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The case of a compilative anime music video translation

Riku Haapaniemi | Tampere University

Laura Ivaska | University of Turku

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A (Re)turn to the Source Text

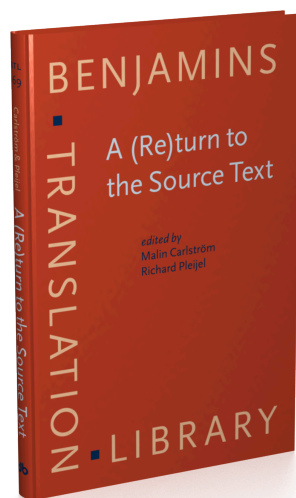
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Complexities of source text networks in globally circulated multimodal texts

The case of a compilative anime music video translation

Riku Haapaniemi & Laura Ivaska
Tampere University | University of Turku

As audiovisual texts circulate through multiple language areas and diverse markets, localized target texts (TT) derive from complex networks of source texts (ST) and distribution processes. In this study, we analyze the Finnish opening to the Japanese anime series *Digimon* as an example of a multimodal TT whose different modes indicate different and sometimes multiple STs. We propose that the concept of compilative translation can be of help in such cases where the ambiguity of the ST complicates the study of the TT. We conclude by suggesting that defining the ST is a matter of perspective, and that this perspective must be chosen wisely because the conceptualization of the ST affects how we understand the TT.

Keywords: localization, multimodality, indirect translation, compilative translation, translation processes, audiovisual translation, song translation, anime, music video

1. Introduction

The concepts of “source text” (ST) and “target text” (TT) are central to translation studies (TS). Extrapolating on these concepts, it is easy enough to assume that translation is a simple, one-way transaction: source leads to target, so a specific TT is derived from a specific ST (see, e.g., Pięta 2024). This straightforward conceptualization of the relationship between “source” and “target” may be further compounded by a language-centric understanding of the term “text”: if texts are seen as primarily verbal units, translation takes place in language, and therefore the ST-to-TT relation is exhibited in language – and studied in terms of language. However, there are translation processes and translational phenomena that

are more complex than what is indicated by these corollaries of the concepts of “source,” “target,” and “text,” such as TTs exhibiting ambiguous connections to multiple STs (e.g., Davier 2022; Ivaska 2021) and ST-to-TT relations manifest in non-lingual textual modes (e.g., Ketola 2018).

One prominent example is the translation of audiovisual (AV) texts and other such *multimodal* texts, and the often-complicated localization processes behind the production and distribution of multimodal TTs. If texts are considered multimodal entities as opposed to primarily lingual, the translation of texts must also take auditive, visual, and other modes into account as expressions that affect the interpretation of the ST and the production of the TT (e.g., Ketola 2018: 83–84, 87–89). Further, if multimodal texts are translated as part of a multi-national and multi-lingual localization process, the different cultures and language areas involved may have different requirements for what needs to be translated and how. The localization of an AV text may be limited to adding subtitles to a video or replacing the speech on an audio track with dubbed dialogue, or it may go so far as to involve censoring or otherwise changing ST contents (as discussed in, e.g., Parini 2012).

Considering the prevalence of *indirect translation* – translations based not on the original ST but on a previous translation of it (e.g., O’Hagan 2022) – in the localization field (where the practice is often referred with the term “pivot translation”), it is possible that different TTs ostensibly derived from the same ST actually combine influences from different mediating texts across their different modes. In such instances of *compilative translation* (see, e.g., Assis Rosa et al. 2017: 122) of multimodal texts, the ST-to-TT relation is less a straightforward genealogical line identifiable through lingual correspondences and more a rhizomatic network of connections (following, e.g., Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 4–12) exhibited in multifarious lingual and non-lingual textual elements.

In this chapter, we discuss theorizations of multimodality and indirect translation in localization processes and find that while in theory AV texts are conceptualized as multimodal entities whose different modes are inseparable from one another, textual modes do in fact get separated and recombined in various ways during these texts’ production and distribution processes. In other words, there appear to be contradictions between what theory suggests about multimodal texts and how multimodal STs and TTs are actively compiled in translation processes – contradictions which, we argue, TS must reconcile before it can properly engage with complex translational phenomena based on rhizomatic networks of textual connections rather than a binary ST-to-TT relationship.

We illustrate how ST networks can be reflected in a TT by analyzing various translated versions of the opening music video to the Japanese anime series *Digimon*. This case study showcases the complexity of the textual networks within

which multimodal TTs, produced and distributed as part of a global localization process, exist. Valdeón (2024:1) notes that analyzing “the interaction between the verbal elements and the visual, acoustic, kinetic and other semiotic modes ... requires the use of a variety of theoretical approaches” and claims that this may be the reason why the interplay between different modes has so far not received “the attention it deserves” in TS. Our analysis combines perspectives from multimodality, indirect translation research, and song translation theory, bringing attention to the various connections between the different TTs’ auditory, visual, and verbal modes and highlighting how interactions between modes complicate each TT’s relationship to the ultimate Japanese ST. We proceed to focus on the Finnish version of the opening and utilize categorizations of song translation types to illustrate how different the Finnish TT looks according to which ST(s) it is assumed to be based on. Over the course of this analysis, it becomes apparent that assuming that the modes of a text are as inseparable in practice as they are in theory may lead to a simplistic understanding of the relationship between different textual modes – and, consequently, of the ST-to-TT relation itself. Such assumptions obscure the potential connections a specific TT may have to other STs beyond the one ST on which it is assumed to be (solely) based. Similarly, they prevent us from noticing the compilative and perspective-dependent nature of both the TT and the ST.

