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Scanlation vs. Official Translation

A Case Study on Tokyo Ghoul

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Abstract:

When comparing official translations and scanlations (fan-translation) the discussion often leads to the method of translation, namely foreignization and domestication. This study seeks out to compare the official translation, by Viz media, to the scanlation done by Twisted Hel Scans, of the manga Tokyo Ghoul. The translations were compared to see if some different tendencies in their translation choices could be found. As well as looking for differences, the accuracy was also analyzed to see which translation had the higher accuracy.

The results showed that the official translation leaned more towards a domesticated approach but did use some foreignizing aspects as well. The scanlation was leaning much heavier towards a foreignizing approach in which the translators tried to keep the original sentence structure and also tried to transfer Japanese cultural terms into the translations. The scanlation overall had a worse flow of the text when compared to the official translation, and it also presented more translation errors.

Keywords: Japanese-English translation, manga translation, domestication, foreignization, scanlation, Tokyo Ghoul

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1. Introduction

While searching for opinions online about the different translations of a work of manga, the author of the paper came across one such discussion on the website “reddit¹”. Reddit is a social platform where anyone can post and discuss whatever they want, in the form of a forum thread. The discussion is about which translation is the best one, an official or a scanlation (fan translated and edited). While the opinions differed from person to person, the general opinion seemed to be that they prefer the fan-translation over the official, this due to the scanlations being “truer” to the original. One such comment, which was based on the discussed in the forum, is as follows (Viz being the official translation while other two are scanlation groups):

So basically:

Viz: fantastic art, the physical book experience, but average translations.

TwistedHelScan: Great artwork, great translations, but slow to release.

Jaimini's Box: OK artwork, good translations and fast releases.

I guess I just have to decide if the physical book experience (including the art) outweighs the better translations for me.

Anyways, thank you. - kratelos

This leads to the question to why the official translation, which is done by professionals, is considered to be of lower quality than that of the scanlation team. (It should be noted that scanlations are almost always available to the reader before an official translation is done.) According to Dybała (2020) one reason for this might be due to the idea of the “rooted translation”. A rooted translation is usually the first translation that is available, that becomes the standard that all later translations will be compared to. He claims that even though the official translators might have legitimate reasons to why they translate as they do, this can often be seen as a “wrong” or “bad” translation due to the fact that an expectation has already been created from the rooted translation. He suggests that to help the readers understand why the official translation is done the way it is, more communication is needed between the readers and the companies that do the official translations. While this certainly is an interesting point to consider, it probably does not tell the whole story.

This research investigates two translations of the manga Tokyo Ghoul. The official English translation done by Joe Yamazaki, published by VIZ Media and the

¹

https://www.reddit.com/r/TokyoGhoul/comments/8fwiz0/which_translation_is_best_official_or_fan/

English scanlated (fan-translated) translation done by Twisted Hel Scans. They are compared to each other along with the original in Japanese written by Sui Ishida.

The purpose of the investigation is to compare the translations to the original to see if certain trends can be found in how both groups choose to translate. This was done to see if it can be proven that the scanlation is “truer”, or a more foreignized translation, to the original. The accuracy was also analyzed to see which translation is more accurate, this due to the reddit posts that claimed that the scanlation is of better quality.

The structure of the thesis is as follows: First some background of scanlation and some relevant concepts in Translation Studies will be presented. After that previous works that are relevant to the study will be presented in the Previous studies section. Then the material and method will be explained, followed by the results and analysis. Finally a discussion will be presented and at the end a conclusion to the study.

2. Background

In this section the background relevant to the study will be introduced. First the phenomenon of scanlation and then some concepts in Translation Studies which are central to the present study.

2.1 Scanlation

This study is a comparative study of the official English translation and the scanlation of the manga Tokyo Ghoul. In this section the concept of scanlation and some of its problematic nature will be explained shortly.

Scanlation mainly refers to the process of scanning the raw pages of Japanese manga, and after that edit, translate and publish online. This is largely done by fans of the original series that want spread the series to a wider audience by translating it into other languages. O'Hagan's paper "Evolution of user-generated translation: Fansubs, translation hacking and crowdsourcing" explains the evolution of fan translation, where she goes through its history. She explains that scanlation is a rather new part of fan-translation history, as the concept of fan translation started out with fansubs for movies and TV series done in the 1980s. Scanlation started much later when the internet started to be available to the general population (2009).

Darissurayya explains the process of scanlation in more detail. The first thing that happens in scanlation is the process of choosing the content that the scanlation team want to scanlate. When the content has been chosen, the manga is then either bought or in some cases downloaded online to be scanned. Each page is scanned and then saved in a digital format so that it can be edited. The next procedure is "cleaning" and translating. The process of cleaning refers to removing the Japanese text from the pictures so that it can later be replaced by the translated text. Both processes can be done simultaneously as they are not dependent on anything other than the original. When both processes are done, the next step of typesetting and editing begins. In this process the style of the text and other edits to the images are done, and the translated text is put into the pictures.

The final step of the process is the quality checking. At this point one reads through the translated manga and looks for errors from the earlier processes. If an error is found one goes back and fixes it; if not the finished product is ready for publishing.

One large problem that cannot be ignored when writing about scanlation is the legality of it. As Lee (2009) brings up in her paper, strictly speaking scanlation is illegal, since scanlators are publishing copyright protected works. This is often tolerated though, since it is often seen as free publicity and scanlations are usually taken down by the scanlation group when the official translation is later published. But even though the scanlation group choses to no longer host their translation, since it has been on the internet it has usually been downloaded and later uploaded by someone else, so it is hard to fully remove it from the internet.

