished than experienced subtitlers’. Experienced subtitlers have collected more tools in their shed already, and their working processes run smoothly. They have learned patent answers, are aware of their faults, and are able to routinely check for errors they tend to do.

47 per cent of the respondents estimate using 10–20 per cent of the translation and subtitle preparation phase on searching for background information and consulting experts, specialists and colleagues. 16 per cent use 30–40 per cent of the phase on gathering background information, and yet 16 per cent use 50–80 per cent of the phase on searching background information. However, 3 per cent say that they only use 5 per cent of the phase on gathering background information. Considering that 33 per cent of these are experienced subtitlers, they might be unable to identify this phase from their translation process. 67 per cent of
subtitlers that use only 5 per cent of the translation and subtitle preparation phase in searching background information are inexperienced subtitlers. They either fail to estimate the time used in this phase, or need to gradually increase the time spent on this phase in order to gain high-quality translations. Calculating this slightly differently, 56 per cent of subtitlers use only 5–20 per cent of their translation phase in gathering background information, whereas 44 per cent of subtitlers use 30–80 per cent of this phase in searching for information. In fact, according to four respondents, it is not possible to even attempt to estimate this phase, since programmes differ so much in their styles and levels of information.

Inexperienced subtitlers, who do not preview the video file before starting the translation and subtitle preparation phase, perhaps aiming to save time, do not seem to manage to save time from the overall subtitling process. Returning to the traditional subtitling method, and translating the whole text in one go, would diminish the previously mentioned problem of translating terms differently in different sections. Then the finished texts can also be cued in one go. 80 per cent of respondents practising this method have over 2 years of experience. However, 20 per cent of respondents doing this have less than 2 years of experience, and these do have a long overall duration of the subtitling process. It can be regarded more profitable, especially for inexperienced subtitlers, to first translate as one, continuous process, and only then move on to doing the cueing phase.

Also those who are experienced and preview the video file beforehand do spend a long time in the translation and subtitle preparation phase – it is the most important phase of the subtitling process. Inexperienced subtitlers, who use the traditional subtitling process, are not considerably more effective in their work than those using the unconventional processes. This may be because inexperienced subtitlers, regardless of which working method they use, lack routines in their work, and are rarely as effective in their work as experienced subtitlers. In subtitling, being slow in one’s work is not the worst case scenario. It is a good thing that inexperienced subtitlers spend a lot of time and effort in their work – in all phases of the process. Developing in one’s work requires understanding of what is needed in the work, and since one uses a lot of energy in
finishing the process, it can be concluded that the subtitler in question is doing the work as well as he or she possibly can. The speed and effectiveness of the working processes will increase as the routines and expertise develop. Considerable duration of the subtitling process means not only being inexperienced, but that one is able to take responsibility of one’s work, and aims to maintain the highest quality in subtitling.

5.3 The digital subtitling software

Section 5 of the questionnaire focuses on digital subtitling software along with its effects on the subtitling process. 53 per cent of the respondents use the digital subtitling software at home, or otherwise away from the subtitling agency. 44 per cent use the software at the agency, and for this, subtitlers have several reasons. 13 per cent of the respondents consider the software too expensive.

Liian suuri investointi tässä vaiheessa uraa.
(Male, 7 months of experience)

Sen hankkiminen ei toistaiseksi ole ollut taloudellisesti riittävän houkuttelevaa.
(Male, 2 years of experience)

19 per cent of the respondents say they visit the agency for social reasons.

Työ olisi yksinäistä, jos ei kävisi toimistolla ajastamassa.
(Male, 1 year and 1 month of experience)

Ylläpidän toistaiseksi kernaasti edes jonkinlaisen illuusion työprosessin ja -ympäristön sosiaalisuudesta.
(Male, 11 years of experience)

The finished subtitles are prepared by the subtitler, the subtitler delivers them to the subtitling agency, and technicians at the television channel make the finalising touches without any personal contact with the subtitler. As more and more subtitlers are working alone from their homes, it remains largely everyone’s own responsibility to participate actively in the discourse of the field, maintaining and utilising this modern virtual working community, and gaining insights into
various aspects from one’s colleagues. The following respondent also has some reservations on the new digital technology (as do 13 per cent of the respondents):

Sopeudun hitaasti uusiin tekniikoihin. Kollegoiden kokemukset eivät rohkaise aloittamaan kamppailua bugisten ja puolivalmiiden ohjelmistojen kanssa.
(Male, 11 years of experience)

The following comment wraps up several of the aforementioned reasons, such as expenses, technical factors, and the social dimension of cueing at the subtitling agency:

En ole nähnyt sopivaksi sijoittaa niin suurta summaa, kun en ole varma, mikä ohjelma toimii luotettavasti, täyttää kaikki nykyisen ja mahdollisten tulevien työnantajien vaatimukset ja on vielä olemassa/tuettu vuoden kuluttua. Osittain myösmin nautin käännöstomistolla käymisen sosiaalisesta ja rutinia rikkovasta puolesta.
(Male, 2 years and 7 months of experience)