Ultimately, we wish to show that the different modes of a single multimodal TT may be the products of their own distinct genealogies: auditory, visual, verbal, and other contents may travel their own routes across language areas, cultures, and markets, and this may cause them to intertwine and recombine in unexpected ways in any single multimodal TT. This does not dispute the theoretical conceptualization of texts as holistic multimodal entities, but it does require TS to acknowledge that the actual production of these texts may, for various reasons, involve processes of reception and redistribution that (however momentarily) break or reconfigure existing connections between different modes. STs, then, may not be stable entities whose “unity” is composed of a fixed set of textual features, but rather relativistic clusters of elements compiled for a certain purpose and from a certain perspective. This, in turn, requires TS to reconsider its assumptions about the relationship between, and conceptualization of, “source” and “target”: if a “text” is understood as the multimodal product of a complex production and distribution process, STs and TTs must likewise be understood not as the start and end point of a simple interlingual exchange but as nodes in a rhizomatic network of textual influences exhibited in lingual and non-lingual forms alike. What TS theory needs, then, is not just a return to the source text, but also a thorough re-examination of the very concepts of “source” and “text.”

2. What is a “source text” in the localization processes of multimodal texts?

2.1 “Source text” as a theoretical concept

Considering how central a concept the “source text” is for TS, one would expect to find definitions for it more easily than one does. Theoretical discussions of the relationship between a ST and a TT tend to acknowledge that this relationship is not, in fact, as binary as the terms alone would indicate (see, e.g., Delabastita 2008; Guldin 2020; Marais 2021), but the actual definition of “source text” has received less attention. Baer (2017: 228) even argues that the concept of ST has been left “undertheorized” and remains a significant “unknown known” of TS. Similarly, Ivaska and Huuhtanen (2020) note that many TS handbooks lack articles on “source text,” or even just “text” in general, and what definitions do exist are not always successful. For example, they criticize Shuttleworth and Cowie’s (1997: 157–158) definition because it equates the ST with an “original text,” pointing out that, as Pym (2011a: 92) has discussed, using the term “original text” promotes a false “illusion of primacy” which overlooks the fact that “no text can be a primal ‘source’” since “all texts incorporate elements from previous texts.” Baer (2017) attributes this illusion to the prevailing TT-oriented paradigm and to the Romantic idea of the original, which tends to see texts as stable entities, a point of view questioned by at least deconstructionism (e.g., Dizdar 2011), genetic criticism (e.g., Nunes et al. 2021), and process ontology (e.g., Marais 2019). This illusion of stability and of the primacy of the original might well be at the heart of why the ST has remained so undertheorized.

Yet, there can be no translation without a ST, at least if we follow Toury’s (2012: 29) definition of translation. For Toury (2012: 29; see also Apter 2005), translation implies that “there is another text, in another language/culture, which has both chronological and logical priority over it.” However, as Davier and van Doorslaer (2018: 246) point out, it can sometimes be difficult to identify a single ‘other text’ for each translation “which can be compared to a target text at the level of the textual unit.” As an example of a translation process that entails the use of more than a single ST (see Ivaska 2020: 27–30), in compilative translation the translator compiles their ST before or during the translation process from various sources (see Ivaska 2021). Emmerich (2017: 13) goes as far as to argue that this is the case with all translations and that it is only the process of translation that gives birth to the ST, as

each translator creates her own original, fixes a particular text as the particular ‘prior’ text to be translated — fixes it sometimes before translating, and sometimes during and even by way of the process we tend to think of as ‘translation proper.’

In the case of compilative translation, there are other texts that have a chronological and logical priority to the TT, but none of those individual texts per se is the one-and-only “original” ST of the compilative TT being made. Therefore, the kind of ST which would allow for comparison at the level of the “textual unit” might exist only in the mind of the translator (see Apter 2005; Hung 2005).

2.2 Production and distribution processes of multimodal TTs

The difficulty of getting a definite grasp of a ST for the purpose of comparing it to a TT is only exasperated when we extend our scope beyond the lingual mode of the textual unit and consider the wealth of semiotic resources offered by other modes on which the translator can “fix” their TT. AV products – texts comprised of both auditive and visual modes, such as films, music videos, and video games – provide one example of a type of multimodal text that introduces added complexity to establishing ST-to-TT relations in translation processes. For Assis Rosa (2018:17), AV products contain semiotic complexity that results not only from multimodality – the integration of audio-verbal, visual-verbal, audio-nonverbal, and visual-nonverbal signs – but also from the “variable contribution of each constituent to any specific AV text and even text-part” (Assis Rosa 2018:11). Similarly, Taylor (2018) calls for the need for a “more complete representation of all the meanings contained in a multimodal text” (Taylor 2018:50) because “[m]ultimodal text analyses point to the importance of the interplay of semiotic resources in AV products” (Taylor 2018:49). In practice, the different modes included in the AV product contribute to meaning-construction in their own unique ways as parts of a textual unit and, therefore, a film or other such AV text may be judged to be unified and coherent “if the semantic content of both the aural and visual elements combine to provide a clear understanding of the narrative or plot” (Taylor 2018:42).