2.2 Foreignization and domestication

Foreignization and **domestication** are different ways on how to translate cultural terms from the SL², that are otherwise not very well or not at all known in the TL. The concepts of foreignization and domestication comes from Venuti (305-6), but his ideas were built from an earlier concept by Schleiermacher in early 19th century. Hasegawa states (196) that the idea behind the concepts is for either the TT reader to approach the ST author or the ST author to approach the TT reader. These two concepts will be key to the comparison done in this study. As stated in the introduction, scanlation is often seen as a “truer”, or foreignized, translation and is often preferred therefor. Meanwhile official translations are often domesticated to fit the target culture.

2.2.1 Foreignization

Foreignization is when the TT reader approaches the ST author, meaning that the translation is done in such a way that it highlights and keeps cultural terms from SL. This is done so that the text is as close and true to the original as possible and to resist the possible dominance of the TL culture. By doing this though, the TT can often lose the natural flow of the text.

2.2.2 Domestication

Domestication is when the ST author approaches the TT reader, meaning that the translation is done in such a way that if the ST author knew the TL and wrote the text in that language, that is how it would have been written. The text should above all else be natural and have a good flow in the TL, cultural terms are often changed into similar cultural terms in the TL.

² SL (Source Language) – The language of the original text.

TL (Target Language) – The language of the translated text.

ST (Source text) – The original text.

TT (Target Text) – The translated text.

3. Previous Research

In this section of the paper previous research relevant to the study will be introduced.

3.1 Official vs. Scanlation

Studies done comparing official translation and scanlation have been done with different foci, trying to find out the differences between the two. In Darissurayya's "Accuracy of English-Indonesian scanlation of *Detective Conan* manga as compared to its Japanese-Indonesian translation", she focuses on the accuracy when comparing the official translation and scanlation of the manga *Detective Conan*. According to the study some scanlation have a higher accuracy than the official but not every time. This often came at the cost of the fluency of the text, where the official had a much better flow. This is said to be due to the scanlation using literal translation more often. While the study does produce some significant results, not much is said as to the reasons why translations were done the way they were.

Another study done by Okyayuz (2017) focuses on the format, what was translated and what was not, and what different translation strategies were used. This study was done on the manga *Naruto* translated into Turkish and it compares the official translation to the scanlation. This study was carried out to present grounds on how multimodal, multicultural translation is done in manga.

In her study she concludes that in both cases it is clear that manga is something has to be foreignized to be able to be appreciated fully. This was because manga seemed almost impossible to domesticate to the target culture without losing much of the original feeling of the text. It is also clear that manga, due to its unique features is worth researching more about. Manga presents many unique translation problems that pushes amateurs and professionals to find different solutions to solve them.

3.2 Translation Problems in Manga

There are many kinds of translation problems that are unique to manga when it comes to translation. One of the biggest and most discussed translation problems is onomatopoeia. Huang (2014) discusses in his "Fluidity of modes in the translation of manga: the case of Kishimoto's *Naruto*" the importance of onomatopoeia in manga due to its visual effects on the reader. The western way of reading differs from the Japanese way. Western languages read from left to right and the text is read horizontally, while Japanese is read from right to left and the text, while also read horizontally, can also be read vertically. This results in different ways the eye move when reading the comic and the readers attention reaches different spaces depending on how you read it. The pictures are made with the idea of Japanese texts, which can result in that when translated the flow of the visual aspects are not

the same. This study help illustrate this problem when translating manga. A similar point is made by LaPlante in a much more detailed and extensive way in his study.

Focusing on onomatopoeia and the problems that occurs with translating them, Bartashova and Sichinskiy (223-225) presents different ways to analyze and solve them in their study. Similarly, Inose describes a more concrete way of how to solve the problems of translating onomatopoetic words.

Another aspect that can be analyzed when searching for translation problems is how to deal with cultural-specific terms. There are different ways on how to deal with this kind of translation problem, one such way is the use of translator notes. Fabretti argues that, within the fields of comics the frequent use of translator notes (T/N) is something unique to scanlation and is not often seen in other types of translation (86). The argument made is that T/N are used as a way for the scanlator to both solve these cultural-specific translation problems, as well as directly communicating with the reader. This is an interesting point to look at when comparing official and scanlation. If official translations rarely use T/N, then how do they solve the translation problem differently?

3.3 Domestication and Foreignization

The choice of domestication and foreignization has always been a heated topic when it comes to translation of manga. Wattson discusses some of the history of the anime/manga industry in his study and how it has evolved and what part domestication and foreignization has had in this (87-92). In the early stages when anime/manga arrived and started getting popular in the west, it was seen as something for children. Official translations were therefore made with that in mind, and alterations were made so that it would fit a young audience. Alterations were also made to fit the cultural standard of the west. This resulted in often heavily domesticated products that would even be called censored versions by the fans. Later when fan-translations started to arrive and with the arrival of the internet, information about these heavily edited versions began to spread and people started to prefer the fan-made versions instead, that focused on foreignizing the products. This resulted in the industry having to change their approach, forcing them to use more foreignizing aspects in their work. According to Wattson (93), in recent days the industry is less domesticating in their approach and the fan-translations seems to move away a bit from the often-extreme foreignization, which would result in grammatical errors and overall bad flow of the text. While this could be true, there are no clear examples of this to prove it in the study, so doing research on various newer manga/anime could look to prove this point.

