SWEARING IN SUBTITLES

A study of the use and translation of swear words in English and Danish based on the criticism of the English subtitles in the Danish crime series The Killing (Forbrydelsen).

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1. Introduction

Swearing is something that most people have an opinion about. Some people swear frequently, while others may be repulsed by the use of swear words. But the fact is that swearing is a natural part of the language, and most people swear in one way or another although they claim that they never swear. Because language and society are both in constant development, some swear words eventually lose their effect, or they are not considered swear words anymore. There may be certain variations from one language and culture to another as to which types of words are considered swear words, which are most frequently used, and which are considered most severe. Swear words derive from so-called taboo areas in our lives, which is the reason why they have the power to offend, shock, persuade or amuse, depending on the situation.

Swearing has also become more frequent on television in recent years. This does not necessarily mean that people swear more today, but it may be an indication that swearing is less taboo than it previously has been. Nevertheless, many people find the use of swear words on television inappropriate, especially because television forms such a great part of our lives. People may find that swearing on television has a bad influence on especially children, but at the same time, the language use on television often reflects how people speak in real life.

The major impact of swear words was underlined in the autumn of 2011, when the British media informed that the subtitling of a Danish series broadcast on BBC Four contained far too many severe swear words compared to the original dialogue. The series in question was *The Killing*, which in Danish is entitled *Forbrydelsen*. It was broadcast on Danish television in the spring of 2007 and proved to be highly popular among Danish viewers. It was written by Søren Sveistrup and produced by DR, Denmark’s national broadcasting corporation. The series was also broadcast in several other countries and received a number of nominations and awards, including the BAFTA Award in 2011, and its popularity even resulted in a US remake.

*The Killing* was broadcast in the UK on BBC Four from January to March 2011. It received a warm welcome and was described as “the best series currently on TV” (Jarossi 2011). But before the second series was to be broadcast in November 2011, various British newspapers wrote that the
viewers could expect to see some changes in the subtitles. Due to a viewer complaint following the first series, the BBC had ostensibly found itself obliged to ask the subtitling company responsible for subtitling the series to tone down the swearing in the second series. The discontented viewer had found it unsatisfactory that relatively mild Danish swear words had been translated almost exclusively into *fuck*. This has motivated me to take a closer look at the subtitling of *The Killing* and what has caused this criticism.

**Therefore, the aim of this thesis is to study how the subtitler has dealt with the translation of Danish swear words in the subtitling of *The Killing* with special focus on the alleged overuse of the word *fuck* and intensification of relatively mild Danish swear words.**

Since swear words are claimed to have a much stronger effect in writing than in speech, extra caution is called for in the subtitling of swear words (Lindberg 1989). But what actually characterises a swear word, and why are some swear words considered to be stronger than others? Are there any differences between Danish and English swear words or the taboo areas from which they derive? What is the general attitude towards swearing on television, and are there any restrictions pertaining to swear words in the audiovisual media? These are some of the questions that I will attempt to answer in this thesis.

Given that this thesis deals with the subtitling of swear words, chapter 2 will present the field of audiovisual translation. In section 2.1, an historic overview of audiovisual translation will be provided, while audiovisual translation will be defined in section 2.2. Section 2.3 will present the three dominant types of audiovisual translation, namely subtitling, dubbing and voice-over, with special focus on various factors related to subtitling, such as the time and space constraints, the switch from the spoken to the written mode and the feedback effect. In section 2.4, it will be discussed whether the UK should be characterised as a subtitling or a dubbing nation, since English-speaking countries do not make use of audiovisual translation to the same extent as the rest of the world. Section 2.5 will deal with why some scholars have been reluctant to refer to audiovisual translation as translation, while section 2.6 will discuss some of the main points of criticism of the applied theory. Throughout the years, a great number of scholars have dealt with subtitling and audiovisual translation in general, and some of the most influential ones are Gottlieb (1997, 1998, 2004, 2005, 2008a, 2008b, 2009) and Diaz Cintas (2004, 2007).
Swearing, which will be dealt with in chapter 3, has not been studied to the same degree as audiovisual translation and subtitling, but a number of scholars have sought to account for this very complex phenomenon, including Ljung (1984, 2011), Andersson and Trudgill (1990), Rathje (2005, 2010, 2011) and Allan and Burridge (2006). Section 3.1 will focus on what characterises swear words and what differentiates them from taboo language in general. Swear words derive from so-called taboo areas in our lives, which is the reason why they have the power to evoke a certain reaction in people. The taboo areas religion, diseases, sex and bodily effluvia and euphemisms will be discussed in section 3.2. In section 3.3, a typology of swearing will be presented based on the swear words that form part of the collected data, while section 3.4 will discuss various motives for swearing.

Swearing may be subject to a certain degree of regulation in the form of social constraints reflecting the values of society. These are so-called norms, stating what is and what is not appropriate behaviour, and non-conforming behaviour is likely to be a source of discontent. Norms will be discussed in chapter 4. Section 4.1 will briefly touch upon Descriptive Translation Studies, to which various scholars in norm theory adhere. In section 4.2 on norm theory, it will be discussed what characterises norms and whether they are descriptive or prescriptive, while translation norms will be dealt with in section 4.3. Norms play a major role in subtitling, and these will be discussed in section 4.4, and section 4.5 will discuss previous studies on swearing in subtitles. Toury (1995), Chesterman (1997) and Hermans (1999) are some of the most influential scholars to have dealt with norms in translation, and whose theories Pedersen (2011) has applied to his research into norms in subtitling.

Norms are one of the numerous parameters that a subtitler should take into consideration in connection with the presentation of subtitles. Conversely, such parameters may also give an indication of why a subtitler has made the decisions that he has. Influencing parameters will be discussed in chapter 5. Section 5.1 will discuss various parameters found on a general level pertaining to the subtitling situation as a whole, while section 5.2 will discuss parameters pertaining to individual translation problems. The influencing parameters presented in this thesis will be based on Nedergaard-Larsen (1992), Georgakopoulou (2009) and Pedersen (2011).
The analysis of the collected data will be conducted in chapter 6. The data consist of all the swear words used in both the original dialogue and the subtitles in the entire first series of *The Killing*. The series comprises 20 episodes, and each episode lasts approximately 55 minutes, which amounts to 1100 minutes of data altogether. The large amount of data enables me to study not only the translation of various Danish swear words into *fuck* as isolated pairs, but measured against the total number and various types of swear words in the series.

Section 6.1 will contain a presentation of *The Killing*, various factors relating to the subtitling situation and a discussion of the criticism that the subtitles have been subject to. Subsequently, an empirical study of the collected data will be conducted, consisting of both a quantitative and a qualitative analysis. The quantitative analysis will be conducted in section 6.2, in which I am going to study the number of swear words in the original dialogue compared with the number of swear words in the subtitles, and establish whether there is a difference between the two – that is, whether there has been a reduction or an increase. Furthermore, I am going to establish which types of swear words are most frequently used in both the original dialogue and the subtitles, including the number of instances of the word *fuck* in the subtitles compared with the original dialogue. Finally, there will be a discussion on the results of the quantitative analysis.

The criticism of the subtitles draws special attention to the severity or offensiveness of swear words, both of which reflect a subjective attitude towards certain swear words. But while offensiveness seems to reflect dislike, severity refers to the perceived strength of certain swear words. Both terms will be used throughout this thesis, but perceived severity is the term that will be used in connection with studies conducted on swear words, and it is also the term used in a British study, commissioned by the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA), the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), the Broadcasting Standards Commission (BSC) and the Independent Television Commission (ITC) in 2000. In order to assess the degree to which intensification has taken place in the subtitles, I have conducted a study which primarily is to establish the perceived severity of the Danish swear words that form part of the data, and which is to support an already existing study in the area conducted by Rathje and Grann (2011). These studies will be further discussed in section 6.3.
The qualitative analysis will be conducted in section 6.4 and will primarily focus on the use and
translation of the word *fuck* based on the results of the quantitative analysis and the established
severity of the various swear words that form part of the original dialogue. Section 6.4.1 will focus
on the use of *fuck* in the original dialogue, and how the subtitler has dealt with this in the subtitles.
Section 6.4.2 will establish which Danish swear words in the original dialogue have been rendered
as *fuck* in the subtitles, and where they are ranked in terms of severity in comparison to both each
other and to *fuck*. While section 6.4.2.1 will solely focus on episode 15, which is the episode that
contains most instances of the word *fuck* in the subtitles, section 6.4.2.2 will focus on the use of
*fuck* in the rest of the series. All the examples will be supported by a transcription of the context in
which the word *fuck* appears in order to establish whether and how this may have had an influence
on the decisions that the subtitler had made. The results of the qualitative analysis will be discussed
in section 6.4.3. Section 6.5 will continue the discussion on swearing in general, and the attitudes
towards swearing in the audiovisual media in Denmark and the UK.

Throughout the thesis, I am going to discuss the terms source text and target text. But instead of
writing the words in full, I am going to use the abbreviations below:

Source text = ST
Target text = TT
2. Audiovisual translation

This chapter will present the field of audiovisual translation, and the various aspects of the field will be discussed with special focus on subtitling. Section 2.1 will give a brief historic overview of audiovisual translation, while audiovisual translation will be defined in section 2.2. Section 2.3 will look into the various types of audiovisual translation, whereas 2.4 will focus on the UK as either a subtitling or a dubbing nation. Section 2.5 will contain a brief discussion of whether audiovisual translation actually is translation, and section 2.6 will present some points of criticism in connection with the translation theory discussed in this chapter.

2.1 Historic overview

Audiovisual translation has come to play a major role in the lives of people all over the world, who spend a fair amount of time every day on audiovisual materials. However, when the silent film was introduced around the beginning of the 20th century, translation was not a necessity as the film medium removed all language barriers through its universal means of expression. Both the printed word and the radio required that the receivers understood the language being spoken, but the cross-cultural codes of the silent film made it possible for all viewers to create their own dialogue using the power of imagination. Shortly after, however, so-called intertitles were introduced, which were cardboard signs that presented key points in the story line, and they were inserted between the scenes or after a mute utterance. Although these cardboard signs needed to be translated into different languages, it was not until the late 1920s through the first sound film, the American production *The Jazz Singer*, that the world in earnest was introduced to audiovisual translation. The sound film implied that not only short sentences but the entire dialogue had to be translated, and thus the two methods that are still used today – namely *subtitling* and *dubbing* – were developed (Gottlieb 2008b: 207-208).

Audiovisual translation has received much attention throughout recent years due to the increasing international exchange of film and TV productions, which has created a major need for audiovisual translation (Díaz Cintas and Remael 2007: 8). However, the exchange of audiovisual material has

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1 The cardboard signs were known as *subtitles* until the introduction of sound film, when they were renamed *intertitles* (Gottlieb 2008b: 207)
proven to be somewhat asymmetric. Ever since the 1930s, Anglophone film productions have dominated cinema theatres throughout the world, and today, Anglophone imports in the form of film, DVD and TV productions far exceed the number of domestic productions in most European countries and thus constitute a major part of the international entertainment industry (Gottlieb 2008b: 208). On the other hand, foreign-language productions do not have a large market share in the UK and the US, which may reflect a lack of interest in watching subtitled or dubbed foreign-language films among Anglophone audiences, who share the preference for Anglophone productions with the rest of the world (Gottlieb 2009: 21-22).

So historically, the main function of audiovisual translation has been to make foreign-language productions understandable to a specific language group. However, audiovisual translation is also used as a means to increase the sale of domestic productions from small language communities, which means that audiovisual translation serves as a marketing instrument in the distribution of a production. Furthermore, a certain broadcaster or programme provider may also arrange for the production of an audiovisual translation (Luyken et al. 1991: 11).

2.2 Definition of audiovisual translation

While the previous section provided an overview of the history and function of audiovisual translation, this section will focus on defining the term. As mentioned in the previous section, the field of audiovisual translation has received much attention throughout recent years, which has resulted in a vast number of publications within both audiovisual translation and the different types of audiovisual translation.

Gottlieb defines audiovisual translation as “the translation of transient polysemiotic texts presented on screen to mass audiences” (2008b: 205-206). This definition underlines that audiovisual translation does not refer to just any kind of translation presented on screen, but is restricted to so-called transient texts, including films in cinema theatres, material broadcast on TV screens, DVDs and videogames. This definition excludes static material, such as e-mails and web pages, where the audience is in control of how long the text is presented on screen.
Gottlieb also defines audiovisual texts as *polysemiotic*, which is a term that refers to the multiple parallel channels of communication that the subtitler needs to take into consideration when translating, and which can either support or constrain the subtitler in his work. Unlike polysemiotic texts, *monosemiotic* texts, such as books, consist of only one channel of communication. Gottlieb distinguishes between four different communicative channels in the audiovisual media (1997: 89):

1. The verbal audio channel: dialogue, background voices, lyrics
2. The non-verbal audio channel: (background) music and sound effects
3. The verbal visual channel: captions and written signs in the image
4. The non-verbal visual channel: picture composition and flow

The three dominant types of audiovisual translation are *subtitling*, *dubbing* and *voice-over*. What characterises all three types is that they are *intrasemiotic*. Roman Jakobson (1959) established three types of translation, namely *intralingual*, *interlingual* and *intersemiotic* (Díaz Cintas and Remael 2007: 8-10). However, Gottlieb includes intrasemiotic translation as yet another type in his classification of translation types, which serves as an umbrella term for both intralingual and interlingual translation. While intersemiotic translation refers to the translation between semiotically different entities – that is, there is a difference between the communicative channel/s used in the ST and the TT – intrasemiotic translation refers to the translation between identical semiotic systems. As shown above, the different channels of communication in translation can be both verbal and non-verbal. However, intralingual and interlingual translation is always verbal. The difference between the two is that intralingual translation involves only one language, while interlingual translation refers to the translation between two different languages (2008a: 43-48).

**2.3 Types of audiovisual translation**

There are different strengths and limitations connected to each of the three types of audiovisual translation, and although some countries have experimented with different types, most countries have a history of favouring one specific type. The three dominant types of audiovisual translation will be elaborated on below with primary focus on subtitling.
2.3.1 Subtitling

The inclusion of several communicative channels in connection with subtitling finds expression in Diaz Cintas and Remael’s definition of subtitling (2007: 8), which is described as:

“… a translation practice that consists of presenting a written text, generally on the lower part of the screen, that endeavours to recount the original dialogue of the speakers, as well as the discursive elements that appear in the image […], and the information that is contained on the soundtrack […].”