As AV texts are usually translated by subtitling or dubbing (Perez-Gonzalez 2014:12) – which involve adding elements to the visual mode or replacing elements in the auditive mode – translation processes complicate the makeup of these texts even further. In fact, despite the codependence of the different modes, when an AV product is moved from one linguo-cultural locale to another, its different modes may receive different kinds of treatment along the way. As exemplified by the practices of subtitling and dubbing, some aspects of the text – like visuals or sounds – may require little or no translation, while others – such as spoken dialogue – may need to be completely replaced (O’Hagan 2022:446). Which modes require translation and which do not may vary between locales, and some decisions may be carried over from one locale to another while some may not. For example, Dore and De Nicola (2023:1) discuss the practice of indi-

rect translation in AV localization as using “subtitles, a rough translation or the translation of the original postedited cinematic script, to translate audiovisual products into other languages.” Here, the mediating texts are primarily lingual, even though the STs and TTs in question are multimodal. A single multimodal TT produced through a localization process involving indirect translation may therefore be informed by a number of STs, as some of the TT modes (e.g., non-lingual visuals and sounds) may draw from the ultimate ST while other TT modes (e.g., verbal contents) draw from a mediating text. In practice, one mode of a multimodal TT may exhibit different ST relations than another mode, complicating the conceptualization of the ST-to-TT relation of the text as a multimodal whole.

One localization phenomenon where these complex relations are very apparent is the translation processes of Japanese AV products, such as anime and video games. Japanese media products often travel through especially multi-faceted localization processes involving multiple languages and locales before they reach a specific target audience (as discussed in, e.g., O’Hagan 2022). An individual text is often also a part of a larger multimedia franchise – an anime series may also involve video games, toys, trading cards, and so forth (O’Hagan 2007: 234–244) – which further complicates the network of influences between texts and may even directly inform translation solutions: for example, translated anime dialogue may be expected to follow the target-language names and terminology established in a previously localized video game. In addition, individual texts may be localized to various extents (O’Hagan 2022; Zhang and Song 2023: 9–10). In the field of game localization, for example, some games undergo full localization where all elements are translated (i.e., in-game texts, like menus; art elements, such as texts within graphics; AV elements, such as trailers; and paratexts, like websites and marketing material; see O’Hagan and Mangiron 2013: 163–164). In contrast, in partial localization, it may be that only the in-game texts are translated, but spoken dialogue is left in the original language and subtitles are provided instead of doing a voice-over for the dialogue (see, e.g., the case study discussed in Zhang and Song 2023). As another example, culturally sensitive material may be edited from the game in response to player feedback, retroactively changing the ST but not necessarily the translation that has already been produced (Zhang and Song 2023: 5). Zhang and Song (2023: 5) argue that the STs of AV products like video games are “potentially more complicated than [in] other types of translation,” as they are effectively compilations of different types of texts produced by different people with potentially different linguistic backgrounds, possibly in an iterative manner, and/or concurrently in different geographical locations.

The material and social processes by which AV products circulate international markets affect the contents and makeup of the circulated texts in various ways (O’Hagan 2022: 441–443). Studying multimodal TTs produced in localiza-

tion processes as part of global multimedia franchises therefore requires a conceptualization of the ST-to-TT relation that goes beyond one-to-one correspondence between texts and/or languages, because the realities of how these TTs are produced and distributed can create networks of dependencies between texts that are much more complex than a direct relationship between a single verbal ST and a single verbal TT. The concepts of “source” and “target” may imply a direct genealogical line, but as the localization cases discussed above (and the *Digimon* case analyzed below in Section 3) exemplify, the actual relationships between STs and TTs can be more complex and not, in fact, direct or binary at all.

2.3 Indirect and compilative ST-to-TT relations in multimodal localization processes

As the study of translations of translations, indirect translation research is no stranger to complex or ambiguous genealogies between sources and targets. For example, in indirect translation processes, a text may simultaneously be both a ST and a TT (Ivaska 2020: 20–23), challenging the “false binary” (Marais 2021: 25) of the idea that the ST and TT are opposites. In contrast to this binary, Marais (2021: 25) sees ST and TT as relative terms, as “frozen moments in a process” – frozen by the translation scholar or another interested party – “for the purposes of observation.” Similarly, Emmerich (2017: 13) sees the translator “fixing” and thereby “creating” (or compiling) their own ST for the purpose of producing a TT. However, just because we “fix” a certain cluster of textual elements as the ST or the TT for the purposes of study “does not mean that we can reduce the complex process [of translation] to two moments” (Marais 2021: 25).

As discussed, the localization processes of anime, video games, and other such AV products have been noted to often involve compilative and other forms of indirect translation (e.g., O’Hagan 2022; Zhang and Song 2023; Dore and De Nicola 2023). Still, the nature of indirectness in the translation of AV products and other multimodal texts has not yet been properly theorized by scholars of indirect translation, whose research has mostly focused on literary translation (see Ivaska et al. 2023). For instance, Assis Rosa et al. (2017) suggest a classification scheme for the different kinds of relations that can exist between indirect TTs and the different source languages that may be involved, but such classifications may not be straightforwardly useful in discussing AV products because of the multiplicity of modes beyond language in which ST-to-TT relations – be they direct or indirect – may be exhibited.

For example, the game localization case discussed by Zhang and Song (2023) involves a Chinese partial localization of a Japanese game where the verbal content in the text’s auditive mode (English-language spoken dialogue) is the result

of indirect translation, whereas the verbal contents of its visual mode (Chinese-language subtitles) are done from the original Japanese ST. The different modes of the game as a multimodal textual unit exhibit varying degrees of indirectness and different ST-to-TT relations, as do the combinations of different modes, which are also a component in meaning-construction from AV texts (Assis Rosa 2018: 17; Taylor 2018: 49). How, then, should the TT as a whole be classified? In cases like this, is it possible to capture and represent all the relevant connections between a TT and the texts that influence it – compilative STs, mediating texts, paratexts, and everything else involved in the localization process or the larger multimedia franchise – in a single genealogical line, however staggered?