3.4 Legality of Scanlation

Whatever good and bad things could be said about scanlation, the biggest problem with it is without a doubt the legality of it. Lee (1011-1012) talks in her paper about how, with the development of the internet, the interest and demand for

manga has exploded, and also due to the internet the availability has increased. This increase in demand has pushed for more scanlations, since the official industry cannot keep up with all new releases. But according to copyright laws, translation, reproduction, and exploitation is illegal. That said, there are some loopholes, such as “private use” or similar use within a limited circle. As there is little to no debates in media about the subject, Lee claims that it is hard to know how the industry approach the situation. It is however most of the time, tolerated due to being seen as free advertisement, since scanlation is usually done on a not-for-profit basis.

Lee’s study was done in 2009. A later study done in 2015 by Madeley (378) points to some different results. According to Madeley, while the scanlator groups themselves still usually stand by the not-for-profit basis, the sites hosting the translated manga draw in large amounts of money from add-revenue and similar things. This led to the US and Japan to join forces in June 2010 to take legal actions against these hosting sites. While this was thought to be the end of scanlations, not much has changed on the scanlation scene. But it has forced the official industry to adapt, resulting in many more titles being distributed legally and also being made available in an easier way through the use of apps and online sites. It also resulted in a shorter waiting time for the English releases, which now are released simultaneously or shortly after the Japanese release.

4. Material and method

In this section, the material and method used for this study will be presented.

4.1 Material

The source material for this study is the manga Tokyo Ghoul (トーキョーグール) written by Sui Ishida (石田スイ), published in book format 2012 in Japan (The series was serialized in Weekly Young Jump in 2011). The original Japanese version is used as the ST. The study uses the chapters 7-9 of the series, which is found in the first volume of the series. These chapters were chosen because the scanlation group “Twister Hell Scans” translate only from chapter 7 and onwards. The focus of the study is to compare Twister Hell Scan’s translations to the official translation done by Viz Media. Twisted Hell Scan published their first translations of chapters 7-9 in 2013, but the translation was later taken down from the groups site. Even so, the translation still circulates in the community and is reuploaded by various anonymous people on different hosting sites. The material used in this study was collected from the site “mangafreak3”. Viz Media later published the official translation in U.S.A. 2015, translated by Joe Yamazaki. Viz Media’s translation will be referred to as TT1 and Twisted Hell Scan’s as TT2. Both are translated from the ST in Japanese into English.

The manga falls under the genres of action, drama, horror, mystery, supernatural and is aimed towards *seinen*, meaning young men. According to Anime News Network⁴ the series was the fourth bestselling manga series in Japan in 2014, with over 6.9 million copies sold across all 14 volumes.

The story takes place in modern day Tokyo, Japan. In this world there are beings called “ghouls” who live feeding of human flesh. An organization call CCG (Commission of Counter Ghoul) has been established in order to counteract the attacks from ghouls on the citizens. The story follows Kaneki Ken a university student who is caught up in the ghouls world after his date turns out to be a ghouls.

After being attacked by the ghouls, Kaneki is taken into a hospital but is himself turned into a ghouls at the hands of the doctor who takes care of him. While following the struggles of Kaneki Ken in his new ghouls body, the reader gets to see the side of the ghouls and their struggles in life, while Kaneki tries to solve the mystery of how and why he was turned into a ghouls.

4.2 Methodology

Both translations were analyzed through ST-TT comparison. First, the two TT’s were compared to each other, frame by frame to see if there were any differences

³ https://w13.mangafreak.net/Manga/Toukyou_Kushu

⁴ <https://www.animenewsnetwork.com/news/2014-11-30/top-selling-manga-in-japan-by-series-2014/81607>

between the two translations. What is defined as a difference is when the dialogue, onomatopoeia, background text or visual language (choice of font, layout of text) is translated differently. When a difference was found, both translations as well as the original Japanese was noted down into a spreadsheet so that it could later be looked at to analyze on a deeper level.

In the text several cases of *ateji* occurs. *Ateji* is a Japanese word that is supposed be read a different way than what is originally intended. This is shown by having the so-called *furigana*, a phonetic guide, changed. This change is done by the author to show how he/she intended the word to be read, or if they want to present additional information. An example of this could be the word 喰種^{グール} which is used frequently in the manga. 喰種 is read as *kūshu*, but here we can see that the author changed it into グール (*gūru*). In this case the author wants to convey the meaning of the word *gūru*, or ghoul as it is in English, by using certain *kanji*. At the same time the intended way of reading it is supposed to be ghoul as is shown with the help of the *furigana*.

During this process, in order to determine the translations accuracy, they were also compared to the original to find mistranslations, omissions or other intentional changes done by the translator teams. When a difference was found, the difference along with the original Japanese was noted down in a separate spreadsheet. The other translation team's solution to the translation was also noted down to have a suggestion on how it could have been translated. If both TT's were mistranslated, a suggestion from the author of the present paper is instead made. Based on Vina Darissurayya's model on how to rate the translation accuracy, which was introduced earlier in the Previous Studies section, the mistranslations were rated from a scale of 1-3 depending on how serious of an error was made. 1 being only a minor translation error, 2 being translated accurately but with some loss of meaning, and 3 when the translation is not accurate.

The differences found from comparing TT1 and TT2 were then analyzed to try and come up with the possible reasons why they were chosen to be translated as they were. When all differences had been analyzed, the possible reasons, such as indications towards domestication and foreignization, were then grouped up to see if maybe a pattern started to emerge. This is done to suggest if official and scanlations have different trends on how they translate. Finally, both TTs' translation accuracy was summarized to see which translation could be argued to have the better translation accuracy, and to see what type of mistakes the most common ones were.

5. Results and analysis

In this section of the paper the results of the study will be presented and analyzed.