There are two main types of subtitling, which have already been presented in connection with the different types of translation – namely intralingual and interlingual subtitling (Gottlieb 1997: 71). According to Gottlieb, this means that subtitling is a type of intrasemiotic translation. However, Assis Rosa (2001: 213-214) argues that subtitling should be characterised as intersemiotic due to the shift from speech to writing, which furthermore implies a change in the channels of communication from mainly verbal audio to verbal visual. But Gottlieb states that because subtitling “operates within the confines of the film and TV media, and stays within the code of verbal language” (Gottlieb 1997: 111), it is considered intrasemiotic. Furthermore, the shift from speech to writing and the change of channels does not imply an alteration of the original. The verbal visual channel is already present in the original through captions and written signs, which means that the semiotic composition is maintained although the semiotic balance between the different channels undoubtedly changes (Gottlieb 2008a: 56).

Gottlieb defines the shift from speech to writing that characterises subtitling as diamesic translation (2008b: 208):

“Subtitling can be defined as diamesic translation in polysemiotic media (including films, TV, video and DVD) in the form of one or more lines of written text presented on the screen in sync with the original dialogue.”

The figure below shows that diamesic, interlingual translation is a diagonal process, in that the foreign-language dialogue in the spoken mode is presented in the written mode in the target language:
The figure also shows that intralingual subtitling is a vertical type of translation. Intralingual subtitling includes subtitling programmes for the deaf and hard of hearing, for instance, where spoken information in one particular language is rendered in writing in the same language (Gottlieb 2008a: 57-58). Dubbing and voice-over, on the other hand, are examples of horizontal translation processes. Furthermore, dubbing and voice-over are isomesic, meaning that the translation takes place from one language into another without changing the language mode (Gottlieb 2008a: 46). Given that that intersemiotic translation types imply a change in the sign system, they cannot be placed in the figure above, which only comprises verbal channels of communication. Audio description, for instance, a means to help blind and visually impaired by adding narration and making non-verbal information verbal, is an example of intersemiotic translation (Gottlieb 2008a: 43).

What also distinguishes subtitling from other types of translation is that the subtitles are presented on the screen at the same time as the original, which means that the viewers are able to make an instant comparison between the two. This makes subtitling particularly vulnerable, and is also the reason why subtitles are frequently subject to criticism (Díaz Cintas and Remael 2007: 55-57). Subtitling is sometimes referred to as ‘constrained’ translation. All types of translation are constrained in one way or another, but the constraints related to subtitling are infamous (Pedersen 2011: 18). This also means that there has been a certain reluctance to refer to subtitling as translation. This is especially the result of two different factors, namely condensation and the shift
of language mode. The condensation factor is based on the quantitative constraints of time and space. Subtitling does not leave room for more than about 70 characters per subtitle consisting of two lines, which should be displayed on the screen for approximately 6 seconds, taking into account the average reading speed of the viewers (Gottlieb 2008b: 208-210).

There are several factors that may affect the reading speed of the viewers. If the non-verbal visual channel is in focus, the viewers may need more time to read the subtitles, as distinct from a non-action packed scene where the subtitles and the dialogue coincide, in which case it is easier for the viewers to follow the subtitles (Pedersen 2011: 20). However, there are additional important factors that make it difficult to lay down rules regarding reading speed, such as whether the viewers are familiar with the ST language, and whether the film or programme is watched on DVD, in the cinema or on TV (Ivarsson and Carroll 1998: 65).

The second factor mentioned above is the shift of language mode, which has also been referred to as diamesic translation. Much of the condensation in subtitles is a natural consequence of diamesic translation, as written language is more concise than spoken language. To a large extent, spoken language is characterised by spontaneous speech and other oral features that are sometimes considered redundant although they may be of stylistic importance, such as cursing, slang, colloquialisms and repetitions. This may be very unfortunate in those cases where the viewers are only presented with a sanitised version of the original dialogue, deprived of linguistic nuances that may play an important role in creating the different characters and the atmosphere in general. To some, the necessity to reduce the original dialogue in the subtitles may also be an excuse to leave out certain elements considered either controversial or unmanageable (Gottlieb 2008b: 232-233).

Due to the fact that subtitling is an overt type of translation, the so-called feedback effect from both the verbal and the visual channels is unleashed. The feedback effect can either support or constrain the subtitler in his work. If the viewers understand some or much of the original dialogue, it may result in criticism if recognisable words from the original dialogue are lacking in the subtitles, as the viewers may think that the subtitler has forgotten to translate the words in question. Furthermore, it may also cause some dissatisfaction if the length of the subtitles does not match the length of what has been uttered (Díaz Cintas and Remael 2007: 55-57).
However, a quantitative reduction in the subtitles in connection with spontaneous speech or refraining from rendering the verbal style of the actors is not necessarily equivalent to stylistic or semantic loss, but may rather enhance the understanding of the message. This is referred to as *intrasemiotic redundancy*. Furthermore, the feedback from the other semiotic channels, referred to as *intersemiotic redundancy*, such as intonation, body language, facial expressions and background images, also makes up for much of the information lost in the subtitles. Yet, any discrepancy between the tone of voice or facial expressions and the subtitles may also give rise to criticism (Gottlieb 1998: 247).

### 2.3.2 Revoicing

A different type of audiovisual translation is termed *revoicing*, which can be further divided into four sub-groups: *dubbing*, *commentary*, *simultaneous TV interpreting* and *voice-over* (Gottlieb 2008b: 215). Dubbing and voice-over, however, are the most frequently used types and are the only ones used in connection with films and series. Revoicing implies the replacement of the foreign-language dialogue with the domestic language. However, while there is no feedback from the original dialogue in connection with dubbing, voice-over does not aim at synchrony between the translation and the original dialogue.

#### 2.3.2.1 Dubbing or post-synchronisation

Dubbing is an isomesic, *covert* type of translation, as it implies the revoicing of each of the voices in the original dialogue by same-sex voices in the target language, thus hiding the original dialogue. This gives the viewers the feeling of watching an original version, which also places great demands on synchronisation at different levels ranging from lip-synchronisation to matching the actors’ personalities at the same time as retaining idiomaticity (Gottlieb 2008b: 216-217).

Dubbing is a much more expensive and time-consuming mode of audiovisual translation than subtitling, since dubbing requires a whole new cast of actors. According to Luyken et al. (1991: 105), dubbing is 15 times more expensive than subtitling, although these figures are rather dated
and only show the average cost of subtitling and dubbing in Europe. But newer figures still show that dubbing is ten times more expensive than subtitling (Pedersen 2011: 6).

In the major Western European countries, i.e. Spain, Italy, Germany and France, dubbing is the main type of audiovisual translation and has been since the 1930s (Gottlieb 2008b: 216). There are many reasons as to why some countries have chosen dubbing over subtitling throughout the years, such as high illiteracy, promotion of the local language, or the reason may lie in the nationalistic history of the countries. Under the fascist rule in Italy and Spain and the Nazi rule in Germany, the use of foreign languages on the silver screen was prohibited or limited. However, it is not possible to apply the same yardstick to all countries, as France has never been fascist, and Portugal has never prohibited subtitling despite it being fascist (Pedersen 2011: 5).

In subtitling nations such as Denmark and Scandinavia in general, together with other minor European speech communities, dubbing is not very common and is only found in connection with animated films, cartoons and other programmes for children. It has often been stated that dubbing is the main type of audiovisual translation in language communities with more than 25 million people. This is true when it comes to the Western European countries, but there are certain deviations to this norm as the medium and genre also play a major role when choosing audiovisual translation type. Children’s programmes, for instance, are typically dubbed in most countries, while niche films are often subtitled even in traditional dubbing countries (Pedersen 2011: 6-7).

2.3.2.2 Voice-over

Voice-over is a much cheaper version of dubbing, as it only requires a minimum of actors, but still it is twice as expensive as subtitling (Luyken et al. 1991: 105). Voice-over differs from dubbing in that the original dialogue can still be heard vaguely, and no demands are imposed on lip synchronisation. What also differentiates voice-over from dubbing is that voice-over can be both isomesic and diamesic – isomesic because verbal sound is revoiced, and diamesic because verbal images, such as street signs, headlines and post-produced captions, are also revoiced (Gottlieb 2008b: 223-226). However, this must also imply that subtitling can be isomesic as well in connection with the subtitling of the verbal visual channel.
There are two types of voice-over. Third-person voice-over or reporting is mostly used in Western European countries in connection with children’s programmes. The only voiced-over TV programmes in Denmark in recent years are children’s films, mainly Swedish films based on the children’s books written by Astrid Lindgren. First-person voice-over or recital is mostly used in Eastern European countries in connection with all types of TV fiction. In the UK, however, especially interviews are frequently voiced-over, but also news and documentaries throughout the world may be voiced-over (Gottlieb 2008b: 223-226).

2.4 Is the UK a subtitling or dubbing nation?

There tends to be some disagreement as to whether to refer to the UK as a dubbing or a subtitling nation. According to the statement above saying that dubbing is used in countries with more than 25 million inhabitants, dubbing should be the preferred type of audiovisual translation in the UK. Gottlieb (1997: 254) has previously expressed that:

“Straddling the fence, Britain has formed a tradition of dubbing foreign-language films and television programmes aimed at a mass audience, whereas ‘art movies’ are shown with English subtitles.”

More recently, however, Gottlieb has stated that dubbing has “cemented its status” in the UK, which he categorises as a dubbing nation along with Spain, France, Germany and Italy (2008b: 239). Pedersen, on the other hand, states on this matter that (2011: 4):

“The U.K., for instance, is normally labelled a subtitling country […] and in a sense, this is correct, as the very rare foreign-language products broadcast in Britain tend to be subtitled.”

But he underlines that labelling countries as either the one or the other may be somewhat misleading, due to the fact that many countries make use of more than one type of audiovisual translation depending on the medium and the genre, and DVDs often allow the viewers to choose which mode they prefer. Furthermore, there is a major difference in the number of imported foreign-language productions in different countries. Therefore, it is impossible to place the UK in
the same category as the Scandinavian countries, for instance, which import a great deal of foreign-language productions and subtitle most of them, while the number of foreign-language productions in the UK is very limited in comparison (Pedersen 2011: 4-5). Luyken et al. (1991: 31-32) also stress the difficulty of categorising the UK as either a subtitling or a dubbing nation:

“Great Britain and Ireland belong to the large Anglophone audiovisual market and are neither classical “subtitling” nor “dubbing” countries, but use these Language Transfer mechanisms as needed and in a mixed manner.”

Whether subtitled or dubbed, foreign-language productions are not the preferred type of entertainment among English-speaking people. Especially in the US, there is a tendency to produce remakes of foreign-language films instead of relying on audiovisual translation. If it is estimated that the intended viewers only have limited interest in the source culture and setting of a film whose story line is interesting, total remakes can be the solution (Gottlieb 2009: 23). This has been done in connection with the Danish crime series The Killing, dealt with in this thesis, and several other Scandinavian films, such as the Swedish production The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo (Mænd der hader kvinder) and the Danish Brothers (Brødre).

### 2.5 Is audiovisual translation translation?

Two widely discussed issues within audiovisual translation are the name of this particular field, and how it relates to the overall term translation studies. These issues are of special interest due to the frequently raised question of whether audiovisual translation – and especially subtitling – actually is translation. To many people, the term translation mainly refers to the translation of books or other written text, but the vast amount of translated material today includes so much more than literature. According to Gottlieb (2008a: 42), translation is “any process, or product hereof, in which a text is replaced by another text reflecting, or inspired by, the original entity”, which leads us further to the definition of text as “any communicative system working through the combination of sensory signs”. This implies that a text consists of the entire context in which the verbal material is expressed (Pedersen 2011: 10-11).
The discussion of which term to use is also a question of which term best describes the activity. Díaz Cintas and Remael use the term audiovisual translation (AVT), which they claim “has been gaining ground in recent years and is fast becoming the standard referent” (2007: 12). Gottlieb, on the other hand, prefers screen translation, although he acknowledges that the term is not quite satisfactory given that it may be misunderstood as including all types of translation on screen. In fact, he prefers the Danish term billedmødieoversættelse, which literally means ‘picture media translation’ (2008b: 205). A further term suggested by Gambier and Gottlieb (2001: viii-xx) is multimedia translation, but which according to Díaz Cintas and Remael is too broad and lacks some boundaries (2007: 12). The discussion on which term is most suitable continues, but audiovisual translation is the term that will be used in this thesis, because it implies that both the visual and the audio channels of communication must be taken into consideration in connection with translation types such as subtitling.

Some terms that have been used to describe the activity do reflect a reluctance to regard audiovisual translation as translation, such as language transfer suggested by Luyken et al. (1991: 11). Díaz Cintas and Remael also mention adaption as yet another term preferred by many scholars instead of audiovisual translation and the like. However, they do believe that most scholars today regard translation as a more flexible term capable of including different modes of translation, since the notion of translation has changed throughout the years with the invention of the cinema, the television and the computer (2007: 9-11).

Different text types and different media impose various kinds of constraints on the translator, leaving him with different ways of handling the translation and solving the issues at hand. A translation can never be a copy of the original, and there are no definite solutions either. However, the translator always needs to exploit the linguistic and technical means at hand and take into consideration not only the different channels of communication but also the viewers (Gottlieb 1997: 109-110).

2.6 Criticism of translation theory

There appears to be some discrepancy between Gottlieb’s definitions of subtitling over the years, especially regarding the terms diasemiotic and diamesic, both of which have been used to define
subtitling. Gottlieb’s definition of subtitling cited in section 2.3.1 on diamesic translation can also be found in one of his earlier publications, but where he states that “[s]ubtitling can be defined as “diasemiotic translation in polysemiotic media…” (2004: 220). The term diasemiotic has not been presented earlier, but what characterises diasemiotic translation is that the communicative channel/s in the original and the translation differ from each other, although the number of channels remains unaltered, which furthermore means that it is intersemiotic (Gottlieb 2008a: 43-45).

Gottlieb has also previously stated that: “… subtitling – although diasemiotic – is still considered intrasemiotic.” (2005: 11). What he meant was that despite the use of different channels, verbal information is still rendered verbally in subtitling. But according to Gottlieb’s more recent publications, subtitling cannot be diasemiotic, nor can diasemiotic translation be both intrasemiotic and intersemiotic (2008a: 43-44). Nevertheless, Gottlieb himself actually underlines this by deleting ‘diasemiotic’ from an edited version of the quotation above, which now says that “… subtitling is considered intrasemiotic” (2008a: 56).