Multimodal TTs highlight the central role that the conceptualization of the ST plays in studies concerning any kind of translation, not only in indirect translation research but translation research in general. Indeed, recognizing the complexity of the relationship between the multimodal TT and its ST(s) in localization processes presents a challenge for utilizing established typologies and other such methods of translation research in the study of these kinds of TTs. How we see the ST – both as a theoretical concept, and as the specific text relevant to the study in question – directly affects how we see the TT, what research methods we can apply to study it, and what kinds of results we get (see Ivaska and Huuhtanen 2020). This will be explored further in the next section, where we analyze the opening music video of the anime series *Digimon* as an example of a multimodal localized TT and where different perspectives on the ST are shown to have different implications for the analysis of the TT.

3. Analyzing different language versions of *Digimon*'s opening music video

3.1 Overview: *Digimon* as an example of a complex network of texts in a multi-national localization process

Digimon, short for “digital monsters,” is a Japanese multimedia franchise centered on the titular virtual creatures. Starting life in 1997 as a series of virtual pets similar to *Tamagotchi* toys, the *Digimon* franchise has since grown to include animated TV shows and movies, video games, comics series, novels, toys, trading cards, and more. Internationally, one of the most widely recognized aspects of the franchise is the anime series, which premiered in Japan in 1999. In its first seasons, the *Digimon* anime follows a group of children who travel to a digital world that exists parallel to the physical world. The children join with a group of friendly *Digimon* inhabitants of the digital world who have the ability to “digivolve” into vari-

ous stronger variations of themselves when need arises. Together, they venture to save the digital world from the evil Digimon who are corrupting it. (For a more in-depth discussion of *Digimon* mythology, see, e.g., Ojeda-García and Ogáyar-Marín 2022.)

The anime series was subsequently localized into a number of languages and dubbed versions of the show aired on various national and international television networks. The various localized versions of the *Digimon* anime make some changes to the Japanese original in order to accommodate the requirements and expectations of each specific locale. In addition to changing the language of the dialogue, some versions may include different names for the human characters, they may have a different soundtrack, or they may have omitted some scenes deemed unsuitable for young viewers in the locale in question. Perhaps the most immediately obvious of these changes is the opening music video (commonly shortened to just “opening” or OP) of each version, consisting of the theme song and the accompanying video. The Japanese OP is repurposed in many language areas, but often with new lyrics and a new sung performance in the target language. However, some versions replace the Japanese OP’s music with a completely different song. The most prolific of these is the song used in the English OP and in nine other OPs.

In the following sections, we will identify the varied kinds of connections that can be established between the Japanese, English, and other language versions of the *Digimon* OP in its different modes — auditive, visual, and lingual — and explore the complex network of sources and targets so revealed. In Section 3.3, as an illustrative example we delve deeper into the translation choices made in the song lyrics of one specific language version — namely, the Finnish OP — and see what influences from the global network of language versions and localization processes are suggested in that one version of the song. Contrasting song translation theories which seem to assume a more conventional ST-to-TT relationship with the ambiguous relationships involved in the localization process of *Digimon* OP leads us to question whether assumptions about sources and targets in established analytical and theoretical frameworks in TS may limit our understanding and study of these kinds of complex translational phenomena.

3.2 *Digimon* opening’s audiovisual contents in different language versions

The OP to the Japanese *Digimon* anime features the song “Butter-Fly,” performed by singer Kōji Wada, played over visuals illustrating the narrative of the show and incorporating scenes from the first season’s episodes. “Butter-Fly” itself is a guitar-driven rock song whose lyrics contain no overt references to *Digimon* (as will be discussed in Section 3.3). The video track and scene transitions are timed to the

rhythm of the song. Over the intro, the seven main characters are depicted as plummeting into an abstract space and the series' Japanese-language title card (an orange text on blue background with the words "Digimon Adventure" in Japanese and English) is shown. As the lyrics start, the title card transitions to a representation of the children arriving to the digital world and, after this, to a display of each main character's companion Digimon, showing them digivolving from their initial states to the versions they will stay as for the majority of the show. As the song proceeds to the more bombastic refrain, the music is coupled with scenes showing the Digimon changing form yet again, this time to giant-sized and monstrous versions of themselves. Finally, the crescendo of the song is played over dramatic scenes of each giant Digimon performing their signature attacks, and a sequence of three group shots: the seven main Digimon in their initial forms, then in their intermediate forms, and finally posing in their gigantic forms together with the seven human characters. So, the order of the visual scenes in the OP reflects both the progression of the music and the progression of the central narrative elements of the show: the children's introduction to Digimon and their world, and the mechanics of how Digimon transform from one type into another.

The English *Digimon* OP is drastically different both in video and audio. Instead of "Butter-Fly," the English OP features "Digimon Theme," a techno-inspired song explicitly created to function as the theme song to the English dub of the anime. The visuals of the OP have been significantly changed, too: the scenes are the same as in the Japanese OP, but they are shown in a different sequence. For example, where the Japanese OP methodically introduces the setting and the primary Digimon types in its first half and then times the reveal of the more advanced Digimon forms with the increasing drama of the music, the English OP showcases all the various Digimon in very quick succession right at the beginning, presumably to frontload the more visually impressive monsters. At the same time, the title card transition from the Japanese version is removed altogether and replaced with an image of the international *Digimon* brand logo (an orange-on-blue logo with "Digimon" at the center and the words "Digital" and "Monsters" around it) at the very end of the OP.

Compared to the Japanese and English versions, *Digimon* OPs in other language areas include many similarities but also almost always some differences in both auditive and visual contents. In terms of audio, while the music of either "Butter-Fly" or "Digimon Theme" is used in almost every other OP, most versions incorporate new lyrics to the song that are sung by a new performer in the local language. Table 1 lists different language versions of *Digimon* and indicates which song is featured in which versions.