After comparing TT1 (Official) and TT2 (Scanlation) with the ST in the chapters 7-9 of the manga, 118 differences in translation or mistranslations could be found. While more differences could be found when doing the comparison, minor differences such as where there were small differences in word choice, but the meaning remained roughly the same, were not included.

The table below shows what kind of differences was found and how often they appeared. Some of the cases overlapped into more than one category.

Table 1: Types of differences found

Type of difference	Amount
Ateji	9
Background text	4
Honorifics	11
Choice of translation style	29
Onomatopoeia	57
Translation errors	16
Translator notes	2
Use of swearing	4
Total	118

5.1 Ateji

In the manga the author made use of *ateji* in several places to place certain extra meaning to some words, or to show how he intended it to be read. In the study 9 such cases could be found. Some examples of how TT1 and TT2 chose to translate them will be presented here. The transcription of the *ateji* will be done within parentheses.

Example 1. From case 1

ST: 何でだよ・・・何でお前ら^{グール}“喰種”は僕から“居場所”^{目常}を奪っていくんだ！！

Nandeda yo... nande omaera “kushu” (gūru) wa boku kara “ibasho” (nichijō) o ubatte iku nda!!

TT1: Why...? Why are you ghouls... .. taking away every place I belong?!

TT2: Why...? Why are you "Ghouls" snatching away my "place to belong"...?!

In this example both translations are roughly the same, but they both fail to convey the double meaning of “居場所” which has the *ateji* of 日常. Both translations chose to translate 居場所, which would translate to the place where one belongs, but does not translate 日常, which translates to something like “your everyday routine”.

There is also the use of 喰種 which would translate to “a species that eats” but is read as グール or ghoul. This is also used in the title of the series 東京喰種 or トーキョーグール, the words are also written in the alphabet on the ST as Tokyo Ghoul. Tokyo Ghoul is also used in the translations for the series in both TT1 and TT2. The concept of ghoul is not something native to Japan but is something borrowed from the west. So, translating 喰種 to “a species that eats” would be unnecessary for a western audience since they would most likely already be aware of what a ghoul is. While for a Japanese audience the concept of what a ghoul is might not be known.

Example 2. From case 16

ST: そして僕はニシキの^{本当の姿}残虐性をしている・・・

Soshite boku wa Nishiki no zangyaku-sei (hontō no sugata) o shitte iru

TT1: I know what he really is.

TT2: and I know what Nishiki's really like...

In this example we can again see how both translations struggle with the double meaning. 残虐性, translates to cruel/brutal/savage. 本当の姿 literally translates to “true form/figure” or as in the translation what the person really is like.

残虐性 is removed from both translations and it is assumed that the reader already knows that Nishiki is a brutal person. It is also interesting to note that in comparison to the first example both translations chose to use the *ateji* here instead of the original word.

Example 3. From case 104

ST: こんなに^{美味しそう}肉 "じゃない

Kon'nani "niku" (oishi-sō) janai

TT1: Doesn't he look delicious?

TT2: Such delicious looking "meat"

In this example we can see a solution to the double meaning problem in TT2. 肉 translates to “meat” and 美味しそう translates to “delicious looking”. The

sentence is referring to a person that the ghoul wants to eat. TT1 removes the 肉 part and assumes that from the picture the meaning is understood, while TT2 kept both meanings in their translation.

5.2 Background text

The background text is text that is written in the background, such as books, magazines, signs, and similar things. Onomatopoeia is not counted into this category even though they are written as background text. While there weren't many cases in the study an important difference can be seen in when comparing the translations.

Example 4. From case 6

ST: 大学生物学

Daigaiku seibutsugaku

TT1: College Biology

TT2: (Not translated)

The difference that can be found is that TT2 does not translate background text. In this context there is a CD case lying on a table in the background with the text written on it as a title. This could be due to the group not having the expertise to remove the original Japanese text and add the English translation, or due to them not wanting to alter the original.

Example 5. From case 93

ST: エルマーと 16. 。。

Erumaa to 16

TT1: The dragons of Blue...

TT2: (Not translated)

As in the previous example, the TT2 offers no translation, but something interesting can be observed here. In the ST there lies a book on a table where you can read エルマーと 16 which would translate to Elma and the 16. The book refers to a children's book, called エルマーと 16 ぴきのりゅう. This book is originally in English with the title The Dragons of BlueLand 3, written by Ruth Stiles Gannett, which is the third book in a trilogy. This was then translated into Japanese. This shows that the TT1 team has done research to look up the book and not just translate what was written.

5.3 Honorifics

Honorifics exist in the English language, but not to the same extent as in Japanese and not with the same cultural meanings. In this study two different way of approaching the translation of this problem was found.

Example 6. From case 10

ST: 西尾さん？

Nishio-san

TT1: Nishio?

TT2: ...Nishio-san?

The honorific “-san” is the most commonly used one in Japan. It is used to strangers and acquaintances. An English equivalent could be “Mr” or “Mrs”, but it does not quite convey the same meaning.

In TT1 they remove the *-san* part and use the name of the person to whom it refers. TT2 chooses to keep the *-san* part along with the name. Similar things could be observed with other honorifics such as *-kun* and *-chan*.

Example 7. From case 96

ST: もしもしヨモさん

Moshimoshi Yomo-san

TT1: Hello? Mr. Yomo?

TT2: Hello, Yomo-san?

In a similar situation to example 6 something interesting was found. This time TT1 does not simply remove the *-san* part but chooses to translate it to Mr. Yomo, but in every other case they refer to him as just Yomo. The only difference was that the conversation was held over telephone.

Example 8. From case 15

ST: 先輩んち近いんすか

Senpai n chi chikai n su ka

TT1: Is your place close by?