Gottlieb has also previously stated that “the process of diasemiotic translation is diagonal” (2004: 220). However, the shift from speech to writing is what Gottlieb now refers to as diamesic translation. Therefore, what was previously described as the diasemiotic nature of subtitling (2005: 19) has now turned into the diamesic nature of subtitling (2008b: 232). It seems that Gottlieb has come to terms with the fact that the shift from the written to the spoken mode does not imply a change in the communicative channels in the diasemiotic sense. But although Gottlieb has previously regarded subtitling as a type of diasemiotic translation, he has nonetheless never claimed that subtitling involves the addition of a new semiotic channel, which would imply that it was intersemiotic (2005: 11):

“Another argument in favor of considering subtitling intersemiotic, namely that of pointing to the written subtitles as a semiotically foreign element in the translated film, must be refuted as well.”

This means that the verbal visual channel is already present in the original through written signs such as captions and displays, although there may be a change in the semiotic balance between the channels. However, one of Gottlieb’s earlier definitions of subtitling, which he still refers to for
various reasons other than to describe the semiotics of subtitling, is at variance with the above statement. It says that subtitling is (2008b: 231):

A. Prepared communication
B. using written language
C. acting as an additive
D. and synchronous semiotic channel
E. as part of a transient
F. and polysemiotic text

Nevertheless, Pedersen is one of the scholars who makes use of this definition as he finds it semiotically accurate, and he describes each of its comprising items in-depth. What is especially noteworthy is item C (2011: 9):

“C contrasts subtitling with dubbing or traditional forms of translation, as subtitling adds a semiotic channel of information, whereas dubbing or e.g. literary translation replaces an existing channel.”

Pedersen (2011: 9) states this despite indirectly acknowledging that the verbal visual channel is already present in the film media through captions and signs, which is somewhat self-contradictory. What Pedersen says here is inconsistent with everything previously stated about subtitles not being an added semiotic channel, and would again imply that subtitling is diasemiotic. It is true that subtitles do not replace the original dialogue as dubbing does. Instead, they are added to the picture, but not in the form of a new semiotic channel. The verbal visual channel is not the most prominent semiotic channel in a film, but it is nevertheless present.
3. Swearing

Swearing forms part of everyday language use for people of all ages and cultures throughout the entire world. Although many swear words have lost their literal meaning and people have a more easy-going attitude towards swear words than previously, the use of swear words still has the power to provoke (Andersen 1998: 8). However, even people who are very easily provoked are likely to possess knowledge of how to swear. But swearing is also a very complex phenomenon due to the various aspects related to the use, function and perception of swear words.

Many scholars have pointed out that the number of studies on swearing is rather limited (Jay 1992: 113; Rathje 2010: 133). But although there is not an abundance of publications dedicated solely to swear words, various aspects of swearing have been studied throughout the years, ranging from the history and origin of swearing, the various types of swearing to the psychological aspects of and motives for swearing. Among the scholars who have contributed to the literature on swear words are Montagu (1967), Ljung (1984; 2011), Andersson and Trudgill (1990), Hughes (1991), Jay (1992) and Allan and Burridge (2006). Rathje (2005; 2010; 2011) has contributed to the study on the sociolinguistic aspects of swearing in that she has examined the actual use of swear words among Danes based on various demographic factors. Furthermore, Rathje and Grann (2011) have conducted a study on the attitudes towards different types of swear words among Danes. Similar research has been conducted in the UK (2000) commissioned by the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA), the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), the Broadcasting Standards Commission (BSC) and the Independent Television Commission (ITC), focusing on people’s attitudes towards swearing, swearing on TV and the severity of swear words in general.

However, one area that has not been given much attention is the translation of swear words, let alone swearing in audiovisual translation. A number of studies have been conducted on the subtitling of swear words into Swedish (Mattsson 2006), Chinese (Chen 2004) and Danish and Spanish (Sharma 2010) as well as on the dubbing of swear words into Spanish (Fernández 2006; Pujol 2006). Nevertheless, no studies have been conducted on the subtitling of swear words into English, the reason for which most likely being that audiovisual translation does not play a major role in English-speaking countries.
This chapter will focus on various aspects of swearing. Section 3.1 will seek to define swear word, explain how swear words relate to various taboo areas, and discuss what differentiates swear words from bad language in general. Section 3.2 will discuss the various taboo areas from which swear words derive, while section 3.3 will deal with the use of swear words, and a typology of swearing will be presented. In section 3.4, various motives for swearing will be discussed.

3.1 Definition of swear words

A number of questions arise in connection with the discussion of swear words. What characterises a swear word? How do people swear? Why do people swear? While some people swear frequently, others only do it out of frustration. But in a broad sense, most people swear in one way or another – although there tends to be some disagreement on what actually characterises swear words and which words qualify as swear words. Not only among scholars. According to the study conducted by Rathje and Grann (2011), words that are claimed to be swear words by scholars may not be considered swear words among the users of swear words and vice versa.

Nevertheless, most scholars agree that it is very difficult to define swear words, and only a few make an attempt to present a definition (Rathje 2010: 133). Some scholars even believe that it is impossible to account for swearing in a systematic manner due to its complexity (Ljung 2011: 4). However, one definition can be found in Andersson and Trudgill, who suggest that “swearing can be defined as a type of language use in which the expression” (1990: 53):

- a. Refers to something that is taboo and/or stigmatized in the culture;
- b. Should not be interpreted literally;
- c. Can be used to express strong emotions and attitudes.

When a taboo word is used as a swear word, it is not the literal meaning of the word that is referred to. Instead, due to the value it gains by being a taboo word, it functions as a means to express emotions and attitudes (Andersson and Trudgill 1990: 53). This also means that taboo words used in their literal sense are not considered swear words. The main reason for making this distinction is that taboo words in general can be replaced by another word with the same literal meaning, such as the synonyms *fuck, screw, shag and bonk*. However, these words do not retain the same synonymy
in swearing. For instance, the interjection *Fuck!* is very normal in swearing, but *Screw!, *Shag! or *Bonk* are not. On the other hand, this also means that various taboo words with different literal meanings obtain a different kind of synonymy when used as swear words. That is, they may all have the same function and can be used interchangeably, such as *Fuck you!, Damn you! and Sod you!*. However, there is no connection between these words when used literally (Ljung 2011: 12-13).

3.1.1 Taboos

The previous section established that swear words are taboo words. But what are taboo words? Allan and Burridge (2006: 1) state that “[t]aboo arises out of social constraints on the individual’s behaviour where it can cause discomfort, harm or injury”. The reason why some words are considered taboo is that they are associated with certain matters in life that are only appropriate to do in certain places and at certain times, such as going to the toilet, which, of course, it is of vital necessity in order for people to survive. But it is done discreetly and is inappropriate to talk about unless the proper words are used. Different cultures may have different taboo areas, and there may be a difference in the extent to which they are considered taboo (Andersson and Trudgill 1990: 56-57). Based on Allan and Burridge (2006: 1) and Andersson (1985: 79), Rathje (2010: 133) presents six different areas that are considered to be taboo in the Western world:

- Bodies and their effluvia
- The organs and acts of sex
- Diseases, death and killing, physical and mental handicap
- Religion and church, naming and addressing sacred persons, beings, objects and places
- Food gathering, preparation and consumption
- Prostitution, narcotics and criminal activity

The list of taboo areas above is not entirely restricted to swear words, but also includes so-called *terms of abuse* or *insults*. Terms of abuse differ from swear words in that they are directed at another person and are meant to be derogatory. Although swear words may be perceived to be quite

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2 Allan and Burridge (2006: 189) state that racial or ethnic slurs are often based on food items that are stereotypically associated with various groups of people, such as *spaghetti-head* (Italian) and *rice-eater* (Chinese).
offensive, they are generally not used with the intention of insulting someone. However, some taboo words can be used as both swear words and terms of abuse, an example of this being the word *shit*. In the expression “*Shit, I have lost my wallet*”, *shit* should be regarded as a swear word, but if someone says “*You little shit*” to another person, it should be regarded as a term of abuse (Rathje 2010: 136). Allan and Burridge present various types of terms of abuse, such as comparing people to animals (*bitch*), insults derived from bodily organs (*asshole*) or bodily effluvia (*shit*) and sexual behaviour (*fucker*), pointing out people’s physical characteristics as abnormalities (*fatty, four-eyes*), insults invoking subnormality or derangement (*retard, idiot*) and racist insults (referring to Arabs as *towel heads*) (2006: 79-83).

Due to the fact that terms of abuse have a different function than swear words, they will not be included in the analysis. Rathje (2010: 137), however, has also chosen to exclude *curses*, such as *Fuck you!*, from her definition of swears words, because they are also directed at another person. However, curses are not degrading in the same way as the terms of abuse presented by Allan and Burridge above, which can be regarded as name-calling. Therefore, curses will be included in this thesis as a type of swearing.

Although terms of abuse are easy to distinguish from swear words, other taboo words may prove to be much more difficult to categorise. The reason for this is that some constructions contain taboo words whose meaning may be difficult to define as either literal or non-literal. A word such as *røv* can be used in a variety of ways. It can be used to refer to a certain body part, but it can also be used in fixed expressions, such as the curse *Rend mig i røven!* (*Fuck you!*), which is so distant from its original meaning that it is considered swearing. However, fixed expressions such as *at lette røven* (*to get off one’s arse*) and *at være på røven* (*to be on one’s arse*) are not as straightforward, since they are neither literal nor non-literal but rather metaphorical. Ljung presents a great number of examples of the metaphorical use of taboo words such as *hell, piss, shit* and *arse* compared with the non-literal-non-metaphorical use (2011: 14-18). It may often prove to be very difficult to make such a distinction, but words with a clear literal or metaphorical meaning will not be included in the analysis.
3.2 Types of swear words

Swear words can be divided into different categories representing different taboo areas. There are various ways of categorising taboo areas depending on which languages are discussed. Ljung (2011: 35-44), for instance, divides the taboo areas into five major categories or themes, namely the religious theme, scatological theme, sex organ theme, sexual activities theme and the mother theme. The mother theme will not be dealt with in this thesis, mainly because it is not represented in my data, but also because this category mostly consists of terms of abuse, such as motherfucker. Furthermore, the scatological, sex organ and sexual activities themes will be dealt with in one single category and renamed sex and bodily effluvia. The third category that will be dealt with is diseases, which Ljung only presents as a minor category. However, religion, diseases and sex and bodily effluvia are also the three categories presented by Rathje (2010: 149-151) and Rathje and Andersen (2005) together with a fourth category, namely euphemisms, which also will be discussed below.

3.2.1 Religion

Religious swear words constitute the largest group of swear words in the Danish language and are also considered to be the oldest swear words (Rathje 2010: 149). But religious swear words are very common in many languages. In Christian cultures, religious swear words can furthermore be divided into two different subgroups, namely celestial swear words referring to God, Jesus/Christ and the Holy Ghost, and diabolic swear words referring to the Devil and hell. While celestial swear words have lost much of their power and are considered to be very mild, diabolic swear words have managed to retain their power, especially in the Nordic countries (Ljung 2011: 37).

Diabolic swearing is very common in Danish and includes different variations of the words helvede (hell), satan and fanden (the devil). Some frequently used diabolic swear words have undergone a major transformation. One of these is fandeme, which is a reduced form of the oath Gid Fanden ville æde mig om det er løgn (May the devil would eat me if it’s a lie). However, some frequently used celestial swear words have also undergone a major transformation, such as the adverb sgu, which is a reduced version of oath Så hjælpe mig Gud og hans hellige ord (So help me God and His holy word). It was originally used in Danish courts of law, but in the course of time, it found its way out of the courtroom and was eventually reduced to the tiny word sgu. Oaths and curses such as the
ones presented above are not common today, and many people are not aware of the origin of words such as *fandeme* and *sgu*. In spite of this, they still have the power to evoke a reaction (Andersen 1998: 8).

According to the authors of *Grammatik over det Danske Sprog* (*Grammar of the Danish Language*), Lars Heltoft and Erik Hansen, *sgu* is no longer a swear word but can be compared to all the other tiny adverbs that make the Danish language special, such as *vel*, *vist*, *jo* and *nok*, which are not found in the English language and are difficult to translate (Sørensen 2011). Nevertheless, according to the study by Rathje and Grann – which they underline was conducted before *sgu* was claimed to be a non-swear word – more than half of the respondents regard *sgu* as a swear word, but a relatively mild swear word. However, *sgu* is considered more offensive than other celestial swear words, although not as offensive as diabolic swear words (2011: 3-6).

### 3.2.1 Bloody

An English swear word whose etymology is difficult to establish is the adjective *bloody*, which is sometimes linked to the religious category. According to Hughes (1991: 12), *bloody* is word borrowed from underground slang and does not derive from the religious exclamation *By our Lady* as often claimed (1991: 24). Ljung (1984: 57) agrees that this is the most common explanation, but no one actually knows for sure from where it derives. Ljung also claims that *bloody* is a very offensive British swear word. However, this differs from studies conducted in the UK on attitudes towards swearing, where *bloody* is regarded as either a quite mild swear word or not even a swear word by the majority of respondents, which is also the case with other swear words with a celestial content (the ASA, the BBC, the BSC and the ITC 2000: 9-14).

### 3.2.2 Diseases

This category includes swear words related to dreaded diseases. While Danish has retained the use of disease-related swear words, such words are not common in modern English. However, an example of an old curse in English that falls into this category is *A pox on...!* (Ljung 2011: 43). A curse with similar meaning is found in Danish, namely *Gid pokker havde ham*. It is still used today
but has been reduced to the small word *pokker* (Andersen 1998: 8). *Kraftedeme* is also a disease-related Danish swear word referring to the disease *cancer* and derives from the oath *Kraeften æde mig* (*May the cancer eat me*) (Quist and Hagen 2007: 56). Today, not many people know the origin of *pokker* or acknowledge *pokker* as a disease, which is probably why it is not considered to be a very offensive swear word or to be a swear word at all. *Kraftedeme*, however, is considered to be quite offensive, most likely because cancer is still a dreaded disease (Rathje and Grann 2011: 3-6).

### 3.2.3 Sex and bodily effluvia

This category contains words that refer to the taboo area of bodily effluvia, such as *skid, lort* (both Danish words for *shit* or *crap*) and *pis*, and body parts, such as *rov* (*arse*), but also some of the more recent words to have entered the Danish vocabulary of swear words, namely the English words *shit* and *fuck*, the latter referring to the taboo area of sexual activities. The use of English swear words in the Danish language is mainly a result of the Anglo-American influence on the Danish language and culture. However, the reason for adopting English swear words may also be that swearing in a foreign language does not seem as offensive as swearing in the mother tongue. There are no Danish swear words relating to sexual activities besides *fuck*, which may indicate that expressing sexual life verbally in Danish is considered particularly taboo (Rathje and Andersen 2005: 4-9). Therefore, the use of a foreign-language swear word such as *fuck* can be compared to toning down a swear word, as it would probably be much more offensive to say *kneb* (Danish for *fuck*) (Tonsberg 2010: 27). Despite of this view, *fuck* is considered to be one of the most offensive swear words in the Danish vocabulary, according to the study on swear words by Rathje and Grann (2011: 3-6).