The visual contents of the other OPs are mostly consistent with the choice of music – those featuring "Butter-Fly" incorporate the visuals of the Japanese OP,

Table 1. Categorization of different language versions of the *Digimon* anime according to whether they use the same song as used in the Japanese OP (“Butter-Fly”) or the English OP (“Digimon Theme”). Versions marked with an asterisk (*) include the Japanese or English sung performance, others incorporate new target-language lyrics.

<i>Digimon</i> OPs with a version of “Butter-Fly”	<i>Digimon</i> OPs with a version of “Digimon Theme”	<i>Digimon</i> OPs with another song
Japanese	English	Italian
Arabic	Brazilian Portuguese	Korean
Cantonese	Czech	
Castilian Spanish	Danish	
Croatian	Dutch*	
European Portuguese	French	
Finnish	Hebrew	
German	Norwegian	
Greek	Polish	
Hindi	Swedish	
Indonesian		
Latin American Spanish		
Mandarin Chinese		
Serbian*		
Slovenian		

while those featuring “Digimon Theme” incorporate the visuals of the English OP. The Italian and Korean OPs are their own special cases, as they both incorporate original songs that are not present in any other language versions; in terms of visuals, both follow the Japanese OP but make some changes involving the title card, the Korean OP reordering some scenes to display the Korean-language title card over other visuals and the Italian OP replacing the Japanese title card with the English-language international brand logo. The title card is where a number of “Butter-Fly” OPs deviate from the Japanese visuals, too. For example, the Arabic version uses scenes from the anime to reorder and replace some of the Japanese OP’s visuals, including the title card, while in the German and Finnish versions the video tracks otherwise follow the Japanese OP but the Japanese title card is replaced with the international *Digimon* logo. The somewhat prosaic way in which the Finnish OP does this is worth noting: the title card is not incorporated as a video effect, like in Italian or German, but rather by cutting to a photograph of the backside of a *Digimon* trading card featuring the logo. The Finnish OP, then, involves explicit connections not just to the Japanese OP in music and visuals but also to the visual contents of other texts in the franchise – namely, the *Digimon* trading cards – which it has appropriated for its own purposes. In this

way, the title card of the Finnish *Digimon* OP reflects how the textual elements of TTs involved in multi-lingual media franchises and multi-national text distribution processes are potentially compiled from and influenced by the entirety of the global textual network behind them, not just one specific ST.

In fact, the Finnish OP is representative of this same phenomenon in the one remaining significant mode of these multimodal texts that has not been discussed yet: the lingual mode of the sung lyrics. Next, we will analyze the translated lyrics of the Finnish OP as an example of how much the lyrics of “Butter-Fly” OPs in different languages tend to differ from those of the Japanese ST and compare this with the contents of the lyrics of “Digimon Theme.” These discussions are framed in the context of song translation research, especially categorizations of the degrees of semantic correspondence between ST and TT songs. Presented in this framework and following the analysis of the other audiovisual modes above, it becomes apparent that the kinds of connections that exist between these texts are difficult to explain and categorize in the simple terms of one-way ST-to-TT relations.

3.3 Verbal contents of *Digimon* opening’s localized versions: Perspectives from song translation research

The translated lyrics for “Butter-Fly” tend to be much more explicitly *Digimon*-themed than the original version of the song. The Finnish OP follows suit. The Japanese lyrics are those of a rock ballad; the Finnish lyrics are those of a theme song to a children’s animated TV show. This difference can be seen clearly when comparing the English gloss translations of both texts presented in Table 2.

The field of song translation research recognizes that translated song lyrics often feature solutions that may appear rather non-standard from the conventional viewpoint of fidelity ethics in TS (as discussed in, e.g., Franzon 2021: 83–84). Song translation scholars have made numerous attempts to reconcile the fidelity-centric understanding of what a translation should be with the wide range of changes song translators may make, or to at least contextualize the latter in relation to the former. Many of these discussions have explored the concept of *singability* – the formal adherence of lyrics to music so that the lyrics can be sung and performed to the music (Low 2003: 93) – as one prominent factor that explains why song translators seem to enjoy special freedoms that other translators would likely be admonished for. Song lyrics have to follow the formal structures of the music in order to function as texts in the role they are created for (Haapaniemi and Laakkonen 2019: 65–67), which means that achieving at least a basic degree of singability on the phonetic level in the TT overrides the goal of exhibiting semantic or thematic fidelity to the ST. In an AV text like the *Digimon*

Table 2. Contents of the Finnish lyrics to “Butter-Fly” compared with the contents of the Japanese lyrics. The gloss translation of the Japanese text is a cleaned-up DeepL translation, compared for accuracy against a number of fan translations published online