TT2: Senpai, is your house close?

Here TT1 removes the 先輩 part, but TT2 keeps it in its original Japanese as “senpai”. *Senpai* is translated as senior, as someone who is older than you or has worked longer at the place you work.

5.4 Choice of translation style

The main difference between the two translations was what translation style they used. TT1 chooses to translate into sentences that have a better flow in English so that is more natural and easier to read. TT2 chooses to remain as close to the ST as possible making more literal translations, which results in a text that can be hard to read at times.

Example 9. From case 23

ST: . . . ヒデはあの先輩と仲良いの？

Hide wa ano senpai to nakayoi no?

TT1: Are you pretty close to him?

TT2: Hide, are you good friends with that senpai?

While both translations have roughly the same meaning, it can be seen that in TT2 they try to keep the same sentence structure and keep all the parts that was in the ST sentence. If Hide is left out of the Japanese sentence, then it might not be clear to the other person you are speaking to whom you are referring to when you are talking about who they are getting along with. But this is not usually needed in English. Usually when we speak in English we use “you” to refer to each other when we speak. We rarely use the name of the person we speak to when the conversation has already started. This can be seen in TT1, while in TT2 they try to translate it as literal as possible not leaving anything out.

Example 10. From case 53

ST: . . . ヒ . . . ヒデ . . . を . . . 喰べ . . . るだって . . . ? 誰
が . . . そんなことッ . . .

...Hi... Hide... o... Tabe... ru datte...? Dare ga... son'na ko to ~tsu...

TT1: E-Eat... Hide? I would never...

TT2: ...You... You mean I was going to... Eat... Hide...? Who in the hell...
Would do something like that...?

The first thing you might notice is that TT1 is much shorter than TT2. Another thing to notice is that TT2 tries to keep every pause in the sentence structure as it is in the ST, by using dots. But at the same time, while the ST sentence does convey a certain anger in it, the part of “Who in the hell” is an addition that they have made which is not in the ST.

Example 11. From case 102

ST: この"爪" . . . りぜの . . . "赫子" . . . ! ? いや . . . そんな筈

Kono "tsume" ... rize no... "kagune"...! ? Iya... son'na hazu

TT1: These claws... Arent they Rize's Kagune? No... There's no way...

TT2: This "claw"... Is Rize's "Kagune"...! No... That's impossible...

For context the “*kagune*” that is referred to in the example, is a type of growth that come out of a ghouls body. In this case it takes the form of a big claw. Similarly to previous example, it can be seen that TT2 tries to keep the sentence structure as close to the ST as possible with the pauses. TT2 also keeps the quotation marks

around the words just as in the ST. TT1 uses less pauses and does not keep the quotation marks.

5.5 Onomatopoeic and mimetic expressions

Onomatopoeic and mimetic expressions are used in varying degree in the manga. In this manga, it is mostly used in the fighting scenes to get a sense of motion and action but can be seen in other scenes as well. Japanese onomatopoeia and mimetic expressions are much more extensive than in English and are not only used for sound effects but can also portray emotions and feelings. Translating such words into English is always a challenge, so in these examples it will be shown how TT1 and TT2 chose to translate them. As a sidenote, the author of the manga has created some original expressions, which the author of this paper has not seen before nor could find easily available translations from. As such it could also be understood that both translation groups could have had similar problems in finding translations for them.

Example 12. From case 5

ST: ガサガサ

Gasa gasa

TT1: RSTL RSTL

TT2: rustle rustle

In this example, a person is sorting through some items making a rustling sound. Either translation could be said to be correct, but you can notice a trend here that we see in the rest of the manga as well from TT1. This being the shortening of the sound effect. Rustle is turned into RSTL. In case 34 we can see a similar thing:

ST: もくもくもく

Moku moku moku

TT1: CHW CHW CHW

TT2: CHEW CHEW CHEW

The person is chewing on some food while making this sound. Chew is turned into CHW.

Example 13. From case 29

ST: ホカホカ

Hoka hoka

TT1: Puff Puff

TT2: steam steam

In this case, it is the expression of hot food that is steaming out. In reality there is no noticeable sound from hot food, but one can observe the steam coming out of it. In TT1 they use “Puff puff”, which comes from something puffing out something in to form smoke or air. In TT2 they take the more literal approach of just writing what the onomatopoeia describes.

Example 14. From case 37

ST: グウウウ . . .

Guuuu....

TT1: SQZ...

TT2: (Not translated)

In this scene, the main character can be seen squeezing some food in his hand. As in example 12, we can see here again that TT1 chooses to shorten the sound effect from squeezing something into just “SQZ”. Another trend that is seen a lot in the manga is in TT2. In about half of the cases in TT2, the onomatopoeia are not translated. As was brought up in the Background text section, this could be because the group lack the expertise to remove the original Japanese text and add the English translation, or because they simply do not want to alter the original.

5.6 Translator notes

This is just a short section as there were only two cases of translator’s notes in the study, but it still has interesting points. Translation notes are usually added to help the understanding of a cultural term that the target audience might not know about. It is usually added below the image where it needs to be explained or at the end of the chapter.

Example 15. From case 27

ST: ちょっとたい焼きでも食おうか？

Chotto tai-yaki demo kuou ka?

TT1: Wanna grab a taiyaki

TT2: It's just some taiyaki, but shall we eat? (With addition of T/N note: taiyaki is a fish-shaped pancake filled with bean-jam)

In TT2 the addition of the translator note helps explain what it is, while in TT1 you are assumed to already know it or figure it out from the picture.