In English, *fuck* is actually only exceeded by the terms of abuse *cunt* and *motherfucker* when it comes to severity. *Shit, crap* and *piss* are also very common swear words in English, but they are considered to be much less severe than *fuck* (the ASA, the BBC, the BSC and the ITC 2000: 9-14). *Fuck* is a very colourful word and can be used in various ways and to describe various situations. Examples of this are the exclamation *Fuck!*, the curse *Fuck you!* and the variation *fucking*, which can be used as both an adjective and an adverb. *Fuck* can also be used in idiomatic expressions such as *to give a fuck*, *for fuck’s sake*, *fuck off* and *fucking up* (Ljung 2011: 39-40). In Danish, *fuck* can be used with Danish morphology, or more precisely with Danish inflexion, such as *Du fucker alting op*

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3 *Shit* as a swear word was found for the first time in the Danish language in 1991 and *fuck* in 1990 (Rathje 2011: 150).
(You fuck up everything). It is also very common to replace the English pronoun you in Fuck you! with the Danish pronoun dig, resulting in Fuck dig! (Quist and Hagen 2007: 57).

3.2.4 Euphemisms

Euphemisms are words and expressions used in order to tone down swearing, often in connection with religious swear words, where paraphrased versions may be used in order to refrain from invoking God or the Devil, such as saying for hæwlede instead of for helvede (Rathje 2010: 150-151). There are similar nonsense equivalents of actual swear words in English, such as saying Gosh instead of God and Gee instead of Jesus. It is also possible to replace an offensive word with an already existing word with the same sound and length, such as saying darn instead of damn and shoot instead of shit (Ljung 2011: 11). This is also the case in Danish, where Satan, for instance, can be replaced by the male name Søren as in sørens and for søren (Rathje 2010: 151). According to Rathje and Grann (2011: 3-7), not many people regard such euphemisms as swear words, although elderly people claim to use them quite frequently.

Technically, euphemisms are “words or phrases used as an alternative to a dispreferred expression” (Allan and Burridge 2006: 32). Dispreferred expressions are also referred to as dysphemisms and are generally considered taboo, although context is of vital importance to whether or not a word is considered dysphemistic. However, using a euphemism instead of a dysphemism may be regarded as self-censoring behaviour, which is also the case in connection with orthophemisms, a more formal or neutral type of self-censoring. Euphemisms, dysphemisms and orthophemisms do not relate to swear words only but to dirty or tabooed words in general, or rather words that may have dirty or tabooed connotations. Shit, for instance, is a dysphemism, for which the euphemistic word is poo, while the orthophemistic word is faeces (Allan and Burridge 2006: 31-34).

3.3 The use of swear words

The categories presented above show that swear words derive from various taboo areas. But within these taboo areas, there are also different types of swear words with different functions. A number of scholars have made an attempt to present a typology of swearing, but there does not seem to be
any agreement on how this should be done or how the term *swearing* relates to the various types of swearing.

Although the English verb *to swear* is usually linked to so-called bad language, the original meaning of the verb is *to take an oath* – the act of making a solemn promise, often in relation to God (*I swear by Almighty God*) or another sacred object. This definition still obtains, but the orthophemistic use of swearing and oath taking is less dominant today compared to blasphemous, dirty or dysphemistic swearing (Allan and Burridge 2006: 76). Another word that tends to be used synonymously with swearing is *cursing*, which technically refers to the act of invoking harm or evil on someone or something (Ljung 2011: 31).

Rathje considers swearing, cursing and oaths to be three different types of swearing, but she also considers swearing to be the umbrella term for all three types. While oaths are invoked upon oneself, curses are invoked upon someone or something else. Swearing, on the other hand, is the act of expressing strong emotions without a particular aim (2010: 137). An older typology of swearing is found in Montagu (1967: 105), who also suggests that swearing is both a type of its own defined as “verbally expressing the feeling of aggressiveness that follows upon frustration in words possessing strong emotional associations” and an umbrella term for seven different types of swearing. Additionally, he presents ten different functions that the various types of swear words may have. However, Montagu’s typology is very comprehensive and rather difficult to work with and will therefore not be dealt with in this thesis.

Unlike Montagu and Rathje, Ljung does not regard swearing as a specific type but only as the overall activity. What Montagu and Rathje refer to as swearing as a type, Ljung defines as *expletive interjections*, such as *God!* and *Shit!* . He divides swear words into two major groups entitled *stand-alones* and *slot fillers*, which are made up of the various functions that swear words may have (2011: 30-35). However, Ljung’s typology of swearing is also very comprehensive, and some of the functions may be difficult to distinguish from each other. Still, his typology does not encompass all the uses of swear words, which seems to be a very difficult task, one of the reasons being that the use of the word *fuck* is so versatile. Therefore, I have chosen to present a new typology, inspired by Ljung (2011: 22-35) and Andersson and Trugdill’s presentation of how “swear-words may intrude into grammatical patterns” (1990: 62-63):
1. Stand-alones
   a. Interjections
      
      *Shit! Jesus Christ! What the fuck! The fuck we are!*
      
      *Pis! Satans! For helvede!*

   b. Interjections loosely tied to a sentence
      
      *Say something, for fuck’s sake!*
      
      *Så sig nu noget, for helvede!*

   c. Curses and unfriendly suggestions
      
      *Fuck you! Piss off!*
      
      *Fuck dig! Rend mig i røven!*

2. Emphasisers
   a. Adverbs
      
      *I don’t fucking think so; This better not take too bloody long; I bloody well have*
      
      *Nej, det gør vi krafldeemne ikke; Jeg håber fandeme, I har fundet noget*

   b. Adjectives
      
      *Drop the fucking gun! Just tell us his bloody name*
      
      *Tag over i dit skide hus; Det tager en helvedes tid*

   c. After WH-words
      
      *What the fuck are you doing? Who the hell is that?*
      
      *Hvordan fanden kunne han vide det? Hvad i helvede har du forestillet dig?*

   d. Prefixation, suffixation and infixation in words or phrases
      
      *(Absobloodylutely; Shut the fuck up)*
      
      *Jeg er skideligeglad; Nøglen er for helvede ikke vores eneste problem*

3. Idiomatic swearing
   a. Adjectives
      
      *I called her a bunch of fucked-up names; I ran into the owner who was pissed off*
      
      *Jeg kaldte hende en masse fucked-up ting*

   b. Verbs
      
      *Notwithstanding, you fucked up; I don’t give a shit about the campaign*
      
      *Men det ændrer ikke ved, at I har fuctet op; Jeg vil da skide på den valgkamp*
c. Pronouns

We’ve done fuck all
Vi har sgu ikke gjort en skid rigtigt

4. Nouns

Enough of that shit; Do I have to answer that crap?
Gider ikke det pis; Vi har været igennem det lort to gange

It seems to be very difficult to present a typology that fulfils all needs, and my solution may not be the most optimal solution either, but it is clear and covers the types of swearing in my data, of which all the examples above form part. The typology has been divided into four different categories. The name of the first category, *stand-alones*, is borrowed from Ljung (2011: 30-33), but the various subcategories have been adjusted somewhat. The *stand-alones* are comprised of *interjections* used to express various feelings, such as anger, surprise or pain, *interjections loosely tied to a sentence*, which are expressions that can be used to stress the significance of an utterance, although they can also be used as pure interjections, and *curses*, which are directed at another person and are used to express feelings such as anger, contempt or discontent.

The category *emphasisers* includes all the types of swearing that Ljung refers to as adverbial intensifiers, adjectival intensifiers, emphasisers and modal adverbials (2011: 22-34), which have the function of intensifying or placing emphasis on an adjective, adverb, noun or a statement. The subcategory *prefixation, suffixation and infixation in words or phrases* is not found in the subtitles, which is why I have added a couple of examples in parenthesis to show English swear words can be used in this way.

What should be mentioned regarding prefixation is that some Danish words can be used as both intensifying adverbs and prefixes, although there does not seem to be a clear distinction between the two. Dansk Sprognævn (2012b) states that as a general rule, compounds containing an intensifying prefix are written in one word, although some intensifying prefixes can also be written separately. Danish swear words, such as *skide* and *pisse*, are considered to be intensifying prefixes and can be used to form compounds such as *skidesur* (*shit angry*) and *pissesur* (*piss angry*) (Dansk Sprognævn
However, they can also be used as intensifying adverbs written separately as in *skide sur* and *pisse sur* (Dansk Sprognævn 2007). Although it is not made clear, there does not seem to be a difference in meaning.

The category *idiomatic swearing* has been divided into the three subcategories *adjectives*, *verbs* and *pronouns*. English especially uses a great deal of idioms in swearing, where the meaning cannot be inferred from the individual words that form part of the idiom. Ljung (2011: 26-27) discusses the notion of idiomatic swearing and whether it should even be characterised as swearing, since an idiomatic expression such as *to fuck up* has the same literal meaning as *to mess up*, and taboo words used literally should not be regarded as swearing. However, he underlines that despite the synonymy between the two idioms, the word *fuck* in itself is not used in its literal sense, which is why it should be considered swearing.

Nevertheless, it can be discussed whether there should even be a category entitled idiomatic swearing, since some of the other categories contain idioms as well. Curses such as *Piss off!* and *Fuck you!* could form part of the subcategory idiomatic verbs. However, they have a different function than the verbs in the category idiomatic swearing. Furthermore, because swear words have various functions and are used in different ways, it would prove to be very difficult to categorise them according to word class only. This is also the reason why adjectives form part of both idiomatic swearing and emphasisers.

The last category entitled *nouns* can be said to be the odd man out, but the words that form part of this category do not fit into any of the other categories. Ljung (2011: 17) claims that a word such as *shit* is frequently used metaphorically to refer to “something unpleasant” or “something small and unimportant” and should in such cases not be considered swearing. Nevertheless, I have chosen to include it in the typology when used in this sense, as it is considered to be taboo but is still very far from its literal meaning.

Furthermore, it could be argued that *to give a shit* should be categorised as a noun, but here *shit* is regarded as part of an idiom used as a verb meaning *to care*. What is also somewhat questionable is whether the idiom *ikke en skid* should rather be categorised as a noun, but since both *fuck all* and

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4 The use of *skide* and *pisse* as adjectives preceding nouns is disregarded here.
*ikke en skid* are used idiomatically and synonymously with the pronoun *nothing*, they have been categorised under idiomatic swearing. Nevertheless, such discussions only prove the complexity of swearing, and there seem to be numerous ways to present a typology. However, the typology presented above fulfils its purpose, as it is based on the swearing in *The Killing*.

### 3.4 Motives for swearing

Although many people regard the use of swear words as offensive, insulting, blasphemous or merely unnecessary, there are different reasons as to why people swear – reasons that extend beyond striving to be offensive. But because it is not always considered appropriate to swear, swear words gain certain power, which makes them useful in various situations (Quist and Hagen 2007: 56).

It is a well-known fact that swearing is very often “an emotive reaction to anger, frustration, or something unexpected and usually, but not necessarily, undesirable” (Allan and Burridge 2006: 78). Swearing can, of course, be evoked by an unexpected positive event, but it can also be a reaction to sudden physical pain, such as whacking a toe against a table leg. Not only is swearing frequently evoked by frustration and pain, but swearing also relieves such feelings and restores “the normal psychophysical equilibrium of the individual” (Montagu 1967: 72). This has actually been established in a study conducted by researchers at the School of Psychology, Keele University in England, which shows that swearing has a pain-relieving effect and gives people a higher threshold of pain (Graven 2009).

However, swearing is also frequently used in a social context where it may serve various functions. It can be used to shock or amuse someone, but it can also be used as an identity marker or to signal group membership, where swearing forms part of a certain joint colloquial style. Therefore, factors such as the style expected by the interlocutors, their respective social status and the social distance between the interlocutors all have an influence on how swear words are perceived, and whether people are offended by the use of swear words – although sometimes swearing is used for the specific purpose of offending someone (Allan and Burridge 2006: 77).
There are also certain linguistic aspects related to swearing, which, according to Andersson and Trudgill, actually weigh more than religious and moral arguments when people are asked whether or not they condone swearing. People frequently claim that swearing is a sign of personal weakness, that those who swear have a limited vocabulary, and they only swear because they do not have other words at their disposal. The argument presented by those in favour of swearing is exactly the same – that swear words are used when there are no other words at one’s disposal. However, the reason in this case is that sometimes no other words suffice (1990: 63-64). Swear words may add strength or variation to an utterance or statement in a way that is impossible to achieve using inoffensive words (Zettersten 1997: 9).

Nevertheless, the choice of swear words and the reaction to the use of swear words depends more than any other words on the specific situation or context in which a message takes place – who the interlocutors are, their relationship to each other, and what is expected to be achieved by using swear words (Jay 1992: 12-13). Furthermore, factors such as tone of voice, intonation, facial expression and body language, which are closely connected to swear words, may give an indication of the actual intent of the use of swear words, and they also affect how swearing is perceived (Ljung 2011: 4-5).

Words are not dirty or offensive *per se*, but it is what people associate with certain words – lower body parts, sex, bodily effluvia, diseases or religion – that makes them dirty. Therefore, swearing is also closely related to the social constraints reflecting a society and its values. Andersson and Trudgill (1990: 35) state that:

“Nothing is good or bad in itself. No word or phrase is in itself bad. It is bad only in the eyes of those who evaluate and look at the language. […] If we turn the argument around, we can say that what is judged as bad or wrong in a certain culture reveals something about this culture”.
4. Norms

Factors such as the time and space constraints and the shift from speech to writing have a major influence on the outcome of subtitles. The need for condensation may imply that swear words and other characteristics of the spoken language, which are often regarded as redundant, are left out of the subtitles. What frequently determines how such technical aspects affect translation behaviour are so-called norms (Pedersen 2011: 130). Norms control many of the choices that subtitlers make in different situations for different audiences and may extend beyond the nature of the ST and differences between the languages. Therefore, norms also exist in connection with the subtitling of swear words – not only as a result of the need for condensation, but since swear words are generally regarded as bad language, they have a very strong effect in subtitles.