Finnish	Japanese (romanized)
Tulkaa mukaan muuttumaan tähän leikkiin hurjimpaan	Gokigen na chou ni natte kirameku kaze ni notte
Kaikkee paha vastaan me taistellaan	Ima sugu kimi ni ai ni yukou
Kiltit aina voimaa saa muuttamalla hahmoaan ja yhdessä me paha uhmataaan	Yokei na koto nante wasureta hou ga mashi sa Kore ijou shareteru jikan wa nai
Ja niitä wow wow wow wow wow	Nani ga wow wow wow wow wow
vastaan taistellaan, me voitetaan	kono sora ni todoku no darou
Me wow wow wow wow wow	Dakedo wow wow wow wow wow
maailmaa parempaa voidaan rakentaa	ashita no yotei mo wakaranai
Voittamaton Digimon, niin se on	Mugendai na yume no ato no nanimo nai yo no naka ja
Muuttamalla hahmoaan unelmat me voidaan pelastaa	Sou sa itoshii omoi mo makesou ni naru kedo
Voittamaton Digimon, niin se on	Stay shigachi na imeeji darake no tayorinai tsubasa demo
Maailma pelastetaan rakkaudella	Kitto toberu sa on my love
Finnish (English gloss)	Japanese (English gloss)
Come and transform in this, the wildest of games	I'll become a happy butterfly, riding the sparkling wind
We will fight everything that's evil	I'll come to you right now
The kind ones always get stronger by changing their form	I'd rather forget about all the other stuff that's on my mind
And together, we will defy evil	I don't have any more time for pretending
And, wow wow wow wow wow	I wonder, wow wow wow wow wow
We will fight against them and win	what will reach the sky?
We, wow wow wow wow wow	But, wow wow wow wow wow
Can build a better world	I don't even know what tomorrow will bring
Invincible Digimon, so it is	After an endless dream, in this empty world
By changing form we can save the dreams	It seems like our beloved dreams will be lost
Invincible Digimon, so it is	Even with these unreliable wings full of lingering images
Saving the world with love	I'm sure I can fly on my love

OP, the singability of the lyrics could be recontextualized as just one aspect of the semiotic interplay of different modes contributing to overall textual coherence (Taylor 2018: 42–49): as the verbal mode of lyrics and the auditive mode of music exist as part of the same text, they must complement each other in their structure, and – as discussed above in terms of the relationship between the audio and video track in the OPs – the same applies to the visual mode.

In practice, then, song translation is about negotiating the formal constraints imposed by other textual modes, exhibited as requirements like singability, with other aspects of lyric writing and translation (Haapaniemi and Laakkonen 2019: 65–66). Low has described song translation as a pentathlon (Low 2017: 78–113) where phonetic singability must be balanced with recreating ST sense, creating natural-sounding target language, having a good rhythm to the text, and following a rhyming scheme (Low 2017: 79–80). Considered in terms of the pentathlon principle, the Finnish *Digimon* OP scores well enough in most categories: the performance has been successfully recorded, so it is obviously singable enough in the phonetic sense; the lyrics follow a consistent rhyming scheme; the rhythm of the language follows that of the music; and while some sacrifices in terms of naturalness have been made, seemingly to accommodate for verse length and rhymes, the language is certainly not wholly unnatural, either. The category of sense is the outlier. It seems that in the lyrics of the Finnish OP – and of a number of other language versions of “Butter-Fly,” too – the translators deemed it more important for the song to serve its function in the role of the opening theme to the anime and as part of the *Digimon* franchise than to recreate the expressions or thematic contents of the original “Butter-Fly,” hence the introduction of overt references to the narrative of the show.

Acknowledging that song translations can include these kinds of somewhat unorthodox solutions in terms of semantic and thematic content, song translation researchers have sought to create typologies that articulate the ways in which and the degrees to which singable target-language lyrics relate to the source-language song whose music they follow. Low (2013) proposes a three-level categorization based on degrees of semantic faithfulness, referring only to the most faithful kind as “translations” and relegating other types as “adaptations” or “replacement texts” (Low 2013: 230–235). This is another example of a TT typology focusing on one specific type of lingual relation between texts despite the fact that the texts discussed are multimodal, even explicitly claiming that a translation ceases to be a translation when a certain degree of semantic unfaithfulness is reached. Nevertheless, the existence of the other two categories reflects the need to also acknowledge song translations exhibiting different kinds of ST-to-TT relations than just semantic fidelity. In comparison, Franzon (2021) makes no hard-and-fast judgment on where translating ends and something else begins, and instead proposes

a “six-step fidelity spectrum” (Franzon 2021: 116) where “aspects of translational action” can be identified on every step, even in songs that “technically and intuitively” might not be translations (Franzon 2021: 113) and that in Low’s categorization might be termed adaptations or replacement texts. Franzon’s six categories are as follows (Franzon 2021: 85):

1. *Near-enough* translations that make some allowances (for singability, etc.) but replicate the ST’s semantic and thematic contents fairly closely.
2. *Perspective-shift* translations that are still quite close to the ST but that make some fundamental change to the way the contents are framed.
3. *Lyric hook transpositions* that recreate some central factor of the ST but also involve significant changes.
4. *Single-phrase spinoffs* that exhibit “random fidelity” (Franzon 2021: 107) by retaining some specific wordings from the ST but that are otherwise mostly unrelated.
5. *Phonetic calques* that replicate phonetic features of the ST but may or may not retain connections to its semantic or thematic contents.
6. *All-new target lyrics* whose contents may be influenced by other textual features of the ST (such as the tone or rhythm of the music) but that exhibit no obvious connections on the level of language.

Comparing the gloss translations in Table 2, it is obvious enough that the Finnish version of “Butter-Fly” can hardly be considered to fall into category 1; and yet, looking more closely, perhaps it is not inarguably in category 6, either. Considered in terms of category 2, the framing of the contents has indeed been fundamentally changed, but there are similar thematic elements: there is the notion of transformation (metaphorical metamorphosis into a butterfly in the Japanese, literal digivolving in the Finnish), and the sense that some form of adversity (in the speaker’s personal life, or in the conflict between good and evil Digimon) will be overcome through this transformation. From the perspective of categories 3, 4, and 5, the repeated “wow wow wow wow” in both songs is a clear case of replicating a central hook or prominent phonetic feature of the ST in the TT. The very final line of the Finnish song is especially interesting in terms of category 4. The Japanese song ends dramatically with the three rising notes of “on my love” – and these words are sung in English, which is a common stylistic flourish in Japanese popular music. While the Finnish version clearly does not strive for semantic fidelity anywhere else, in this final line it suddenly takes an almost word-for-word approach, even going so far as to forcibly push the four-syllable “rakkaudella” (‘with love’) in the exact same place where “on my love” is in the Japanese song despite there only being room for three syllables. In other words, the Finnish “Butter-Fly” disregards recreating the ST sense when it comes

to its Japanese-language contents, but throws rhythm, rhyme, and even aspects of singability by the wayside when it comes to replicating the semantic meaning of the one English-language line – even when that one line is more relevant to the themes of the original Japanese lyrics than those of the Finnish lyrics.