Focussing briefly on the technical issues, it is true that in order to effectively continue one’s work even though the subtitling tool – the digital subtitling software – is taken into use, directly faultless software as well as effective instructions or a course on how to use the software would be essential. In subtitling, a reasonable amount of routines is required in order to work efficiently. If one has to refer to the owner’s manual or other instructions every few seconds, it is hardly feasible to expect that the speed or effectiveness of working could be at a very high level. The next part of section 5 deals with the subtitlers’ views on whether the digital subtitling software has had an effect on their subtitling process, and if so, how. 14 per cent of subtitlers fail to answer this section completely, while 31 per cent only answer parts of it. Some seem to be under the impression that this section does not concern them because of their lack of experience, others find the section too challenging. Fortunately, the majority of all respondents take the effort of filling out this section.
5.3.1 Effects on the subtitling process

19 per cent of subtitlers have not noticed any effects of the subtitling software on the subtitling process. It should be noted that the majority of the respondents who answer this way are inexperienced subtitlers. However, also a fairly experienced subtitler has an interesting comment on this:

Tekstitysohjelmat ovat periaatteessa olleet aina samanlaisia. Uusissa on joitakin toimintoja, jotka helpottavat työskentelyä, mutta perustyöskentely ei ole juuri muuttunut.
(Female, 7 years of experience)

The respondent says that while some properties of the subtitling software are new, subtitling software has basically always been similar. The basic work of translating and subtitling does not change even if the tools used change dramatically. However, one of the purposes of this section is to focus on the new features of the digitalised subtitling software, and their very effects on the subtitling process. Thus, the factors that this subtitler mentions are among the very issues researched here, but she fails to take further notice of them. However, 41 per cent of the respondents have noticed that the digital subtitling software has had an effect on the subtitling process. Interestingly, the most illuminating answers are from respondents who have the digital subtitling software to their own use. First, let us take a look at some of the comments from the less experienced subtitlers.

Digitaalinen tekstitysohjelma on varmaankin syy siihen, että olen alkanut tehdä käänöksen ja ajastuksen yhtä aikaa. Etsin puheen alkamiskohdan freimi kerrallaan, teen repliikin ja laitan loppumisajan.
(Female, 1 year and 4 months of experience)

This method of subtitling and translating while watching is slow (the overall duration of the subtitling process of this respondent is 85 hours for a programme lasting one hour). The method used by this subtitler will probably change in the course of her career, since otherwise it is difficult to say how she will be able to support herself financially by subtitling.
Ennen kuin sain ohjelman, käänсин wordilla ja katselin kuvaa realplayerilla tahi windows media playerillä. Ohjelma helpottaa työä, koska ohjelma pitää huolen merkimääristä (sic), lukunopuksista (sic) yms. ja käänöksen tarkistuskatselu on luonnollisempaa, kun teksti näkee kuvatiedoston päällä.

(Male, 1.5 years of experience)

This subtitler has been working in a rather modern way from the beginning of his career, and has always received his translation materials in the digital format. However, he is still able to identify changes in the subtitling process, and says that the overall process is enhanced by the properties of the digital subtitling software; the software checks rowlengths (characters per line), and according to this subtitler, the reviewing and corrections phase is more natural as the text is seen on the video file.


(Female, 2 years of experience)

Also this subtitler has worked in a modern manner already before taking the digital subtitling software into use. She is also able to mention that cueing is easier now that the video file is seen simultaneously with the text, and amendments are easier to make already when translating. Next, we will move on to more experienced subtitlers, who have also used video tapes and VCRs during their career.


(Female, 2.5 years of experience)
This female subtitler does not compare the digital subtitling software to ScanTitling, but rather mentions having had to correct and modify subtitles more when she used Word and digital video files. However, also she is of the opinion that cueing is easier as she prepares the subtitles directly to the digital subtitling software.

Scantitlingilla ei pysty ajastamana ennen tekstin kääntämistä. Digitaalisella softalla tekstitys sujuu nopeammin, koska kelaus on helpompaa.
(Male, 2.5 years of experience)

This male subtitler is under the impression that it was impossible to pre-cue when ScanTitling was in use. However, it was possible if one put numbers in each subtitle. Totally blank subtitles cannot be cued with ScanTitling. Also this subtitler says handling the video file is easier now that the image is digital.

Enää en tee replajakoa, sillä ajastussoftalla työskenteleminen on niin mutkatonta.
(Male, 4 years of experience)

This male subtitler has stopped marking the subtitle breaks in the script, since working directly in the digital subtitling environment is so effortless. Interestingly, this is the only subtitler that makes this comment, even though also other subtitlers have stopped marking the subtitle breaks in the script while previewing, or fail to do the previewing phase at all.