The notion of norms was initially formulated to describe human behaviour in a socio-cultural dimension. But because translation is regarded as a form of social behaviour, norms may also be reflected in translations and help account for translational behaviour (Karamitroglou 2000: 15). According to Díaz Cintas, “norms are a very successful concept in the study of translation because they provide a clear objective to the research and direct the translation scholar to what needs to be found and analysed” (2004: 26).

This chapter will seek to define the concept of norms, and discuss how norms relate to subtitling and translation in general. Section 4.1 will introduce Descriptive Translation Studies, while section 4.2 will account for norm theory and discuss the difference between descriptive and prescriptive norms. In section 4.3, different translation norms will be presented, while section 4.4 will focus on norms and swearing in subtitling. Finally, section 4.5 will discuss the results of some studies on swearing in subtitles.

4.1 Descriptive Translation Studies

The search for norms in translation was first proposed by Toury, who is a member of what has been called the ‘Manipulation School’ of Translation Studies together with Hermans, among others, the editor of the anthology of essays entitled The Manipulation of Literature: Studies in Literary Translation, by which the name of the school is inspired. The scholars of the Manipulation School
work within Descriptive Translation Studies (DTS) and regard translation as an activity based on socio-cultural behaviour. It is common to make a distinction between the descriptive and the prescriptive approach to the study on norms in translation. The descriptive approach is based on the establishment of norms through empirical research on actual translations and the relationship between translations and their original, whereas the prescriptive approach focuses on how a translation should be done and how to achieve equivalence (Schjoldager 1994: 65-68). In the study of translation norms based on the empirical nature of the descriptive perspective, focus is on how norms affect translation behaviour without trying to impose norms or guidelines on how translators should behave (Hermans 1999: 72-73).

Chesterman, who also adheres to the descriptive approach, states that if “translation theory is to be a genuinely scientific undertaking, it must of course be descriptive” (1997: 52). Newmark, however, does not even consider translation theory to be a theory or a science but “the body of knowledge that we have and have still to have about the process of translating” (1981: 19 in Chesterman 1997: 43). He states that translation theory implies the existence of a translation problem and recommendations for appropriate solutions (Schjoldager 1994: 68-69). Pedersen (2011: 25) discusses whether Newmark belongs to the prescriptive paradigm or the applied branch of translation studies, which includes translator training, translator aids and translation criticism, as opposed to the pure branch of which DTS form part (Toury 1995: 17-19). However, Toury claims that the applied branch can be nothing else but prescriptive. Although the idea for this thesis originates from the criticism of the subtitling of The Killing, the aim is not to point out what the subtitler should have done, but to conduct empirical research on and account for actual translational behaviour. Therefore, this thesis adopts a descriptive approach.

### 4.2 Norm theory

While there is a clear distinction between descriptive and prescriptive approaches to translation studies, the distinction seems to be somewhat more blurred in connection with norm theory due to the fuzziness of norms. Every individual acquires certain norms through socialisation. Norms thus help regulate the lives we live and form our coexistence, and actual behaviour is also evaluated on the basis of these norms. Norms only exist in recurrent situations where non-random behaviour may
be expected, which also makes it possible to establish regularities of behaviour. If there is no norm, it is a matter of free variation and deviations will not give rise to any criticism (Toury 1995: 54-55).

Norms exist on a continuum between what Chesterman refers to as laws and conventions. Laws are absolute, imposed by an authority, and non-compliance with a law may imply sanctions. Conventions, on the other hand, are less binding than norms as they are purely arbitrary, and failing to adhere to a convention will not necessarily give rise to criticism but only be unconventional (1997: 55). Toury regards norms as socio-cultural constraints occupying the vast middle ground between rules and idiosyncrasies. Norms themselves may range from strong, objective, rule-like norms to weak, more subjective, idiosyncratic norms, depending on whether a certain mode of behaviour is regarded as binding within a homogeneous group or is merely preferred within a more heterogeneous group. Idiosyncrasies and rules may furthermore gain or lose validity, which means that the boundaries between the constraints are rather indistinct (1995: 54).

While Toury regards norms as socio-cultural constraints, Hermans (1999: 79-80) also sees them as templates or ready-made solutions that translators may apply in different situations. Thus, norms may ease the decision-making process, as they are intersubjective and encompass the shared choices that translators make when solving certain translation problems. He furthermore states on the notion of norms that (Hermans: 80):

“The term ‘norm’ refers to both a regularity in behaviour, i.e. a recurring pattern, and to the underlying mechanism which accounts for this regularity. The mechanism is a psychological and social entity. It mediates between the individual and the collective, between the individual’s intentions, choices and actions, and collectively held beliefs, values and preferences.”

It is rather difficult to establish whether or when norms are either descriptive or prescriptive. If norms gain intersubjective status and acceptance, they will automatically be expected to be followed. Thus the question arises whether descriptive norms may become prescriptive, or whether the very notion of norms implies that something is prescriptive. Chesterman, however, takes the view that norms are “descriptive of particular practices within a given community”, reflecting intersubjective acknowledgement of the correctness of certain behaviour (1997: 54).
Whether or not norms are prescriptive per se, they do exert some degree of social and psychological pressure on translators due to their directive character in the form of expectations. As pointed out above, norms may ease the translation process, but they can also be felt as constraints on translational behaviour. However, norms are not necessarily followed. Deviant or discrepant behaviour may occur, and the consequences of deviating from a norm may vary depending on the strength of the norm. Nevertheless, whether norms constrain or facilitate the translation process, they do not deprive translators of making conscious decisions (Hermans 1999: 80-82).

4.3 Translation norms

Although there are various norms in translation, there is no definite solution to producing a correct translation. Therefore, translators may be subject to criticism despite following existing norms. The reason is that various groups of people have different expectations and different views on what constitutes a correct translation or which norms to follow (Hermans 1999: 85).

Chesterman and Toury, among others, have presented so-called norm systems or sets of norms, of which only Chesterman’s will be outlined here. Chesterman distinguishes between process norms and product norms, the latter also referred to as expectancy norms, as they represent the target readers’ expectations concerning a specific type of translation, based on the translation tradition and parallel texts in the TL. Such expectations may relate to discourse conventions, style, grammaticality, collocations, lexical choice, etc. (1997: 64).

Process norms, also referred to as professional norms as they derive from the translational behaviour of professional translators, regulate the translation process. Process norms are subordinate to as well as governed by product norms, as any process of translating a text is determined by the expectations about the end product. However, the expectations of readers are also based on their experience reading translations written by professional translators, which means that translators are initially responsible for establishing product norms. The outcome of their work thus becomes the benchmark for evaluating future translations, and their translation behaviour can be characterised as norm setting (Chesterman 1997: 67-68).
Process norms include the *accountability* norm – which is ethical and deals with loyalty to the parties involved in the translation process – the *communication* norm – which is social and implies optimising communication between all parties – and the *relation* norm, which is linguistic and refers to the relation between the ST and TT. The relation norm is the only professional norm specifically related to the translation process, while the other two can be applied to any communication situation (Chesterman 1997: 67-69).

### 4.4 Norms in subtitling

Norms are not observable per se, but the most accurate representation of the existence of norms is translations themselves, which Toury refers to as *primary* sources to translational behaviour. Theories of translation and statements by researchers, translators, commissioners, editors, publishers and the like are what Toury calls *extratextual* sources to translational behaviour – so-called *by*-products – which he claims may prove to be biased or subjective (1995: 65). Written formulations of norms may of course simply reflect the awareness of existing norms, but they may also reflect a wish to control behaviour. However, there may not necessarily be any agreement between actual norms of behaviour and written formulations of norms (Toury 1995: 55).

Nevertheless, formulations of norms exert a certain degree of prescriptive control in the subtitling industry. There are no official guidelines governing the area, but subtitling companies and TV stations often provide their own in-house guidelines on how to subtitle. However, such guidelines often represent widely accepted norms reflecting the translation behaviour of professional translators – which is based on the expectations of the readers of subtitles, and whose expectations are furthermore based on their experience reading subtitles (Pedersen 2011: 122). This is also pointed out by Lindberg (1989), the founder of the Danish subtitling company Dansk Video Tekst, who has prepared a comprehensive set of rules about TV subtitling (*Nogle regler om TV-tekstning*), which have been developed on the basis of years of subtitling experience primarily at DR (Danish Broadcasting Corporation), and which he claims should be complied with – not uncritically, but they should be regarded as a tool for working independently and creatively.

According to Pedersen (2011: 122), subtitlers throughout Denmark tend to comply with either Lindberg’s rules or the unwritten norms of the subtitling industry – which, according to Lindberg,
are based on the subtitling tradition at DR. Ivarsson and Carroll have also prepared a more international *Code of Good Subtitling Practice* (1998: 157-159), which has been adopted by ESIST (European Association for Studies in Screen Translation), a non-profit association of academics and professionals in the field of audiovisual translation. Diaz Cintas claims that the code is “nothing other than a prescriptive list of rules” and regards it as an attempt to ensure homogeneity in the presentation of subtitles, especially due to the time and space constraints (2004: 29-30). Pedersen, however, defines Ivarsson and Carroll’s work as a source of *descriptive secondary norms*, in that the authors present their views on the practice of subtitling based on personal experience (2011: 123).

### 4.4.1 Swearing in subtitles

It is quite conceivable that subtitling norms are stronger in subtitling countries such as Denmark than in the UK, where audiovisual translation only plays a minor role. However, the BBC provides its own subtitling guidelines, which are “intended for use in subtitle production for BBC Commissioned AV content” (BBC Online Subtitling Editorial Guidelines 2009: 3). The subtitling of strong language is only mentioned in the guidelines in connection with the editing of subtitles, which may prove to be necessary due to the shift from speech to writing resulting in a lack of space in the subtitles. The editing of subtitles may affect swear words just as well as any other type of words, but the guidelines do state that strong language should not be edited out unless there is absolutely no other option. However, it seems that these particular guidelines refer to subtitling for the deaf and hard-of-hearing and not foreign-language programmes.

In addition to this, the guidelines do not state anything about subtitling swear words, but the BBC Editorial Guidelines provide information on the use of strong language on BBC in general. First of all, the guidelines stress that the impact of strong language is determined by several different factors (BBC Editorial Guidelines: 43):
“The effect of strong language depends on the choice of words, the speaker and the context. Different words cause different degrees of offence in different communities as well as in different parts of the world. A person’s age, sex, education, employment, faith, nationality and where they live, may all have an impact on whether or not they might be offended.”

Nevertheless, the guidelines also state that editorial justification and appropriate signposting of strong language is of vital importance in order to meet the expectations of the audience and ensure that no one is offended – especially when using the strongest language, examples of which are *cunt*, *motherfucker* and *fuck*. Furthermore, the strongest language is not to be used before the watershed⁵, and even after the watershed, it should not be used excessively. Strong language in general must not be used before the watershed if it is likely that children are among the audience, and it must not be included in programmes for younger children. In addition, the guidelines state that audiences generally dislike strong language when used carelessly without a clear purpose (BBC Editorial Guidelines: 42-43). All of this indicates that the guidelines are based on research conducted by the ASA, the BBC, the BSC and the ITC on the perception and perceived severity of swear words (2002).

On the subtitling of swear words into Danish, Lindberg says that subtitles should present the ST in the most precise and truthful manner as possible, and they should not be subject to censorship. However, swear words have a stronger effect in writing, which means that they should be toned down in the subtitles in order to create the same effect as in the dialogue. But he underlines that it may not necessarily be a matter of toning down single swear words, but rather pruning down on the number of swear words (1989).

Díaz Cintas and Remael also point out that “[t]aboo words, swearwords and interjections are often toned down in subtitles or even deleted if space is limited…” (2007: 195). However, there are several options available when subtitling swear words, as swear words have various functions and meanings depending on the context, which necessitates evaluation of their effect in the ST culture in order to find an appropriate equivalent in the TT language. Although swear words tend to be

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⁵ The *watershed* signals the point in time after which adult material may be broadcast, such as programmes containing strong language, sex and violence. The watershed begins at 9pm and continues until 5.30pm. Programmes broadcast outside this period of time must be suitable for everyone (BBC Editorial Guidelines: 39).
deleted, this is definitely not the only or most optimal solution (Díaz Cintas and Remael 2007: 196). Ivarsson and Carroll also underline that it is very difficult to assess the rudeness or offensiveness of a swear word, but in case of an excessive number of swear words in the dialogue, they should be toned down. However, they also agree with Lindberg in that the role of subtitlers is not to appear as censors, unless they are specifically asked to by the client or commissioner (1998: 126-127).

Since swear words are a linguistic feature characteristic of the spoken language, they may not be considered of major importance to the storyline of a film or the comprehension of the discourse in comparison to other linguistic features, although swear words may be of major importance for how the characters are portrayed. But since swear words are so-called taboo words, they need to be treated with greater care than other types of words and may also be under greater influence of norms (Mattsson 2006: 3-7).

### 4.5 Studies on swearing in subtitles

Mattsson (2006) has conducted a study on the subtitling of swear words from English into Swedish, in which it was found that a high number of swear words were omitted in the subtitles. She also found that certain types of swear words were chosen in preference to others. The reason for this, she claims, is most likely the strong norms governing the subtitling of swear words, which furthermore derive from norms in the translation of literary text and written originals in the TL. The idea that subtitling is part of a greater system is influenced by Karamitroglou, who regards the final translation product as a result of “the interaction between the elements [or factors] which constitute the system and the levels at which these elements/factors operate” (2000: 69).

To test this hypothesis, she compared her study to the *English Swedish Parallel Corpus*, which consists of written originals in English and Swedish as well as translations of these texts into English and Swedish. Her results showed that the pattern established in the use of swear words in subtitling was also found in literary translation and written originals (Mattsson 2006: 7). A similar comparison will not be conducted in this thesis, as this would extend beyond the scope of this thesis.
However, her study underlines the existence of subtitling norms in connection with swear words – that the number of swear words tends to be reduced in subtitles. This is also the result of a study conducted on the subtitling of English swear words into Danish and Spanish, where a high frequency of omissions was found in the subtitles (Sharma 2010).

The guidelines stating how to deal with swear words in subtitling are rather vague. There are no definite solutions to how swear words are to be rendered in subtitles due to the subjectivity found in the interpretation of swear words, the perceived severity of swear words and their function. However, the fact that there are guidelines on the subtitling of swear words, and strong subtitling norms are found in connection with the subtitling of swear words also reflects a more general norm among people of different cultures, namely that swearing is taboo and not always appropriate language use. Therefore, the subtitler’s task is to find a balance between toning down offensive language and providing the viewers with subtitles that reflect the dialogue in the most truthful manner – which is especially important when subtitling against the current, with viewers having limited knowledge of the ST language and culture.