In fact, when analyzing the solutions made in the Finnish *Digimon* OP, it is worth taking note of the English-language “Digimon Theme.” Considering the curious prominence given to the English ST lines in the Finnish “Butter-Fly,” English texts in the international network of potential STs may prove especially influential to the Finnish TT; and, in fact, one such connection has already been noted, in the form of the photograph of the English-language *Digimon* trading card logo serving as the Finnish OP’s title card. The lyrics of “Digimon Theme” consist of simple repeated statements: “Digimon! Digital Monsters! Digimon are the champions!”; “Change into digital champions to save the digital world!”; “Digivolve into champions! Digivolve into ultimate!” These lines, which effectively condense the premise of *Digimon* into a few phrases, are closer in semantic content to the Finnish “Butter-Fly” than to its Japanese ST. There is the concept of changing form into something stronger, explicitly referring to digivolving in both the English and Finnish song; there is the notion of being “champions” or “invincible,” that is, engaging in battle and emerging triumphant; there is the call to “save the world” (and, implied in English and explicitly stated in Finnish, fight against and champion over the forces that seek its downfall). Considered just in terms of the semantic level of the lingual mode, there is a better case to be made for the Finnish “Butter-Fly” being a near-enough translation (after Franzon) or perhaps a type of expanded adaptation (after Low) of the English “Digimon Theme” than of the Japanese “Butter-Fly” – at least in the case that we do not take into account other textual modes and the obvious fact that the Finnish lyrics are sung to the music of “Butter-Fly.”

Expanding the scope of the analysis beyond just the Finnish OP for the moment, some form of influence from the English localization is evident in other language versions of the OP, too. For instance, the Italian and Greek lyrics include references to the names of the show’s human protagonists, but the names they use are the Anglicized names used in the English dub – “Matt” instead of “Yamato,” for example – even while the OP’s music (in Greek) or its visuals (in Italian) are taken from the Japanese OP. This inconsistency in localization choices is further confirmation that *Digimon* localizations are not simply sourced directly from the Japanese original, and not necessarily even from some mediating version in a more widely-spoken language (such as English), but from various sources that relate to different TT modes in different ways.

Indeed, as a multimodal text, *Digimon* OP’s ST-to-TT relations cannot be assessed just in terms of semantic faithfulness or just in terms of the lingual mode.

As noted, much of the contents of the English lyrics — Digimon changing form, fighting against evil Digimon, etc. — is also communicated through the visuals of the video track, both in the English and the Japanese OP. Another possible conclusion, then, is that the Finnish lyrics draw not from the English lyrics but from the Japanese visuals. In fact, Franzon's categories do acknowledge these kinds of potential complexities to a degree. Categories 5 and 6 recognize that TT lyrics may be informed by non-lingual features of the ST, such as its phonetic or musical aspects. A multimodal ST involves resources for meaning-construction beyond its lingual content, and the meanings derived from these other modes may be communicated as verbal content in the TT. These types of connections are difficult to frame in terms of semantic fidelity, but this does not mean that these connections do not exist or that they were not established through translational action. Susam-Saraeva (2021) argues that the meanings derived from the verbal lyrics of a song are only “the tip of the iceberg” (Susam-Saraeva 2021: 179) built on top of the entire socio-cultural context in which the song is produced and distributed, potentially involving a wider network of other texts in multiple media and multiple languages — often including, as in this case, a video accompanying the song that adds visual resources for meaning-construction to the song's auditive and lingual resources. The addition of video to audio further expands the range of potential elements the song's translator may include in their compiled ST (Emmerich 2017), informing the creation of the target-language lyrics.

Considering the wider socio-cultural context in which the TT is produced and distributed, it is also possible that, being part of the global multimedia franchise and international localization process of *Digimon*, the Finnish localizers simply had an existing idea of the premise of the show and based their lyrics on that pre-existing knowledge. Using the trading card as a makeshift title card certainly indicates some awareness of the surrounding franchise and other texts in it. Regardless, it seems fair to say that analyzing the Finnish lyrics of “Butter-Fly” solely in terms of their relation to the semantic contents of the Japanese lyrics would ignore a number of other potentially relevant sources — in relations beyond semantic faithfulness, in modes beyond the lingual, and in textual connections beyond one single source text and source language. All this makes for a mountain of an iceberg potentially hidden beneath the surface of the target-language lyrics created for any localized version of the OP.

4. Discussion

In our analysis, we have examined the Finnish *Digimon* OP's song lyrics alongside the rest of the AV text and surrounding franchise from a combination of two per-

spectives: as an instance of a multimodal TT that is the product of a complex localization history involving potential indirect and compilative translation, and as a case of song translation. In this framework, the Finnish *Digimon* OP appears as an example of a TT that exhibits numerous kinds of connections to other texts beyond just the semantic content of the verbal mode of a single ST. There are connections to other languages than the language in which the ST's semantic contents are communicated (English words "on my love" translated, Japanese-language contents not); connections to other ST modes than the lingual (structural adherence to music, semantic contents potentially influenced by the visuals); connections to other texts beyond the one established ST in terms of semantic content (potential influence by the English OP); and connections to other texts outside the ST in its non-verbal modes (trading card used as the title card).