Ennen välineinä olivat tv, videonauhuri ja Word, nykyään läppäri ja replat voi kirjoittaa suoraan [digitaaliseen tekstitysohjelmaan].
(Female, 10 years of experience)

The above comment may seem simplified, but is in fact among the most illuminating ones. It puts matters into perspective, since these are the basic elements that changed during the digitalisation of the subtitling industry. Subtitlers used to work with a television set, a VCR, and a computer running Word, but now they only use the computer. Subtitles can be directly typed to the digital subtitling software, if one possesses the software. In the next comment by an experienced female subtitler, she says that she leaves more adapting and
subtitle preparation to the cueing phase, since it is more convenient simultaneously with the image.

Jätän enemmän muokkausta ajastusvaiheeseen, koska se on mukavampaa kuvan kanssa.
(Female, 12 years of experience)

Next, let us find out whether the respondents have noticed that the digital translated material (video file and script) has had an effect on the subtitling process. This question is needed since even though almost all respondents do use the digital subtitling software at the agency or away from the agency, not all do this. 31 per cent have not noticed any changes caused by the digital translation material, whereas 38 per cent have noticed changes. Experienced subtitlers are in the majority among those who noticed have changes. First, let us take a look at comments from those who fail to notice any changes in the subtitling process.

Tekstitysprosessi periaatteessa samanlainen kuin ennenkin.
(Female, 7 years of experience)

Ei havaittavia muutoksia.
(Female, 28 years of experience)

One interesting aspect is that the first subtitler has earlier commented that all subtitling software are basically the same. She may lack some understanding of the more refined details in the subtitling process. Especially as the even more experienced subtitler noticed changes in the previous question, it may be the case that some experienced subtitlers fail to identify the smaller changes in this process. However, now we will see some comments from those who have noticed that the digital translation material has had an effect on their subtitling process. The following respondent says that digital video files are easier to handle, to forward, and to rewind than video tapes. This in turn enhances planning subtitle breaks as well as the whole cueing phase.

Digitaalisessa muodossa olevan kuvamateriaalin voi pysäyttää jopa framen tarkkuudella ja kelaaminen on paljon helpompaan kuin VHS-kasettien kanssa. Tämä helpottaa ja nopeuttaa repliikkijonojen teknoa sekä ajastusta.
(Female, 2.5 years of experience)
Although this subtitler cues at the agency, he feels that the digital material is easier to use than paper scripts and video tapes, since the video file can now be seen on the same screen than the word processing tool.

Nykyään ei tapella postissa hajonneiden kasettien kanssa vaan väärien koodekkien. VHS:n poistumisen myötä ohjelmien katselu ja kelaus on huomattavasti helpompaa.
(Male, 3 years of experience)

This subtitler has noticed the more inconvenient side of the digital subtitling software. He mentions that nowadays one does not have to face video tapes that have been broken in the mail, but rather wrong codecs that may for example completely or partially prevent the video image from showing on the digital subtitling software. These are new challenges brought to subtitlers by the digital working environment. However, he says that now that video tapes are no longer in use, watching and forwarding the video files has become remarkably easier.

Mielestäni ne ovat helpottaneet työntekoa. Enää ei tarvitse raahata selkä notkolla kuvanauhoja ja käsikirjoitoksia kotiin eikä sauhuttaa videoita kelailemalla nauhoja edestakaisin.
(Female, 5 years of experience)

The previous respondent is the only one who mentions the actual physical burden of carrying scripts and tapes, as well as overheating VCRs as one was forced to forward and to rewind tapes, until either the VCR broke down or the tape snapped.

Vaihdoin repliikkijaon tekemisen tietokoneelle.
(Male, 7.5 years of experience)

Interestingly, the previous respondent is the only subtitler that has decided to continue the traditional method, but in a somewhat modernised manner: planning the subtitle breaks on the digital script as subtitlers used to do with the paper script – and some still do.
5.3.2 Effects on the translation process

The question of whether the digital subtitling software has had an effect on the translation process divides the respondents into two groups: 31 per cent have noticed effects, whereas 31 per cent have not noticed any changes. Both inexperienced and experienced subtitlers answer both ways. The cognitive translation process, and the translation and subtitle preparation phase of the subtitling process, although they do overlap, can be studied differently, but this is not clarified for respondents on the questionnaire in any way. The presupposition at the time of preparing the questionnaire was that subtitlers could not have noticed changes in the translation process, since the cognitive translation process presumably could not be directly affected by external translation tools. However, 31 per cent answer having noticed changes and these include some subtitlers that have denied in previous questions having noticed any changes. The presupposition that the translation process cannot be changed is at least partially wrong, as we will find out. However, we will also find out that subtitlers rarely make a difference between the cognitive translation process and the translation and subtitle preparation phase of the subtitling process. The results can be taken into consideration in this research, but the cognitive translation processes are not concentrated upon. For example, the respondent quoted below has in the previous questions answered not having noticed any effects of the digital subtitling software in the subtitling process:

Digitaalinen tekstitysohjelma on vaikuttanut eniten siinä, että kun repliikkejä selatessa kuva seuraa mukana, käänäöksen tarkastaminen lopuksi on kätevääpää. Voi siirtyä repliikkiin, korjata aikakoodia ja saman tien katsoa, että repliikki näkyy oikein kuvan kanssa. Tätä mahdollisuutta ei ollut videoita käytettäessä.
(Female, 7 years of experience)

Actually, this can be an example of a profound understanding of both the subtitling and translation processes. Even though this answer reflects the translation and subtitle preparation phase of the subtitling process, the reviewing phase also belongs to the cognitive translation process. This female subtitler notices that as one is now able to follow at home the video image when going
through the subtitles, the reviewing and corrections phase that includes also actual translating has become easier than before. She mentions that this kind of working was not a possibility in the VHS period. Actually, this could have been done also with ScanTitling, but at the subtitling agency. It is, in subtitling, understandably challenging to distinguish phases and processes from each other. We will still continue on our quest of viewing these processes.

When subtitlers are asked whether the digital translation materials (video file and script) have had an effect on their translation process, 44 per cent of the respondents have not noticed any effect. However, 22 per cent claim to have noticed an effect, but no one refers to the cognitive translation process, but rather the technical aspects of the digital translation material. It can be that the respondents who answer thus have not stopped to ponder upon why these seemingly overlapping questions are asked. However, there is a method to the researcher’s madness. Subtitlers might spontaneously spot the difference between the cognitive translation process and the translation and subtitle preparation phase of the subtitling process. 22 per cent of the respondents cannot seem to make this differentiation, but again, the following respondents do have a point:

Jouhevoittaa työtä. Näppärää, kun voi pitää videota auki käänäksen vieressä.
(Male, 7 months of experience)

Olen, se nopeuttaa ja helpottaa työntekoa.
(Female, 5 years of experience)

Kun kuva on digitaalisessa muodossa, sen käsitteley on aivan erilaita kuin videonauhojen aikaan. Silloin kuva ei voinut pysäytellä yhtä tarkasti eikä siirtyä yhtä helposti edes- ja taaksepäin. Nykyään kuva voi pitää koko ajan käsikirjoituksen rinnalla käänäksen aikana.
(Female, 7 years of experience)

The new digital material is mentioned in several answers as having made forwarding and rewinding the image (video file) easier and more effective. As such, this is not an actual part of the cognitive translation process, but translation processes and translation materials are intertwined. As subtitlers are now able to
work and to translate faster, digital translation materials can be regarded to have an effect on the subtitling process. Interruptions and pauses while handling the translation materials are decreased, and the result is enhanced effectiveness, fluency, and ease of working and translation, which in turn makes the overall subtitling process more effective (see also Vertanen 2007: 323).

5.3.3 Comparing analogical and digital subtitling tools and materials

In the analogical, or the VHS period, freelance subtitlers carried video tapes and thick manuscripts from the agency to their homes, rewound and forwarded the tapes, living in constant fear of the tape breaking down at a critical moment, and another tape not arriving soon enough. In the light of these fading memories, the next questions on the questionnaire concentrate on subtitlers’ professional views and comparisons on analogical and digital era. Contrary to what might have been expected, 63 per cent of the respondents have not noticed the digital subtitling software having had any effect on the time spent on gathering background information (library, contacting experts and colleagues, etc.). It could be that these subtitlers are unable to identify changes in this working process, or they do not remember how things used to be in the VHS days, a little more than a year ago. The more optimistic view is that subtitlers do not decrease their information retrieval phase due to so-called disasters or changes in their timetables (some respondents experienced technical difficulties with the software they currently use); perhaps they take the time from somewhere else but not from retrieving information. 6 per cent of the respondents feel that the digital subtitling software has had an effect on information searching, and most importantly, no one comments that the software has increased the time they spend on gathering information.

Ohjelman käyttöönottovaiheessa ko. ohjelmaan liittyvä tietoa piti hankkia melkoisesti, ja aikaa kului mitattomasti.
(Female, 28 years of experience)
The previous comment is derived from the fact that this subtitler started to cue her own texts only when this digitalisation was realised. Thus, the time she spent on learning how to cue and to use the software was perhaps higher than of those who already cued their own texts and thus only had to learn the new tricks used when the subtitling tool is digital. At any rate, the number of answers similar to this would probably have been higher, had this survey been presented to the same subtitlers 6–10 months earlier, since technical difficulties and re-developed routines would have been fresher in their minds. 66 per cent of subtitlers find digital materials reliable, and 63 per cent say handling and operating the digital files is easier than was the case with VHS tapes. Those with experience of VHS naturally have the means for comparing, and few seem to be dissatisfied with the modern materials. They seem to work happily with the digital versions of the video files and scripts.