An empirical study of actual translation behaviour in connection with the subtitling of swear words in *The Killing* will make it possible to establish whether existing norms have been complied with or deviated from. That is, whether the subtitler has reduced the number of swear words, and whether stronger swear words have been used in the subtitles than those found in the original dialogue.
5. Influencing parameters

There are various parameters that the subtitler needs to take into consideration in connection with how to solve various translation problems. In the study of translations, these parameters may also give an indication of why the subtitler has made the choices that he has. Nedergaard-Larsen (1992), Georgakopoulou (2009) and Pedersen (2011), among others, have presented a number of parameters that may have an influence on the subtitling process, some of which will be discussed in this chapter. While section 5.1 will focus on parameters pertaining to the text as a whole, section 5.2 will focus on parameters pertaining to individual translation problems.

While Georgakopoulou focuses on aspects that affect the decision-making process in connection with subtitling problems in general, Pedersen and Nedergaard-Larsen focus specifically on the subtitling of extralinguistic culture-specific elements or extralinguistic cultural references (ECRs), which is a term that Pedersen prefers to use, as he regards cultural to be less restrictive than culture-specific or culture-bound. This is related to one of his parameters entitled Transculturality, underlining that a great deal of cultural references that once were bound to one specific culture are now recognisable internationally (Pedersen 2011: 46-47).

Extralinguistic elements often play a major role in the discussion of culture-specific translation problems; that is, elements that refer to something outside the language, whether historical, political, geographical or social. However, extralinguistic culture-specific elements are also part of the language in that they are expressed verbally, which is exactly why they may pose a translation problem. In fact, the majority of words or expressions refer to something outside the language, but not necessarily something that requires knowledge of a foreign culture (Pedersen 2011: 45-46). However, language in itself is also culture-specific due to the different ways in which language is used in different cultures in terms of grammatical categories, metaphors, idioms and dialects, etc. (Nedergaard-Larsen 1992: 28-29). Swear words, which are the focus of this thesis, or more specifically the use and subtitling of swear words, are also cultural to a certain degree. Of course, swearing is an international phenomenon, but how people swear differs from one culture to another.
5.1 General considerations

Many of the parameters that influence the translation process are the same regardless of whether the translation problems are characterised as intralinguistic, extralinguistic or cultural. Based on the data applied in his analysis on ECRs, Pedersen distinguishes between seven different parameters, which he claims are all intertwined and either support or constrain the subtitler in his work. These are Transculturality, Extratextuality, Centrality, Polysemiotics, Co-text, Media-specific constraints and Subtitling Situation. While the first six parameters are related to the specific choices made in connection with solving individual translation problems, the last parameter deals with more general considerations regarding the text as a whole (2011: 105-120). Pedersen’s Subtitling Situation is very comprehensive, and the table below only presents some of the aspects which suit the purpose of this thesis. Nedergaard-Larsen (1992: 45-48) also differentiates between general and specific considerations in connection with culture-specific elements in subtitling, but some of the general considerations that she presents more or less overlap with Pedersen’s Subtitling Situation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General considerations (text as a whole)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Source text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Genre and skopus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Style</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Production norms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target-text audience</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Age group</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Knowledge of ST language and culture</td>
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<tr>
<td>Broadcaster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Broadcasting time</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Obligations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Considerations regarding the text as a whole (Source: Nedergaard-Larsen 1992: 45-46; Pedersen 2011: 116-120)

Information about the various aspects presented in the table above can sometimes be found in so-called translation briefs, which may state the purpose of the TT, provide information on the TT audience, and present guidelines that the subtitler can or should follow. Pedersen, however, claims that such briefs are a rarity in subtitling, which means that the subtitler often has to find the
information himself. However, the subtitling situation is very important, because it affects how the subtitler decides to deal with specific translation problems (2011: 115-116).

The first parameter presented in the table above is the source text. What should be taken into consideration in this connection are first and foremost the genre and skopus – or the purpose – of the text. The two are in fact interrelated, in that the genre may give an indication of what the skopos is (Pedersen 2011: 116-117). Nedergaard-Larsen touches upon some of the genres found in the audiovisual media, and what usually is or should be stressed when dealing with the various genres. She states that if the genre is intended to amuse, such as satire and comedy, language should be at centre stage, while genres that are intended to inform, such as news, documentaries or sports, mostly draw attention to a certain event. However, if the genre is feature films, emphasis should be placed on people and whatever accentuates the characteristics or personality of the person speaking (1992: 45-46). Nevertheless, feature films are a very broad genre and include various sub-genres, which may all share some of the features of the other genres.

Since the genre feature films places special emphasis on the various characters that form part of the film, style is also something that should be taken into consideration in connection with the presentation of the subtitles. The style tells the subtitler how to render the utterances of the various characters in the film when it comes to degree of formality and language variation, for instance, which is essential for how the characters appear (Pedersen 2011: 117). Since various features of the spoken language may underline a certain style, a general neutralisation of the language can affect the perception of the different characters or the atmosphere.

At the same time as striving to remain loyal to the ST, the subtitler must also consider whether or not to follow existing production norms. Such production norms may be found in translation briefs prepared by the commissioner, in in-house guidelines prepared by the subtitling company or the broadcaster, or the norms may reflect the subtitler’s personal preferences (Pedersen 2011: 116). The term production norms has not been discussed earlier, but what Pedersen is most likely referring to in this connection are the translation norms discussed in section 4.3, namely Chesterman’s process and product norms, which reflect the translational behaviour of professional translators and the expectations of the TT readers when it comes to a given type of translation. Such norms may range from the various technical aspects of the subtitling process to the subtitling of swear words, such as
toning down the use of swear words in the subtitles – that is, finding milder equivalents or cutting down on the number of swear words. However, it may sometimes seem to be a rather difficult task for the subtitler, maybe even impossible, to stay completely loyal to the ST at the same time as adhering to the various subtitling norms, and the extent to which the subtitler had managed to do this is often a matter of discussion.

The second parameter presented in the table above is the target-text audience. Pedersen stresses the age group of the TT audience, their level of education and specialised knowledge as factors that should be taken into consideration in connection with the overall decision-making (2011: 117). However, most of these factors are more relevant to the subtitling of ECRs, as the question often arises whether or not a certain ECR needs to be elaborated on, or whether it should be retained. Nevertheless, the age group of the audience may also affect the extent to which very strong language is used in the subtitles, although the subtitles should preferably reflect the original dialogue in the most truthful manner. Furthermore, Nedergaard-Larsen states that the subtitler should make an assessment of the degree of knowledge that the TT audience is likely to have of the ST language and culture before deciding on how to present the TT (1992: 46).

When a translation is conducted into English from a rather exotic language such as Danish, the subtitler should presume that the general knowledge of the ST language and culture is rather limited among the TT audience. In a broad sense, this means that if the subtitles vary from the ST, the TT audience may be deprived of important information, as the feedback effect from the dialogue is likely to be of less help to the TT audience than if the ST were in English and the subtitling in Danish. Furthermore, it may also cause some confusion if the feedback effect from the non-verbal audio and non-verbal visual channels does not correspond with the subtitles.

The last parameter presented in the table above is the broadcaster of a film or programme, and broadcasting time is mentioned as one of the factors that may have an influence on the subtitling. For instance, the subtitler may not always be provided with information on the TT audience, but if the subtitler knows at what time of the day a film or programme is broadcast, this could be a possible indication of the age group of the TT audience – whether the whole family will be watching or only adults – which may furthermore have an impact on various decisions that the subtitler has to make (Pedersen 2011: 118). In the UK, the watershed marks the time of the day
when broadcast material is aimed mainly at an adult audience, and this includes the use of very strong language (see section 4.4.1). Therefore, broadcasting time may be decisive for whether the subtitler chooses to use strong language or very strong language when rendering foreign-language swear words.

Furthermore, the identity of the broadcaster may also be of particular importance to the subtitling of a film or programme. If the broadcaster is a public service channel, such as the BBC in the UK or DR in Denmark, there may be certain obligations that have to be met, and certain guidelines that the subtitler has to follow. Such guidelines often pertain to the presentation of the subtitles, including exposure time and other technical aspects which ensure that the vast majority of the viewers are able to read the subtitles. But since public service channels are also regarded as educators, additional demands may be placed on the content of the subtitles (Pedersen 2011: 118). This may include the extent to which strong language is to be used.

### 5.2 Specific considerations

The six remaining parameters that Pedersen discusses all pertain to individual translation problems. Nedergaard Larsen also presents a model of aspects that should be taken into consideration in connection with individual translation problems, and her model is very similar to Georgakopoulou’s observations on the same matter (2009: 29). The table below, however, only presents some of the aspects that may be relevant to the subtitling of swear words:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specific considerations (individual translation problems)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Function</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Descriptive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Evocatory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Relevant to plot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Media-specific constraints</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Redundancy/feedback effect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- From speech to writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Time and space constraints</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Considerations regarding individual translation problems (Source: Nedergaard-Larsen 1992: 47-48; Georgakopoulou 2009: 29; Pedersen 2011: 105-115)
Nedergaard-Larsen and Georgakopoulou both stress the function of an element as an important aspect in connection with individual translation problems. The function of an element is not only decisive for how but also whether an element is to be translated (Nedergaard-Larsen 1992: 47). Lack of time or space, for instance, may imply that certain ST elements are omitted if regarded redundant. Nedergaard-Larsen mentions three different functions that can be ascribed to certain elements, namely descriptive, evocatory and relevant to plot. Not all three functions are equally relevant to the discussion of swear words, which are mainly used as a means to express emotions or attitudes in various ways. Therefore, swear words can be said to be descriptive and underline certain character traits or be evocatory and generate a certain atmosphere. But they are not likely to be of major importance to the plot of a film. However, an exception to this is a film such as South Park: Bigger, Longer & Uncut, where swearing or dirty talk actually form part of the plot.

The second aspect in the table above is related to what Gottlieb describes as the polysemiotic nature of the audiovisual medium; that is, the interaction between the various semiotic channels. As discussed in section 2.2 on the audiovisual media, polysemiotic texts are comprised of four different semiotic channels – the verbal audio channel, the non-verbal audio channel, the verbal visual channel and the non-verbal visual channel. If two or more of the channels are at play at the same time conveying the same message, the level of interaction between the semiotic channels is said to be high. This also means that an overlap of information from the various semiotic channels may result in intersemiotic redundancy (Pedersen 2011: 113-114).

Intersemiotic redundancy is closely related to the aforementioned feedback effect, which is a result of the additive nature of subtitles. The feedback effect may occur through either the verbal channel, in that the original dialogue remains unchanged, or through the visual channel, in that the image contains certain elements that supplement the dialogue. Furthermore, the feedback effect can be of either a positive nature and support the subtitler in his work, or it can be of a negative nature and act as a constraint. But the impact of the feedback effect from the dialogue largely depends the viewers’ knowledge of the ST language (Nedergaard-Larsen 1992: 35).

However, redundancy can also be found within the dialogue itself. This is what Gottlieb (1998: 247) refers to as intrasemiotic redundancy, which may be a result of spontaneous speech, such as repetitions, false starts, ungrammatical constructions and unfinished sentences. Due to the switch
from the *spoken mode to the written mode*, a certain degree of formalisation of the dialogue is required, which automatically results in the omission of various linguistic elements that are characteristic of the spoken language and may be difficult to render in writing (Georgakopoulou 2009: 26). However, Gottlieb states that stylistically important oral features such as swearing are also prone to be omitted, and he claims that this may not only result in a quantitative reduction, but it also normalises the text (2008b: 232).

Sometimes, however, the subtitler does not have any other option but to present a condensed version of the ST dialogue due to the infamous *time and space constraints*, which is especially the case in connection with rapid speech (Pedersen 2011: 115). But it should also be borne in mind that various expressions have a much stronger effect in writing than they have in speech, which may call for some alterations in the subtitles regardless of whether time and space allow it (Nedergaard-Larsen 1992: 34). Nevertheless, it is important to remember that “[t]he task of the subtitler involves constant decision-making to ensure that the audiovisual programme is not bereft of its style, personality, clarity…” (Georgakopoulou 2009: 30).

Factors such as intonation, facial expression and body language may compensate for possible loss of information in the subtitles. But it should also be borne in mind in connection with the discussion of the function a swear word, and why the subtitler may have chosen to render it in the way that he has, that the combination of all the semiotic channels should be taken into consideration.
6. Analysis

The previous chapters have dealt with audiovisual translation with special focus on subtitling, what distinguishes subtitling from other forms of audiovisual translation and the various constraints that pertain to subtitling. Furthermore, various aspects of swearing have been discussed, such as how swear words relate to different taboo areas, what distinguishes swear words from bad language in general, and a typology of swearing has been presented. The notion of norms has also been discussed, including how norms both derive from and affect behaviour, and which norms are found in subtitling. Lastly, various influencing parameters have been presented, relating to both the subtitling situation in general and individual translation problems. In the following chapter, a quantitative and a qualitative analysis will be conducted of the collected data, which comprise all the Danish and English swear words used in the 20 episodes of *The Killing*. But first *The Killing* and its main characters will be presented, and various aspects pertaining to the subtitling situation will be discussed in section 6.1. Furthermore, the criticism that *The Killing* has been subject to will be discussed in section 6.1.1.

In the quantitative analysis in section 6.2, focus will be on studying the number of omissions and translations of various Danish swear words, and a comparison will be made between the types of swear words used in the Danish dialogue and the English subtitles, respectively, as well as the taboo areas from which they derive. Furthermore, section 6.2.1 will contain a discussion on the results of the quantitative analysis. In section 6.3, studies on the perceived severity of swear words will be presented, the results of which will be applied in the qualitative analysis in section 6.4. Section 6.4.1 will focus on the use of the word *fuck* in the original dialogue and how this has been rendered in the subtitles. Section 6.4.2 will establish which Danish swear words have been rendered as *fuck* in the English subtitles, and where they are ranked in terms of severity. While section 6.4.2.1 will focus solely on episode 15, which contains most instances of *fuck* in the subtitles, the use of *fuck* in the rest of the series will be dealt with in section 6.4.2.2. All the examples will be supported by a transcription of the context in which *fuck* appears. Furthermore, there will be a discussion on the results of the qualitative analysis in section 6.4.3. Lastly, section 6.5 will contain discussion on swearing in general and the attitudes towards swearing in the audiovisual media.
6.1 The Killing

_The Killing (Forbrydelsen)_ is a Danish crime drama series, which mainly revolves around Detective Chief Inspector Sarah Lund, the mayoral candidate Troels Hartmann and the family of a 19-year-old high-school girl whose murder Sarah Lund and her partner are working to solve. Sarah Lund has planned to move to Sweden with her Swedish fiancé, but the murder forces her to stay in Denmark and head the investigation. Sarah Lund has a tendency to lose herself in details and become very absent-minded when puzzling over a problem. She becomes so engrossed in solving the case that she dissociates herself from her fiancé, her son and her mother. Sarah Lund’s partner, Detective Chief Inspector Jan Meyer, is her complete contrast. He is supposed to fill her position when she moves to Sweden, but instead they embark on the investigation together. He is outgoing and talkative but also very hot-tempered. His remarks often bear the impress of either sarcasm or frustration, and he is also the character who swears the most. Jan Meyer assigns high importance to family life. He is happily married and has three daughters, but Sarah Lund’s sudden ideas at all hours deprive him of spending as much time with his family as he would like to.