Example 16. From case 70

ST: 赫子

Kagune

TT1: Kagune

TT2: Kagune (With addition of T/N note: “Kagune” is what the ghouls’ claws are called. The Kanji for it is “Shining” and “Child”).

Here TT2 explains what *kagune* is and what the kanji means. As in example 15, TT1 just transcribes the word.

5.7 Use of swearing

While swear words in English does not quite have an equivalence in Japanese, similar intentions can be conveyed. There were some differences that could be found between TT1 and TT2 when trying to convey anger.

Example 17. From case 98

ST: く . . . っそがッ！！な . . . なんだよ それはッ！！

Ku... sso ga! !Na...nanda yo sore wa! !

TT1: You...!! What the hell... Is that?!

TT2: Fu...cker!! Wh...at the hell is that!?

In the ST we can clearly see anger from the character, from the use of くっそがッ . The difference in TT1 and TT2 is that TT2 pushes the anger a bit further, with the use of “Fucker”.

Example 18. From case 101

ST: ぎゃ . . . めろッ！！やめろオ馬鹿野郎オオ！！

Gya...mero! !Yameroo baka yarōoo! !

TT1: N-Nooo!! Stop, dumbass!!

TT2: Gah... op it!! Stop it. You fucking idiot!!

Similarly to example 1, TT2 takes it a bit further than TT1. This seems to be the trend for TT2 where they generally use harsher words than TT1.

5.8 Translation errors

Both translations have translation errors or loss in meaning, but in general TT1 have less errors than TT2. The errors will be summarized in a table and after some examples of errors will be given. The errors will be categorized into three different types depending on the severity of the error. 1 = minor error, 2 = accurate, but with some loss of meaning, 3 = not accurate.

Table 2: Translation errors

Translation	Type 1 error	Type 2 error	Type 3 error	Total
TT1 (Official)	2	5	0	7

TT2 (Scanlation)	3	4	2	9
Total	5	9	2	16

Example 19. From case 9

ST:

Character A: . . . ねえな～もう諦めていい？

Nē na ~ mō akiramete ī?

Character B: いやー . . . お願いしますよ . . .

Iya ~ onegai shimasu yo

TT1:

Character A: It's not here. Do you really need it?

Character B: Yeah... if at all possible...

TT2:

Character A: ...Not there huh-? Is it okay if we give up now?

Character B: No... Please keep searching...

In the ST it is a conversation between two characters who are slightly teasing each other. Character A wanted to just give up looking and Character B who wants him to continue. It is supposed to be a small humor sketch. While TT1 is not translated wrong if you look at the words, the joke is lost, since it feels as if the situation is more serious. TT2 does a better job at retaining the joke.

Example 20. From case 21

ST: へラ

Hera

TT1: HEH

TT2: nod

In this case, a character can be seen grinning and an onomatopoeia expression can be seen as へラ. TT1 translates it as “HEH” which works fine in the situation. TT2 used “nod”, which is a translation error since the character can clearly be seen grinning and not nodding.

Example 21. From case

ST: 無意識で手が出たのか それとも狸寝入りか . . . どっちだ？

Muishiki de te ga deta no ka soretomo tanukineiri ka dochida?

TT1: Did he reach out unconsciously? Or was he pretending to be asleep? I wonder.

TT2: His hand moved unconsciously? Or, just playing opossum...? Which is it?

A person is lying unconscious and grabs the character's leg. The character wonders if he is just faking the unconsciousness, pretending to be asleep. This is translated well in TT1, but in TT2 they try to mimic the Japanese metaphor of 狸寝入り, which involves a tanuki, or racoon dog, pretending to be asleep. TT2 tries to mimic this with a similar metaphor "playing possum", which means playing dead. This could have worked but, firstly they misspelled it to opossum instead of possum. And secondly while this metaphor might be known to native English speakers, many who read the scanlations are not native English speakers and they might not understand it.

6. Discussion

The purpose of this research was to compare the two translations of the manga Tokyo Ghoul, done by the scanlation group “Twisted Hel Scans” and the official translation published by Viz Media. This was done to see if certain trends on how they were translated could be found and also to see if there are any translation errors. When one checks fan sites, it is easy to find opinions which regard the scanlated version (Twisted Hel Scans) more highly than the official translation. This was said to be due to it being “truer” to the original, but it was supposedly also a better translation.

As this research was only done on 3 chapters of the first volume due to the time constraints, more extensive research would be needed to confirm the findings. These findings only represent the manga Tokyo Ghoul and can not be said to represent every manga, but it can help to get the bigger picture if combined with other similar research.

6.1 Foreignization and Domestication

First let us think about what these opinions from reddit supposedly could mean. When these readers talk about a translation being “truer” to the original, what is probably meant is that the translation is done a more foreignizing way. As Hasegawa (196) wrote:

“The foreignization style of translation renders the text in the TT in ways that may seem unnatural or strange in order to highlight the original characteristics of the ST, as a way of resisting the dominance of the target culture”

This means that the text is translated in a way that closely resembles the ST, at the cost of fluency, making the text seem more foreign. So, what these readers then mean is that Twisted Hel Scans translation is a text translated in a more foreignizing way when compared to the official translation. On the other spectrum we have domestication. Where the translation style focus more on the fluency of the text so that the text could be read as if the author of ST wrote it in the TL.

As Wattson (2020) talked about in his research, in the past it was generally known that the official translations were often heavily leaning towards the domestication approach, while fan-translations, or scanlations, leaned much towards the foreignizing approach. As he continues though, he talks about how the industry is changing, with the demand from the readers of more foreignizing translation. This is supposedly leading to official translations leaning away from the heavily domesticated approach and taking in elements of foreignization. At the same time scanlations are dialing down on their heavily foreignized translations and try to translate the text so that it would be easier to read.