This complexity makes it difficult to place the Finnish TT into existing song translation categories, such as Franzon's (2021) "fidelity spectrum." The Finnish lyrics are only one part of a multimodal text that is itself a part of a multi-lingual network of texts in a multi-national text localization and distribution process, which makes it difficult to determine what exactly is the "source" in relation to which the fidelity of the "target" should be measured. What is the source language – can it be just Japanese, since the Japanese-language contents of the original "Butter-Fly" are hardly translated at all, while the English-language contents of the song are translated almost to the letter? What is the source text – can it be just "Butter-Fly" and its lyrics, when there are so many connections to other modes and to the rest of the textual network that comprises the international *Digimon* franchise? At the same time, the role of the Japanese OP cannot be disregarded either, since its other modes contribute so obviously to the Finnish lingual mode in structure (formal requirement of singability imposed by music) and content (visuals depicting the narrative of *Digimon*). It is therefore clear that in researching TTs like the Finnish *Digimon* OP it is necessary to adopt an understanding of the ST-to-TT relation that goes beyond just the semantic level, beyond the lingual mode, and even beyond a single ST; a conceptualization of "source" as a compilation of textual elements and influences, enveloping the multiple languages and multiple texts that comprise the international network of textual movement and distribution which the TT is a part of and which it draws from.

A language-focused, binary conceptualization of the ST-to-TT relation obscures the many other semiotic resources and material realities that contribute to the compilation of a TT in form and content. Beyond the *Digimon* OP, similar complex genealogical relationships caused by text production and distribution practices can also be found in video game localization (Zhang and Song 2023) and film subtitling (e.g., Oziemblewska and Szarkowska 2022), for example. In these instances, translators are often not working from the multimodal ST as a whole

but from its verbal contents only, and the translated dialogue is then re-inserted as subtitles in the multimodal TT. Something similar can take place in “monomodal” translation tasks, too: translation memory tools and other such translation technologies retrieve what they recognize as verbal content from digital ST documents, split it up into segments, and recombine translated segments into a TT document (Pym 2007, 2011b; for a case study, see, e.g., Haapaniemi 2023). Here, too, the production of a TT involves the separation of modes from their textual environments and, through translation memory databases and other similar tools, utilizing contents from other texts beyond just the one ST.

How TS can address the challenge of indirect, pluralistic or ambiguous ST-to-TT relations involves at least three factors. First, what is required is a nuanced understanding of “source (text)” as a concept that acknowledges the potential influences of mediating texts and languages or other sources in addition to or instead of a single ST in a single source language. Second, there is a need for a complex and articulated conceptualization of the array of semiotic resources that are utilized by translators and that affect the creation of translations: translating involves influences beyond the linguistic mode, and even translations that are explicitly implemented in the linguistic mode exist as part of a multimodal textual entity and are affected by those other textual modes in structure and in content. Third, in order to properly account for all these different textual influences, TS needs to implement a wide array of methodological frameworks suitable for the study of different modes (verbal, auditory, visual, etc.), as well as a theoretical and philosophical capacity to hold two somewhat opposing viewpoints simultaneously: on the one hand, texts must be recognized as multimodal entities whose modes are inseparable in the processes of reception and meaning-construction, while on the other hand, it must be acknowledged that text production and distribution practices may still treat textual modes as being separable, resulting in TTs whose one mode draws from one ST and another mode draws from another ST or where one mode draws from multiple STs.

The apparent conflict between the separability and inseparability of textual modes can be reconciled by focusing on the relativistic and perspective-bound nature of what actually constitutes a text. Multimodal TTs are, in a sense, compilative translations by default: some modes may be translated directly, some indirectly, some retained in the original form. In other words, a multimodal ST’s textual modes are not necessarily treated as inseparable in the distribution and production processes of TTs. As texts move across global markets and different language areas, the contents of different modes may end up moving through different routes and crisscrossing from one locale to another each in their own sequence. As a result, different iterations of different modes may end up recombining in a locale, meaning that the TT created in each locale may have not just

one multimodal ST but pluralistic or ambiguous relationships to multiple different texts, expressed differently in its different modes. The assessment of multimodal TTs' ST relations must therefore account for each mode both individually and as a part of the textual whole while also considering the realities of the process by which the contents of that mode were translated. After all, the specific compilation of textual elements constituting the text at hand is always bound to a perspective, "fixed" or "frozen" according to a specific viewpoint by the translator in the translation process or by a scholar in retrospect (Emmerich 2017: 13; Marais 2021: 25). If there is such a thing as a ST to which the TT can be compared "at the level of the textual unit" (Davies and van Doorslaer 2018: 246), what this ST is depends on the perspective of the one conducting the comparison – be it the translator during the process of translation, or the translation scholar during the process of academic research.

Perhaps the nature of the genealogical link between ST and TT should be reconceptualized not as a stable and essential one-to-one chain but as a network extending to many directions where the nodes and the links between them are relative and perspective-bound; not as a hierarchical tree but as a rhizomatic web of influences. Perhaps the notion of "source" should be expanded to better acknowledge the material and social realities of translation processes and to incorporate the textual influences so introduced. Perhaps the "source" of a translation should be understood, at least in cases where the traditional conceptualization risks erroneous conclusions, not as a single text but as a cluster of perspective-dependent textual connections and situationally-compiled textual elements. This kind of reorientation would enable TS to better account for how textual influences interact and interweave under the constraints imposed by the realities of the texts' production and distribution processes; to treat texts as multimodal totalities while also acknowledging their myriad connections in those multiple modalities; and to study and assess any TT not just as a counterpart to a single ST but also as part of a wide-ranging process of textual movement across time, space, languages, and cultures.







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