Throughout the series, several politicians at the city hall are under suspicion of both the murder and misleading each other. When evidence is found that links Troels Hartmann and his office to the murder, it poses major problems in connection with the ongoing election campaign. Troels Hartmann is Major of Education and a candidate for the post as Lord Major, which is presently held by Poul Bremer, who is also in the firing line at one point, suspected of hiding important information relevant to the murder. Troels Hartmann is a very optimistic and righteous politician, and he is very enthusiastic about his work. His wife’s death two years ago still tortures him, but he is now dating Rie Skovgaard, his policy adviser, who is very sharp and has a winning mentality, but she is also somewhat mysterious. As a consequence of various suspicious incidents that have occurred in the wake of the murder, the trustworthiness of both Rie Skovgaard and Troels Hartmann’s campaign manager and lifelong political partner, Morten Weber, is put into doubt. Morten Weber’s past is marked by alcohol and medicine abuse, but he has now completely changed his life and has become highly acknowledged and very dedicated to his work.

At the same time, Theis and Pernille Birk Larsen are grieving for their daughter, Nanna, who has been brutally murdered. But they are also trying to get on with their lives. Theis Birk Larsen is a furniture remover and has his own removal firm. He is a man of few words and with a very sad
mine. When he was younger, he got on the wrong side of the law, but meeting Pernille and having Nanna turned him into a different man. In addition to Nanna, Theis and Pernille Birk Larsen have two sons named Anton and Emil aged seven and six. One of the employees in the removal firm is Vagn Skærbaek, who is also Theis Birk Larsen’s best friend. They have known each other for years, and Vagn Skærbaek takes care of the business when Theis Birk Larsen is unavailable. He was also a criminal when he was younger, but unlike Theis Birk Larsen, Vagn Skærbaek is still mixed up in shady dealings. He does not have a family of his own, but he considers himself as part of the Birk Larsen family, and the children regard him as their uncle.

It can be difficult to brand *The Killing* as one particular genre, as it contains different elements from various genres. However, it is first and foremost a crime series, or rather a police procedural series, focusing on the investigation of a gruesome murder that has been committed. It can also be characterised as a psychological thriller due to the many plot twists and action-packed, hair-raising scenes, as we follow the police in their hunt for the killer. But the murder also highly affects the lives of many people in different ways, both personally and professionally, which furthermore makes it a drama series.

Great emphasis is placed on reflecting the personality of the various characters in the series in order to help the viewers form an idea of who the killer might be. The atmosphere is generally rather dark, reflecting the negative ways in which the murder affects not only the girl’s family, but also Sarah Lund’s personal life and Troels Hartmann’s election campaign. Various people are under suspicion and wrongly accused of the murder, which has severe consequence for some of them. At the city hall, politicians point fingers at each other and dark secrets are unveiled. There is a lot of tension between the various characters caused by frustration, resentment and distrust.

Since *The Killing* is a Danish series with English subtitles, the viewers are not expected to have a great deal of knowledge of the ST language. Although the feedback effect from the non-verbal audio and non-verbal visual channels is quite strong in terms of intonation, facial expressions and body language, the same cannot be said about the feedback effect from the verbal audio channel. It is not possible to say exactly who the intended viewers of *The Killing* are. But it was discussed in section 5.1 on general considerations in connection with subtitling that broadcasting time could give an indication of the age group of the audience, and therefore also help the subtitler make decisions.
on how to solve various translation problems, for instance how to translate foreign-language swear words.

In the UK, the strongest language is only allowed on the BBC after the 9pm watershed, and since the criticism of the subtitling of The Killing was based on the use of what the BBC considers to be the strongest language, and the alleged severity of the subtitled swear words compared to the relatively mild swear words in the original dialogue, it is presumed that the series was broadcast after 9pm. Even if The Killing were broadcast before the 9pm watershed, implying that the swearing were to be toned down in the subtitles, the feedback effect from the verbal audio channel would reveal the use of the strongest language in the original dialogue, and the only way to hide it would be to bleep out certain words. Nevertheless, the series also contains strong violence, which would not be possible to hide in any way.

However, in order to ensure that the criticism was not caused by the use of the word fuck before the watershed, I sent an email to the BBC, in which I asked a number of questions, including who the intended viewers of The Killing were, and at what time of the day the series was broadcast, to which the BBC answered that they wanted the series to reach an audience that was as wide as possible. Nevertheless, it was broadcast at 9pm on Saturday nights in double episodes, which means that it was broadcast after the watershed and therefore mainly aimed at an adult audience (Midjord 2012b).

This also means that the use of the strongest language was criticised despite the fact that the series was broadcast after the 9pm watershed. It was established in section 4.4.1 on swearing in subtitles that the BBC does not have any clear subtitling norms apart from those pertaining to the subtitling for the deaf and hard-of-hearing, and it is unclear to which extent they can be applied to the subtitling of foreign-language films and programmes. Therefore, I also made an attempt to contact the company responsible for the subtitling of The Killing in order to hear whether they follow certain in-house guidelines on how to subtitle swear words, or whether the BBC provided them with any guidelines. Although I did get a reply, they made it clear that it was confidential and was not to be used for the purpose of this thesis.
There are no clear-cut guidelines on the subtitling of swear words, since there are no one-to-one solutions. However, there is consensus among various authors on norms in subtitling (Lindberg 1989; Ivarsson and Carroll 1998; Diaz Cintas and Remael 2007) that subtitles should not be subject to censorship, but in case of an excessive number of swear words, they both should and tend to be toned down in subtitles due to their increased effect in writing.

6.1.1 Criticism of *The Killing*

In the autumn of 2011, the Radio Times revealed that the BBC had sent a memo to the company responsible for subtitling *The Killing*, Voice and Script International (VSI), requesting them to tone down the swearing in the subtitling of the second series. This resulted in quite a number of articles in both British and Danish newspapers. What caused all the commotion was a complaint from a discontented viewer claiming that relatively inoffensive swear words had been translated almost exclusively into *fuck* in the first series. The memo specifically said that:

“Going forward, the consensus here is that we should keep an eye on the number of expletives being added. Where there are a number of options of which word to use, err on the side of caution, and use the less strong word.” (Crawford 2011).

In response to the criticism, a source from VSI stated that in a review of all 20 episodes, they found that 25% of the instances of the word *fuck* in the subtitles had been added by the subtitler, while 75% were already part of the original script. According to the subtitler responsible for the series, he had used the word *fuck* in those cases where the Danish swear word was meant to be offensive. The source also stressed that it should be kept in mind that translation is subjective to a great extent. Danish swear words rarely translate directly into English, and the meaning of a Danish swear word can range from a relatively mild swear word in English to a more offensive one. What is most important is that the language fits the overall tone of the programme (Crawford 2011).

The story was not only printed in the Radio Times but in a number of other newspapers, including the Telegraph, the Guardian and the Daily Mail, which reported that “The BBC has ordered subtitlers to tone down the swearing in The Killing” (Singh 2011), “translaters went overboard and translated nearly all expletives into the word “fuck” in English, no matter their level of offence in
the Danish language” (Sweney 2011), “team mistranslates mild Danish expletives into the F-word” and “a quarter of mild swear words in script were changed to F-word” (Revoir 2011). This last example, which actually mitigates the accusations, shows that some of the newspapers have found it difficult to relate the claim that “relatively inoffensive Scandinavian expletives had been rendered almost exclusively as the f-word” (Crawford 2011) to the figures provided by the VSI.

It also seems that some of the Danish newspapers have chosen to interpret the information provided by VSI in their own way. Politiken, for instance, wrote that the subtitler of The Killing had loaded the English subtitles with the word fuck, and no justification was found in the original dialogue for 25% of the instances of the word in the subtitles (Christensen 2011). Therefore, Politiken is actually saying that the figures provided by VSI in defence of their own work support the claim that the use of fuck was unjustified.

According to the Radio Times, the BBC editor of programme acquisitions, Simon Chilcott, confirmed that there had been some concerns regarding the subtitling of The Killing. He stated that the memo was a reminder to focus on consistency between the subtitles and the various characters and the context. If it was found that one episode contained more instances of the word fuck than the rest of the series, they would have to check up on consistency. Although acknowledging subjectivity as one of the pitfalls of subtitling, he also claimed that a direct translation in many cases would be rather odd and not read well (Crawford 2011).

Because no information was provided on who exactly filed the complaint, or why the dissatisfaction of one single viewer caused so much stir, I asked the BBC whether the viewer who filed the complaint had any special knowledge about subtitling. Furthermore, I asked whether the BBC had told the subtitling company to tone down the swearing due to one single viewer complaint. To this the BBC said that they did not know the identity of the complainant, because the complaint was not sent to the BBC but to a daily newspaper. They furthermore said that:
“The English swear words used would always be chosen based on context – the style of the programme, the tone of each scene, the effect the writer was trying to achieve, and the approximation of which English swearword would best suit in that instance. At no point did the BBC tell the subtitlers to tone down the swearing or change the meaning of certain words to avoid using swear words. Accuracy was always our main concern.” (Midjord 2012b)

Nevertheless, if it truly is the case that the majority of the instances of fuck in the subtitles is unjustified, it does pose a problem as the BBC clearly underline in both the BBC Editorial Guidelines (43) and in their e-mail to me that “[t]here are no swear words which are not allowed in subtitles, as long as their use is justified and in context.” (Midjord 2012b). Whether there is justification for the use of the word fuck in the subtitles, or whether relatively mild swear words have been translated almost exclusively into fuck can only be established by conducting a comparative study of the subtitles and the original dialogue. This will be done in the following sections.

6.2 Quantitative analysis

This part of the analysis will provide an overview of the number of swear words in the original dialogue and in the subtitles, respectively. It will also provide an overview of the types of swear words used and the taboo areas from which they derive. Table 3 below presents the number of Danish swear words in the original dialogue as well as the number of times that particular swear word has been either omitted or rendered as a swear word in the subtitles:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of swear word</th>
<th>Omissions</th>
<th>Translations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fanden/faen/fandeme: 177</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skid: 65</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helvede: 58</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pis: 22</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kraftedeme: 17</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lort: 12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fuck: 10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satan: 7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Røv: 6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gud: 2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shit: 2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total: 378</strong></td>
<td><strong>Total: 231 (61,1%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Total: 147 (38,9%)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sgu: 115</th>
<th>Omissions: 112</th>
<th>Translations: 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total incl. ‘sgu’: 493</strong></td>
<td><strong>Total incl. ‘sgu’: 343 (69,6%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Total incl. ‘sgu’: 150 (30,4%)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Type and number of swear words in the original dialogue, and number of omissions and translations in the subtitles

Table 3 shows that there is a considerable reduction in the number of swear words in the subtitles. Actually, more than half of all the swear words have been omitted, and the number is even more striking when sgu is included. The reason that sgu has been separated from the rest of the swear words is that since 2011, sgu has officially been declared a non-swear word and is merely considered to be a so-called particle (see section 3.2.1). Therefore, it can be discussed whether sgu should form part of the table above, as it highly affects the total number of swear words in the original dialogue and omissions in the subtitles. Sgu constitutes more than one fifth of the total number of swear words in the original dialogue, but only three out of the 115 instances of the word have been rendered as a swear word in the subtitles.
Nevertheless, *sgu* was officially a swear word when the subtitles were produced. Furthermore, although it has been declared a non-swear word, many people still regard it as one. According to the study conducted by Rathje and Grann (2011: 3), 47% of the young respondents and 69% of the elderly respondents regard it as a swear word. According to my own study, were the respondents were specifically asked whether they consider *sgu* to be a swear word despite the fact that it has been declared a non-swear word, 54% of the respondents stated that they consider *sgu* to be a swear word (Appendix 2). However, when asked to assess the severity of *sgu* on a scale of 0 to 6, only 25% rated it a 0. These studies will be presented in section 6.3.

As discussed in section 3.1.1, words of abuse do not form part of this analysis and are therefore not represented in the table above. There are a few examples of terms of abuse in the original dialogue, the majority of which have been rendered as terms of abuse in the subtitles as well, such as *idiot, bastard* and *towelhead*. Given that terms of abuse do not have the same function as swear words, it would be rather difficult to compare the severity of swear words to the severity of terms of abuse, which are targeted directly at another person and are generally meant to offend. Furthermore, since the word *fuck* is not used as a term of abuse in the subtitles, it is not of relevance to this thesis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of swear word</th>
<th>Number of swear words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hell</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fuck</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shit</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bloody</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christ</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Damn</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piss</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jesus</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crap</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>156</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: *Type and number of swear words in the English subtitles*
While table 3 shows how many times a particular swear word in the Danish dialogue has been either omitted or translated in the subtitles, not taking into consideration how it has been translated, table 4 shows the type and number of English swear words in the subtitles. This means that the Danish swear words in table 3 have all been translated into one of the words in table 4. For instance, table 3 shows that fuck is uttered ten times in the original dialogue, but twice the subtitler has chosen not to render the word in the subtitles. Nevertheless, table 4 shows that fuck is used 30 times in the subtitles, which indicates that various types of Danish swear words have been rendered as fuck in the subtitles. This will be examined more closely in the qualitative analysis.