However, there are two sides to every story. 19 per cent of the respondents have encountered technical problems with materials, and 3 per cent claim that video tapes were in some cases easier to use than digital video files:

Se aiheuttaa joskus lieviä ongelmia muun järjestelmän kanssa, mistä seuraa nykimistä, synkronin menetystä tai ohjelman kaatumista. Ei kuitenkaan usein. Sen sijaan työtiedostojen raju kompressointi tekee joskus vaikeammaksi nähdä/kuulla olennaisia yksityiskohtia, jotka esityskopioissa (ja mahdollisesti myös videokopioissa) olisivat selkeitä.
(Male, 2 years 7 months)
Problems with the technical resources of computers can become a difficult issue. One of the main disadvantages of digitalisation is that many subtitlers have been forced to upgrade their main physical working tool, the computer. In other words, many have had to invest in the latest hardware in order to cope with the new digital software. The last respondent suggests that video tapes were sometimes easier to forward and to rewind, but this can be regarded to be a matter of habit, since no one else seems to share this opinion.

Next in the questionnaire, respondents are asked to look at the same matter from another perspective: their overall working processes and methods, and the possible effects that the digital subtitling software has had on them. 22 per cent claim that they have not changed their working methods at all. Many who answer this way have changed from VHS tapes to digital video files. Many have also taken the digital subtitling software into use at their homes, and do not cue at the subtitling agency as they used to. Thus, subtitlers with experience on anallogical video material are incorrect in claiming that their working methods have not changed at all. It is true that primarily the technical aspect, the subtitling tool, has changed. However, it is possible to forget profound changes in their working methods as soon as routine returns to the working process, or are respondents unable to identify changes in their working methods? It can be the case that these respondents have misunderstood the question, but yet choose not to ask for assistance. However, 41 per cent of the respondents manage to identify changes in their working method. Answers are various:

Ovat, kuten olen jo kuvailut. Ajastus on tullut lomittaiseksi käänösvaiheen kanssa.
(Female, 2 years of experience)
The subtitlers mention changes experienced with receiving the translation materials and cueing the translated text. The first respondent quoted here changed her cueing process because of the digital subtitling software: her translation and cueing phases are now overlapping. Many have taken the software into use at their homes, and this means that they no longer have to travel to the subtitling agency in order to finish the work. They do not have to spend time travelling, and they do not have to worry about other subtitlers’ schedules. In addition, respondents mention having previously used a television set and a VCR for the work, whereas nowadays everything is done on the computer. Also scripts are not printed on paper, but subtitlers have the choice of printing out the script at their home or simply using it electronically, on the computer screen. Many answers imply that subtitlers do not resent the changes in their working methods or work, but in fact,
do the opposite. More criticism on the effectiveness and functionality of the new
digital software was anticipated when preparing the questionnaire.

Before diving in the technical side of the digital subtitling software, more
specifically taking it into use, let us take the subtitlers on a trip down the memory
lane, and have them compare ScanTitling with the digital subtitling software. 13
per cent see the digital subtitling software as being as good as ScanTitling, or do
not have a clear opinion on the fact:

Parempaa digitaalisissa ohjelmissa on helppous ja nopeus.  
ScanTitlingista jään kaipaamaan selvästi ja yksiselitteisesti
ilmaistua lukunopeusmittaria ja rivin pituuden ”rajoitinta”.
(Female, 2.5 years of experience)

Digitaalinen (sic) ohjelmalla pystyn siirtymään ja korjailemaan
nopeammin kuin ST:lää. Käyttöliittymä on myös notkeampi.
ST:ssä ylivertaista oli lukunopeusmittari, jonka nuoli antoi selkeään
kuvan siitä mihin asti ehtii lukea. Nykyisen ohjelman janamallinen
mittari on huomattavasti epäselvempi ja sen asetukset tuntuvat
oman intuitioni vastaisilta.
(Male, 2 years and 7 months of experience)

ScanTitling oli yksinkertainen mutta vakaa ohjelma. Sen käyttö oli
näppärä, kun muisti näppäinkomentot ulkoa. Digitaalisesta
cuvasta en enää luopuisi, mutta luotettavaan ohjelmaan voisin
harkita vaihtavani. ScanTitling oli yhtä hyvä kuin uudet ohjelmat,
mutta eri syistä: vakaus vs. näppärät uudet toiminnot.
(Female, 7 years of experience)

The above comments give a notion of how the developers of digital subtitling
software seem not to have taken professional subtitlers’ views into consideration
while planning the vital properties of the software. This might change as updated
versions of the software are launched. However, 44 per cent of the respondents
are of the opinion that digital subtitling software is better than ScanTitling was:

Parempi siinä mielessä, että ajastuksen säättäminen on entistä
helpompaa. Lisäksi ohjelma toimii Windows-ylpääristössä, mikä
helpottaa yhtä aikaista (sic) tiedonhakua internetistä. Toisaalta
piikkuvat vielä vaivaavat [digitaalista tekstitysohjelmaa]  
(kolmiriviset repliikit ja puuttuvat kirjaimet).
(Male, 5 years of experience)
Let us now take a look at how critical the respondents’ views are on the challenging side of the digital subtitling software – taking it into use. 28 per cent have not had any problems with taking the software into use, although some mention that the initial installation phase was challenging. 38 per cent say that they have had problems during or since taking the software into use. Some problems mentioned have to do with settings, such as rowlengths. Many point out that the installation phase was challenging, and some have problems with hardware: their computer is unable to cope with software that requires a considerable amount of resources. One subtitler says that the digital subtitling software she chose has a limited user’s manual, and she has been forced to turn to colleagues for help. Many respondents mention problems with the synchronisation of e.g. the soundtrack and the image. When asked about the overall opinions on the software, 13 per cent confess being dissatisfied with it:

(Male, 3 years of experience)

Melkein. Ohjelma on toisinaan epäluotettava, ja kaatumista saa pelätä vähän väliä. Bugien opetteluun ja kiertämiseen menee oma aikansa, eikä ikinä voi olla täysin varma, minkä jekun ohjelma keksii seuraavaksi. Toisaalta kun ohjelmaan (näppäinkomentoihin,
These subtitlers have encountered serious technical problems. However, one of them is still not ready to change the software that he has already taken into use, because of having already (after 1.5 years of total experience in the field) become used to this software along with its quirks and commands. It certainly does seem that not all software is reliable, and since this is among the most important tools in doing the work of a subtitler, it is understandable that everyone is not ready to take this step. 53 per cent of subtitlers are, nevertheless, satisfied with the software. The first respondent quoted below lists properties that make the software useful, but does criticise the fact that commands needed to operate the software are not transparent: one is forced to refer to the owner’s manual frequently until one learns the commands by heart.

(Female, 2 years of experience)

Olen. Toimii lähes moitteettomasti.
(Male, 2.5 years of experience)

One of the main advantages of the software seems to be external to the software: it provides subtitlers the possibility to work completely at their homes:

Olen. En kadu ostamista, sillä on kiva ajastaa kotona.
(Female, 5 years of experience)
The next question provides an opportunity for deeply analytic self-criticism, as well as criticism towards colleagues. Respondents are asked whether they have noticed that the digital subtitling has had direct or indirect effects on subtitle quality, their own or others’. However, as much as 34 per cent of the respondents say they have not noticed anything, or choose not to state their notions. 22 per cent have noticed something, and 9 per cent have noticed something worth criticising. These issues are mainly technical:

Olen huomannut, että rivin merkkimäärien kanssa on ollut ongelmia. Rivien viimeiset kirjaimet eivät ole aina mahtuneet ruutuun, vaikka tekstitysohjelma on niin väittänyt. (Female, 2.5 years of experience)

Lähetyksiä katsoessa huomaa nykyään kolmirivisiä replikkejä ja replikkejä, joiden lopusta puuttuu kirjaimia. Muita kuin teknisiä puutteita en ole ollut havaitsevani. (Male, 5 years of experience)

Nykyään näkee useammin ruudusta puuttuvia kirjaimia ja visuaalisia omituisuuksia. Muiden teksteissä, omiani katson harvoin televisiosta. (Male, 7.5 years of experience)

13 per cent have noticed that the digital subtitling software has improved the quality of subtitles. The comments on these issues are optimistic, technical, and above all, carefully put:

Repliikki- ja rivijako on paljon mukavampi tehdä, ja tiedostoihin jää vähemmän epämääräisyyksiä (kirjoitusvirheitä, ylimääräisiä välilyöntejä, tyhjiä rivejä), koska ohjelma varoittaa niistä. Lähinnä siis teknisiin seikkoihin. (Female, 1 year and 4 months of experience)

Minulla ainakin ajastukset ovat tarkempia. (Male, 4 years of experience)

Mielestäni ne ovat parantaneet tekstitysten laatua, sillä nykyään käänävä näkee ohjelman samaan aikaan kuin tekee tekstitystä. (Female, 5 years of experience)

Keksin vain sellaisen vaikutuksen laatuun, että ehkä työskentelyn nopeuduttua aikaa jää pohtia parempia käännösratkaisuja.
Subtitlers are considered to be also television viewers, and this question was planned in order to prompt analytic comments on the quality of subtitles, before and after the mass-digitalisation. Fluctuation in subtitle quality has been seen during the past year for several reasons. Even though an opportunity for just criticism is presented here, no one chooses to comment on the quality of subtitles. Instead, many comment on the technical aspects: letters missing at the end of lines, subtitles in contrast with normal Finnish subtitle conventions, and subtitles having three lines. Perhaps respondents are of the opinion as television viewers that Finnish subtitles have managed to maintain their high quality. It is difficult to analyse the true quality of subtitles if one is a trained professional, and usually tends to see errors in subtitles that laymen do not notice. However, the lack of criticism can be derived from subconscious or conscious avoidance of conflict. Those responding are aware of the fact that they are not anonymous in filling the questionnaire, and of course the results of this research are publicly seen. Also, one powerful factor is that team spirit and solidarity among colleagues in the field of subtitling are at a high level.