So with this in mind, what can then be said about the official translation and scanlation of Tokyo Ghoul? The hypothesis was that the scanlation would be a

more foreignized translation and that the official would be a more domesticated translation.

It turned out that this could indeed be seen in the translations. The easiest way to notice this is the use of honorifics. Honorifics is something not commonly used in the West. When we talk, we usually refer to each other by name alone. It could of course depend on the type of relationship between people. In Japan this is not the case. You only use the first name to family members or very close friends. Usually, one would add the suffix of *-san*, *kun*, *-chan* or similar. That is why, when translating this into English, to make it sound natural to an English speaker, you would just translate the name. While if you would want to keep this foreign element, you would keep it. As can be seen in example 6, 西尾さん (*Nishio-san*) is translated in TT1 (Official) as just “Nishio”, while TT2 (Twisted Hel Scans) keep it as it is and use “Nishio-san”. The same thing is done with similar suffixes, and it is used throughout the whole volume. One outlier could be observed though. As seen in example 7, there is one case where TT1 chooses to translate the suffix. This is when a character is calling her older friend from work. In this case it is translated as “Mr. Yomo” which is correctly translated as *-san* is translated to either “Mr” or “Mrs”. The odd thing about this is that in the rest of the manga she never refers to him as “Mr. Yomo” again, but rather uses “Yomo”. The reason is possibly that they are talking over the phone, and she would supposedly not know who the person picking up the phone is and might be more cautious. Either way the *-san* part is not kept as it is in TT2. Likewise, the use of 先輩 (*senpai*) and similar honorifics are transferred by TT2 while TT1 removes them and use either the name or “you”. This can be seen in example 8.

As can be seen in examples 9-11, TT2 tries to mimic the sentence structure of the ST as much as possible even if it results in some sentences ending up being harder to read and even some confusion of the meaning. This points towards a foreignizing style of translation.

In example 11 we can see the use of brackets in the original and the use of dots. The brackets are used to emphasize these words in Japanese, but in English we use brackets when we want to quote something. So, when TT2 translates it as "claw" and "Kagune", one might think that these words refer to something someone else has said. This shows that TT2 tries to be loyal and “true” to the original, but sometimes misses the point. We can also see how the sentence structure with the dots being places very similar to the original as well as the same amount.

In example 9, we see the sentence ヒデはあの先輩と仲良いの? (*Hide wa ano senpai to nakayoi no?*). In this situation we have the main character having a conversation with his best friend about an older student that he just met, and he asks him if he gets along with that person. TT1 translates it as “Are you pretty close to him?”, which seems like what you would normally say if you were talking to your friend. TT2 translates it as “Hide, are you good friends with that senpai?”. Notice here that they made sure to both keep “Hide”, the person he is talking to, and “senpai” the person they are talking about. Normally since you are already talking to each other you would not use that person’s name again in English, it is

already understood that he is asking this question to Hide. We can also see here again the difference in translation of senpai. So TT2 at the cost of a more fluent sentence, chooses to keep “Hide” in the sentence even if it is clearly already understood, to try and be as close to the original as possible.

6.2 Other differences

Another big difference that can easily be noticed when comparing the translations is how they handle the text in the background and onomatopoeic and mimetic expressions.

Background text is text that is written in the background that such as text on signs or the title of a book. Such text is often not vital to the story itself, as it is part of the background, and one could in most cases guess the context from the image alone. In the example 4 we see one such case. In this situation, the characters are talking, and, in the background, we can see a cd-case lying on a table. The case has the title 大学生物学 (*Daigaiiku seibutsugaku*). TT1 translates it as “College Biology”, but TT2 chooses to not translate it at all. A similar case can be seen in example 5. This is a trend that continued throughout the research. One could argue that TT2 chooses to not translate the background text because they do not want to change the original image. This seems unlikely though, and the reason is probably due to the team not having someone experienced enough, who could remove the original Japanese text and add the new English text, from the image. It could be said that choosing to not translate it gives off a less professional impression. Which is why, if it was not translated in an official translation, it could have been seen as a bigger mistake.

Another problem is the translation of onomatopoeic and mimetic expressions. These expressions are often written in the background and are there to enhance the actions that are talking place in the images. Similarly to the problem with background text, as stated before, TT2 in almost all cases does not remove the original Japanese text from the images but rather leave it there. In about half of the cases the expressions are not translated, and in the other ones the translations are written next to the expression or at the corner of the image. In TT1 they are always translated, except in one case where the expression was removed.

Looking at the cases where both groups have translated the expressions, they are quite similar in most cases. What can be seen though is in TT1, where they shorten verbs. In example 12, we can see two such cases. In the first one a person is sorting through some items making a rustling sound. TT2 translates it simply as “rustle rustle”, but TT1 chooses to shorten it into “RSTL RSTL”. Similarly in the next case a chewing noise is translated as “CHEW CHEW CHEW” in TT2 and “CHW CHW CHW” in TT1. This shortening of the verbs could be an attempt to make them seem more like sound effects rather than writing the full text.