5.4 Three methods in subtitling

The subtitling methods that come up in the questionnaire can be classified into three main categories used in Finland. All methods roughly include the same basic subtitling process, but nevertheless contain different working methods. The first category is the so-called traditional method (75 per cent of the respondents apply this method), in which the subtitler uses a script, previews the video file, marks subtitle breaks to the script while previewing, translates and prepares the subtitles, cues them, and then reviews them and makes the corrections that are required. The traditional method can be divided into two sub-categories: the traditional and the modernised traditional method. The traditional method includes a printed paper script (41 per cent of the respondents apply this method), whereas in the modernised method, subtitlers keep the script and video file on the computer
screen while previewing and translating (38 per cent of the respondents apply this method). Everyone does not preview the video file, however, and this is common in short programmes and in series that are already familiar to the subtitler.

The second category includes the pre-cueing method (9 per cent of the respondents apply this method), where subtitlers preview the programme and do a second viewing, cueing blank subtitles. Sometimes no separate preview is done, but cueing is done as part of the previewing phase. Then subtitlers type the texts to these pre-cued subtitle frames. This method was possible, but rare, already in the VHS period. ScanTitling did allow subtitlers to prepare subtitles that have for example numbers in the place of the text, and some subtitlers used this method with ScanTitling. However, the pre-cueing method may have gained some new supporters since the new digital software is more flexible than ScanTitling, allowing blank subtitles to be cued.

The third category includes unconventional or alternative subtitling methods (19 per cent of the respondents apply these methods). These methods include willingly working without a script, starting the translation and subtitle preparation without a preview, and translating directly from the video file, either all in one go, or in smaller sections. Translating while watching the video file was possible but extremely time-consuming already in the VHS period. It was possible to do so by watching the video tape and typing subtitles onto the computer. This is now classified into the unconventional or alternative methods group, since these alternative styles have recently gained supporters mainly among less experienced subtitlers. Some like to search for the starting time of each subtitle, to translate and to write the subtitle, and then to press play again, and thus at a very slow pace prepare the subtitles. Nowadays, with the help of the digital subtitling software, it is more effective to do this, and directly type the subtitles in the subtitling software. This was not possible when ScanTitling was only in use in the subtitling agencies (some freelancers did possess ScanTitling software, but it was rare).

Why do less experienced subtitlers use alternative methods? Digital subtitling technology has provided these possibilities, and young subtitlers wish to utilise
the properties the software has to offer. However, these subtitlers may at some point realise that experienced subtitlers are more effective in their work, and decide that some alterations in their methods should be made. If subtitlers want to develop in their profession, they communicate with their colleagues and learn from them. It is likely that experienced subtitlers recommend the traditional (or modernised traditional) method, which is the most effective one, considering the results of this research.

Why do experienced subtitlers use the traditional method? Subtitlers who learned their profession using ScanTitling, most frequently print out the script and thus use the traditional form of the traditional method. ScanTitling did not as such prevent pre-cueing or translating subtitle by subtitle. What did prevent using these methods, however, was that since the number of computers at the agency was limited, and many subtitlers needed to use them, the times for cueing had to be reserved beforehand. There was no time for endlessly working on the cueing process, and in fact, there still is not. It was impossible without investing in a ScanTitling computer, to pre-cue or to cue while watching, one subtitle at a time. Also the properties of the video tape were limiting: one could only pause, forward, and rewind the tape until it snapped. However, it is interesting to note that also some inexperienced subtitlers apply the most traditional method, even though there is no actual need for printing out the script. The reasons for this can be that this method has been taught to them at the Department of Translation Studies or at the subtitling agency. Perhaps also these inexperienced subtitlers will gradually move on to the modernised version of the traditional method, and start to keep the script and video file on the computer screen.

Although the new subtitling technology provides many options in altering one’s working routines and methods, there are two sides to every story. Subtitlers are during their studies and at the subtitling agencies taught to go through the process in a specific order for a reason. The traditional subtitling process is easy to learn effectively, and to quickly adapt a working routine. By applying this method, one is able to move on from one phase to another, quickly developing their skills and enhancing their working processes. If the overall subtitling process is mixed and
the phases are unclear to the novice subtitler, the process of forming established routines may take longer than in the traditional method. The traditional subtitling method should not be tampered with if the novice subtitler wants to gain best possible results in the most effective way, at least not until the subtitler has gained enough experience and routines to be able to actively and consciously alter his or her working methods without slowing down the overall working process.
6 Conclusion