Another small difference that could be seen was the use of “translator notes”. This is a short extra note from the translator team that often explains a cultural term or

word that might not be commonly known in the target culture. One such case is example 15. In this case they are eating something called *Taiyaki*. Both translations choose to transfer the term *Taiyaki*, but TT2 also adds a note at the side of the image explaining what a *Taiyaki* is. This information is not vital to the story but might be interesting for the reader to further understand the context. Febretti (86) argues in his paper that this is something unique to scanlation and is often not seen in other type of translations when it comes to comics. He writes that translating cultural term can often become a problem but using translator notes is a way to solve this. Such notes were not used in the official translation and the reader is rather supposed to understand it from the context of the text and/or picture. As to why the official translation choose to not use translator notes, it could be argued that the page might look more cluttered and the focus might move away from the picture to the explanation instead, which could break the immersion. It could also be due to that it might look less professional. One solution could be to have a page at the end of the chapter where such terms would be explained, so not to break immersion, but still providing knowledge for those who want to learn.

Finally, there was a small difference in the use of swearing in both translations. TT2 using much cruder language than TT1 in the case of swearing. This could be due to that the TT1 is in a more professional environment and might hold back on the nastier words. It is hard to say for certain without interviewing the translators, since the translations per se is not wrong and it could just be up to personal preference.

6.3 Quality of translation

Another argument from the posts on reddit that the scanlation was preferred, was that the scanlation was also a “better” translation. Judging from the comments that were posted, it was claimed that the official translation had more mistranslations and was generally a less accurate translation. While this is always subjective to each person, some grounds for whether this is true or not can be found. It is also worth noting that to be able to rightfully make these claims one would also have to have access to the original in Japanese and be able to understand it.

The first problem when talking about the translations is the problem of translating the many cases of *ateji* in the manga. Basically, *ateji* is words that can be read in two ways. This is done to place extra meaning to a word or how the author intended the reader to read it. In almost every case of *ateji* both translations fail to carry over this double meaning. To see that *ateji* was such a big translation problem was suprising. It could be worth for further research to focus solely on this translation problem with more extensive research.

While both translations had some minor translation errors, where there was a slight loss in meaning, TT2 with 3 errors had 1 more than TT1. That said, there were some cases of severe loss of meaning in TT2 such as in example 20 or 21. In example 20, we can see the main character grinning uncomfortably. The expression here is へら (hera) which TT1 translates as “HEH”. TT2 on the other

hand translates it as “nod”. The character is not nodding as can be seen in the picture, nor is he agreeing to something in the context. This is a simple mistranslation.

Another case is example 21. The problem in this sentence is the それとも狸寝入りか (*soretomo tanukineiri ka*) part. As explained in the analysis section, the idea in TT2 of translating the Japanese expression into a similar expression in English could have been a good idea. But since scanlation usually are aimed towards an international audience and non-native speakers might not pick up on the meaning. It could have been a better choice to just explain it as was done in TT1.

But the translation problem where both translations had the most errors in was the translation of *ateji*. Both translations struggled with translating the double meaning of the *ateji*, with often just choosing one of the meanings which results in a loss of meaning. There was one case in example 3 where TT2 managed to translate it and keeping both meanings. This shows that the translation of *ateji* seem to be a big problem when translating and it might be worth looking further into translation strategies for it.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, could we notice any trends on how both translation groups chose to translate the manga? Yes, from the data collected one can gather that TT2 (Twisted Hel Scans) is using a more foreignizing approach when translating. This confirms the comments from reddit claiming that translation is “truer” to the original, if “truer” means a more foreignizing translation. This could be seen in the use of honorifics with the suffix such as *-san*, *-kun*, *-chan* and also the use of *senpai* and similar titles. It could also be seen through the sentence structure where TT2 tried to have a very similar sentence structure to the ST, keeping pauses and the use of brackets. The cost of this was that the flow of the text often suffered, but the foreign elements were kept.

TT1 uses some foreignizing approaches when translating such as transferring some Japanese words. Overall TT1 does change the sentence structure to favor a more readable text. It could be said be leaning more towards domestication, but with some foreignizing aspects as well.

As for the other aspect of the research concerning the quality of the translations, where the reddit opinions seemed to think TT2 was of better quality, this seems to be false. From the data collected, TT2 had more translation errors in total, which was 9 errors while TT1 had 7 errors. TT2 also had two serious errors such as in example 20 and 21, while TT1 did not have any serious errors. So overall the quality of TT1 could be said to be better than that of TT2. But does this result in a more likable translation? This is subjective, since judging from the readers reactions on reddit, they seem to generally prefer a more foreignizing translation even if it suffers in quality.

Noticeably, there was also the problem of translating the many cases of *ateji* in the manga, where both translations failed to carry over the double meaning and instead chose one of them.

Other interesting findings found out that TT2 generally did not translate any of the background text, it also roughly only translated half of the onomatopoeic and mimetic expressions found in the cases. TT1(official) translated everything but chose to try and shorten the verbs used in the onomatopoeic and mimetic expressions to make them seem more like sound effects.

TT2 also made us of translator notes to explain some cultural terms, while TT1 left it up to the context to explain it.

Finally, as to the reason why people might prefer the scanlation over the official translation, people seem to prefer a more foreignized translation which the scanlation is. But when it comes to the quality of the translation, it could be argued that the official is of higher quality since it has less translation errors. The reason could also be as Dybała (2020) talked about in his paper about “rooted translation”, that the first translation is often seen as the “correct” translation since it came first and that is what the readers will compare later translations to. It could

also be due to the fact that scanlations are available for free and are most of the time available much earlier than any official translation.

As this research is very limited in term of quantity, a larger scale research would be needed to confirm the findings. The translations are also quite old, Twisted Hel Scan's translation being published in 2013 and Viz Media's translation in 2015, research on newer translations could lead to different findings. Further research about the use of *ateji* in the manga series could be an interesting topic to find out more about as it seemed like the biggest translation problem for both groups. It could also be interesting to carry out interviews with the translation teams to hear their motivations to their translations.

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