There has been a profound change in the primary working tool of a subtitler: the digital subtitling software has been introduced. The subtitling process and the effects of the digital subtitling software on it from the professional subtitler’s point of view were researched in this pro gradu thesis. The research subjects were Finnish television subtitlers working for one of the leading television subtitling agencies in Finland. A questionnaire-type survey with open-ended questions was the method for gathering data. The respondents were a resource of illuminating information on the changes in the subtitling process. The subtitling process need not be similar with all subtitlers now that the digital subtitling software was taken into use. Along with the so-called traditional method (previewing the video file with the script, marking subtitle breaks on the script, after which starting to translate the script, and after this cueing, and then doing the final revisions and corrections review), there are unconventional methods that are potentially on the increase, such as pre-cueing, and translating subtitle by subtitle, simultaneously viewing the video file. One does not need to translate first and cue later, but the processes can be mixed and intertwined. The results along with their analyses provided guidelines to ponder upon as to whether these unconventional subtitling and working methods bring any value to the subtitling process, and whether they make the process more or less efficient in terms of time management in comparison with the traditional ways of working.

The view of both inexperienced and experienced subtitlers was that the overall subtitling process has been enhanced by the properties of the digital subtitling software; cueing is easier and more effective now that the video file is seen simultaneously with the text, and amendments are easier to make already when translating. According to the respondents, ScanTitling was a reliable subtitling tool in its simplicity, and tools do not change the basic work; even the most complete mastery of tools does not compensate shortcomings in translational skills. However, the constantly developing tools, as well as the natural development of the subtitler’s routines, enhance working processes, leaving more
time for the translation and subtitle preparation phase, and consequently enable more effective creation of high-quality subtitles.

The results were gained by carefully categorising, calculating, and analysing (Appendix 3) the answers retrieved with the help of a questionnaire (Appendix 1). The chosen method for gathering data was remarkably effective, and it did accumulate a large number of illuminating answers and reliable qualitative data. In order to gain a more easily controllable amount of data, one could have conducted first an interview with carefully selected questions with 5–8 respondents. After the interview, the questionnaires with even more focussed questions would have been planned out and sent, along with an explanation of the research in a nutshell.

Inexperienced subtitlers, regardless of the working methods they use, lack some routines in their work, and are rarely as effective in their work as experienced subtitlers. Nor should they be. Inexperienced and experienced subtitlers should be encouraged to increasingly utilise each others’ skills, communicating actively with each other. Active and continuous communication within all working environments, also virtual ones, not only enhances the team spirit but also everyone’s professional development. This is why further research following up the development of inexperienced subtitlers, comparing their working methods, would be interesting. It could prove to be the case that the users of one method would develop their routines more quickly than those using the other method. Comparing the quality of subtitles of experienced vs. inexperienced subtitlers, but with a longer period of time, taking the development of novice subtitlers into consideration, would be a fruitful topic for research. This could include developing a model for the subtitling agency’s internal communication, such as Intranet where subtitlers could post ideas for translations and about the technical or more general side of subtitling. As novice and experienced subtitlers interact and communicate in this way, a follow-up interview of novice subtitlers after a period of six months could be done, and their professional development studied. Further, comparing the quality of subtitles among those subtitling the traditional way and those who practise the new, alternative ways, would be interesting. Also,
reviewing the quality of subtitles inside one specific subtitling agency according to different measurements (such as expertise, experience, education, and other factors) could be fruitful, but would require discretion and full anonymity. Mere education or natural-born skills do not suffice when evaluating translator competence. What would be interesting to see is how education, suitable characteristics, and gradually gained translation experience together enhance the translator’s individual professional development, and how the translator develops a healthy professional identity and gradually or already during his or her studies starts to regard him or herself as a proud part of the group of translators.

This study combines the analytic and academic aspects of translation studies with the actual reality in the field of subtitling today. The present research can be followed up by researchers and students, and used as a framework for charting the process-oriented way of studying subtitling – also without using TAP analyses. As Eskelinen (2008: 45) suggests, it must be hoped that the gap between academic education and the world of business will be narrowed as Finnish and European universities are being developed. Audiovisual translation and subtitling are among the areas in the field of translation studies that largely interest and attract the public. Thus, a very large potential for both private and public funding awaits for those opportunities to be utilised, and it will be reached if students and researchers are encouraged to study also this essential field of communication and translation studies. It would benefit all (colleagues and viewers), were translator education in Finnish universities able to provide a larger number of subtitlers with at least reasonable skills before entering the business. As long as subtitlers with a profound understanding of the academic and analytical aspects of translation studies and subtitling, as well as their rights and responsibilities as translators, are effectively trained in the Departments of Translation Studies, the Finnish television viewing public can enjoy the beautiful Finnish language in subtitles also in the future.
References


Appendices

Appendix 1: Kyselylomake (Questionnaire: Word Document)
Appendix 2: Saatekirje (Letter to respondents: Word Document)
Appendix 3: Laskelmat (Calculations: Excel File)