Table 5 below provides an overview of the number of swear words in the original dialogue and in the subtitles distributed over the various taboo areas and subcategories from which the swear words derive. The swear words presented in table 5 derive from the taboo areas of religion, diseases and sex and bodily effluvia, which were also presented in section 3.2 on types of swear words. There are, however, no examples of euphemisms in either the original dialogue or in the subtitles, and this group of words does therefore not form part of the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Taboo area</th>
<th>Original dialogue</th>
<th>Subtitles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>359 (72,8%)</td>
<td>86 (55,1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Diabolic</td>
<td>242 (67,6%)</td>
<td>63 (73,3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Celestial</td>
<td>117 (32,4%)</td>
<td>23 (26,7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex and bodily effluvia</td>
<td>117 (23,7%)</td>
<td>57 (36,5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Bodily effluvia</td>
<td>101 (87,9%)</td>
<td>27 (47,4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Body parts</td>
<td>6 (3,4%)</td>
<td>0 (0,0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Sex</td>
<td>10 (8,6)</td>
<td>30 (52,6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diseases</td>
<td>17 (3,4%)</td>
<td>0 (0,0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>13 (8,3%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>493 (100%)</td>
<td>156 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: Number of swear words in the original dialogue and the subtitles distributed over various taboo areas
Table 5 shows that the majority of swear words in both the Danish dialogue and the English subtitles belong to the taboo area of religion. More specifically, they belong to the religious group of swear words with a diabolic reference. Table 3 shows that especially different variations of the diabolic word *fanden* play a dominating role in the Danish dialogue, while table 4 shows that *hell* is the most frequently used swear word in the subtitles. Furthermore, table 5 shows that words from the taboo area of sex and bodily effluvia also constitute a large part of the swear words used in both the original dialogue and the subtitles. The difference, however, is that while words referring to bodily effluvia predominate in the original dialogue, especially different variations of the word *skid*, words referring to sex predominate in the subtitles, of which there is only one, namely *fuck*.

Only one word constitutes the group of swear words referring to diseases in Danish, namely the word *kraftedeme*. However, it only constitutes a very small part of the total number of swear words used. In section 3.2.2 on types of swearing, it was established that disease-related swear words are not very common in English. This is also confirmed in table 4 and 5 above, which contain no examples of English disease-related swear words. Furthermore, table 5 contains a category entitled “other”, which refers to a swear word that occurs in the English subtitles, but which does not fit into any of the categories above, namely *bloody*. The word was discussed in subsection 3.2.1.1 under religion, but it was also established that nobody knows exactly from where it derives.

### 6.2.1 Discussion on quantitative analysis

What can be concluded at this stage is that the subtitler has followed the existing norm of cutting down on the number of swear words in the subtitles. In fact, only approximately 30% of the swear words in the Danish dialogue have been rendered in the English subtitles – 40% if *sgu* is not included. There may be many reasons as to why the percentage figures are so high. The time and space constraints may be an influential factor together with the shift from the spoken to the written mode, and since swear words seem to appear more offensive in writing, a cut down on the number of swear words in the subtitles may be required. The fact that swear words have a stronger effect in writing is also supported by my own study where 60% of the respondents claim that this is the case. Nevertheless, 66% of the respondents either disagree or highly disagree that the subtitler may choose to leave out some of the swear words in the subtitles (Appendix 2).
Whether this is also the case in the UK is difficult to assess, as no studies have been conducted on this matter, probably since subtitled programmes only constitute a small percentage of what British people watch on TV. But studies conducted on the attitudes towards swearing on TV in the UK show a general agreement that swearing is tolerated after the watershed (the ASA, the BBC, the BSC and the ITC 2000). The watershed regulates the type of programme or film broadcast at different hours of the day, so that people know when they can expect to be exposed to very strong language. But given the fact that British people are not used to seeing swear words on screen to the same extent as Danish people are means that greater caution is called for when translating swear words, which may also be the reason for the high reduction figures.

In a study conducted on the subtitling into Danish and Spanish of the American film *Grand Torino*, the reduction figures were not nearly as high. It was found that the subtitlers had rendered 73,2% and 84,8%, respectively, of the English swear words in the subtitles (Sharma 2010: 57-58). The reason for the difference between the reduction figures in the two films may be that the subtitles studied in connection with *Grand Torino* were on DVD, while *The Killing* was broadcast on the public service channel BBC Four, which has certain obligations towards its viewers.

Furthermore, the chance that people from Denmark and Spain understand English is considerably larger than the chance that British people understand Danish. This does not mean that subtitlers will deliberately try to hide information from the viewers, but people automatically pay special attention to inconsistencies or missing information when the feedback effect from the verbal audio channel is strong. Therefore, as Danish is a quite exotic and unfamiliar language in the UK, the subtitler responsible for the subtitling of *The Killing* may have taken the liberty to leave out swear words for different reasons, such as to make room for other information or to spare the viewers.

However, in a study conducted on the subtitling of swear words into Swedish in the American film *Nurse Betty*, it was found that the subtitler had omitted 63% of the swear words in the subtitles, which tallies well with the 69.6% reduction in the subtitling of *The Killing*. The results also showed that the reduction figures were the same on both public and commercial TV as well as on DVD (Mattsson 2006: 3-4). This may indicate that the norm is to make an excessive reduction in use of swear words in the subtitles, whether they are in English or in a Scandinavian language. Therefore, it is also likely that the difference in the reduction figures between *The Killing* and *Grand Torino* is
due to the general function of swear words. Although the use of swear words is important in relation to some of the characters in *The Killing* and to stress the tension in various scenes, it has a very specific role in *Grand Torino* where the heavy use of strong swear words and terms of abuse is the main feature of the leading character of the film.

However, what is most striking is that the results of the quantitative analysis in section 6.2 are inconsistent with both the criticism of the subtitles and the review conducted by the subtitling company as a reaction to the criticism. The review showed that 75% of the instances of *fuck* in the subtitles could also be found in the original script. However, according to my analysis, there are only ten instances of *fuck* in the Danish dialogue, while there are 30 instances of the word in the subtitles, of which eight have been transferred from the original dialogue. This means that only approximately 25% of the instances of *fuck* in the subtitles can be found in the original dialogue, which is the exact opposite of what the subtitling company claimed to be the case. Nevertheless, the quantitative analysis also showed that there were 493 swear words in the original dialogue, which means that only a small fraction of the Danish swear words have been rendered as *fuck* in the subtitles.

Therefore, the question can be asked whether there has been a misunderstanding, possibly between the subtitling company and the Radio Times. Since the subtitling company was unwilling to cooperate, it was not possible for me to establish whether this is the case. However, in order to find out whether the reason for the discrepancy could be that the subtitled DVD version that I had bought from the BBC Shop was different from the one broadcast on BBC Four, I contacted the BBC Shop who confirmed that the two versions are the same (Midjord 2012a).

Despite the fact that there seem to be some inconsistencies between the various figures, and that the use of *fuck* in the subtitles is not as extensive as initially presumed, it needs to be established which Danish swear words have been rendered as *fuck*, and it will be assessed why the subtitler has estimated that *fuck* is the proper translation of certain Danish swear words in certain situations. This will be done in the qualitative analysis in section 6.4. But first, the perceived severity of various English and Danish swear words needs to be established.
6.3 Studies on swear words

It has been discussed that it may prove to be very difficult to establish what actually characterises swear words. However, what may prove to be even more difficult is to establish the degree of severity or offensiveness of swear words. Whether or not a swear word is perceived to be severe depends on a variety of factors other than the nature of the word, such as function and context. Therefore, the perceived severity of swear words may also prove to be highly subjective and differ significantly from one person to another. Nevertheless, studies have been conducted on the perceived severity of swear words, the results of which will be presented below.

A British study was conducted in 2000 on people’s attitudes towards swearing, commissioned by the ASA, the BBC, the BSC and the ITC. It was conducted among 1,033 respondents who were asked to assess the severity of a number of swear words and terms of abuse on a scale of 0 to 3 – 0 indicating that they did not consider the word in question to be a swear word. Some of the results are presented in the table below, which shows the perceived severity of various words based on their mean value. To base a result on the mean value of something can be quite inaccurate if it is a matter of extreme values. However, this is not the case here as the leap between the lowest value and the highest value is minor.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Ranking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>*Cunt</td>
<td>2.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Motherfucker</td>
<td>2.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fuck</td>
<td>2.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piss off</td>
<td>1.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shit</td>
<td>1.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crap</td>
<td>0.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bloody</td>
<td>0.88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6: Swear words and terms of abuse ranked according to perceived severity (Source: the ASA, the BBC, the BSC and the ITC 2000: 10-14)

* Not a swear word
Table 6 shows that apart from the words *cunt* and *motherfucker*, which are not regarded as swear words but terms of abuse and do therefore not form part of this analysis, *fuck* is regarded as the most severe English swear word – much more severe than *piss off*, which is ranked second most severe. Therefore, the claim that relatively inoffensive swear words have been translated into *fuck* in the subtitiling of *The Killing* may first and foremost be based on the perception that *fuck* is the most severe swear word in English by far. However, whether *fuck* is more severe than the Danish swear words from which it has been translated can only be assessed by looking at similar studies on Danish swear words.

Rathje and Grann (2011) have conducted a study on swear words among 13-14 year-olds and 65-93 year-olds in Denmark. First, the 844 respondents who took part in the study were asked to state whether or not they consider a number of words to be swear words. Second, they were asked to assess the severity of six different swear words on a scale of 6 to 1 – 1 being most severe. The results showed that *fuck* was considered to be the most severe swear word among young people, while *for fanden* was considered to be the most severe swear word among elderly.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Young</th>
<th>Elderly</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fuck</td>
<td>1.4 (most severe)</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For fanden</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>1.9 (most severe)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shit</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pis</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sgu</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For pokker</td>
<td>5.4 (least severe)</td>
<td>5.1 (least severe)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7: *Danish swear words ranked according to perceived severity* (Source: Rathje and Grann 2011: 6)

However, what may prove to be a bit problematic in connection with Rathje and Grann’s study is that most of the swear words that formed part of the second question on perceived severity also formed part of the first question. This means that the respondents were asked to assess the severity of certain words that they might not even regard as swear words. Furthermore, Rathje and Grann’s study does not include all the swear words that form part of my data.
Therefore, I chose to conduct my own study which included all of the swear words used in the Danish dialogue. I combined the two questions above into one question and asked the respondents to assess the severity of all the swear words on a scale of 0 to 6 – 0 indicating that the word in question is not considered a swear word, which is also how the British study was conducted. All three studies were conducted in the form of questionnaires. I chose to distribute my questionnaire via Facebook and also asked a number of people from across Denmark to pass it on, after which I received 112 responses. I did conduct an identical questionnaire in English, sent it to a number of people from across the UK and asked them to pass it on. However, I did not receive enough responses to conclude anything from the results.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Ranking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Helvede</td>
<td>3.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satan</td>
<td>3.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kraftedeme</td>
<td>3.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fuck</td>
<td>3.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fanden</td>
<td>3.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shit</td>
<td>1.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lort</td>
<td>1.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pis</td>
<td>1.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Røv</td>
<td>1.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skid</td>
<td>1.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sgu</td>
<td>1.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gud</td>
<td>0.85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8: Danish swear words ranked according to perceived severity (Appendix 2)

In none of the studies above, the respondents were provided with any context when asked to consider the severity of the swear words. This would most likely have influenced the results, but it would also have been a more comprehensive study. Table 8 shows that some of the swear words are perceived to be very close in terms of severity, such as *kraftedeme, fuck* and *fanden*, which is why I have rounded the numbers off to two decimals. Nevertheless, the swear word considered to be most
severe is helvede. Table 7 showed that fuck and fanden were considered to be most severe in Rathje and Grann’s study, and these two swear words are also ranked among the most severe ones in my study. However, is rather difficult to make an exact comparison between the most severe swear words in the two studies, given that the respondents were not asked to assess the severity of words such as helvede, satan and kraftedeme in Rathje and Grann’s study.

Nonetheless, table 7 and table 8 show that the ranking order is the same for those words that do form part of both studies, although the perceived severity differs somewhat. The respondents in my study generally perceive the swear words to be less severe than the respondents in Rathje and Grann’s study. Why this may be the case will not be discussed in detail here, but it could be a result of the age difference, since age is one of those factors that may affect both the use and perception of swear words. While the respondents in Rathje and Grann’s study are between the age of 13 and 14 as well as 65 and 93, the majority of the respondents in my study are between the age of 20 and 39.

6.4 Qualitative analysis

It was established in section 6.2 that there is a considerable reduction in the number of swear words in the subtitles, and there may be many reasons why this is the case. Swearing is a very complex phenomenon, and translating swear words even more so. The subtitler should always strive to render the ST in the most truthful manner, but on the other hand, an excessive number of swear words in the subtitles may seem overwhelming. Especially if they are perceived to be very severe, which sometimes may require toning down the swear words. The studies on perceived severity established that there are different ‘degrees’ of swearing, ranging from mild swear words to quite severe swear words. However, even the perceived severity of a swear word may vary according to how and when it is used.

This section will focus on the translation of the word fuck, which the subtitler has been accused of using excessively. However, it was also established in section 6.2 that fuck only occurs 30 times in the subtitles out of the 493 swear words used in the Danish dialogue. Nevertheless, this section will shed some light on which Danish swear words have been translated into fuck, and where they are ranked in terms of severity compared to fuck, based on the studies on perceived severity in section
6.3. The translations will also be discussed in relation to the context in which the word *fuck* is used, which may give an indication of why the subtitler has made the choices that he has.

However, a matter that should be touched upon first in connection with the quantitative analysis in section 6.2 is that the number of English swear words in table 4 and table 5 are not consistent. The main reason for this is that table 4 only shows the number of times a particular Danish swear word has been either omitted or rendered in the subtitles, but it does not take into consideration whether a non-swear word has been rendered as a swear word in the subtitles. According to Rathje and Grann (2011: 7), *hold kæft* is not characterised as swearing but as bad language, since it does not refer to a certain taboo area. *Hold kæft* is often rendered as *shut up* or *shut your mouth* in English when telling someone to stop talking. But *hold kæft* can also be used as an exclamation expressing surprise, disgust, annoyance or something different. It has been used in this sense in the original dialogue a couple of times, where it has been translated into *Jesus* or *Jesus Christ*. In theory, this means that a non-swear word has been translated into a swear word. Of course, the use of *hold kæft* is not necessarily considered appropriate, but it is not regarded as swearing either. One example of this is found in episode 13:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Original dialogue</th>
<th>Subtitles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>33:28</td>
<td>Vagn Skærbæk</td>
<td><em>Hold kæft</em>, hvor de ringer, mand. Der er nogen, der har set fjernsyn i går, hvad?</td>
<td><em>Jesus Christ!</em> The calls we get</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33:30</td>
<td>Theis Birk Larsen</td>
<td>Bare hiv det stik ud</td>
<td>Unplug the phone</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Furthermore, there are a number of instances where the subtitler has chosen to add a swear word in the subtitles. In the example below, which is found in episode 7, the swear word *shit* has been used in the subtitles despite the fact that no swear word can be found in the Danish dialogue. There is a considerable reduction in the number of characters in the subtitles compared to the original dialogue in this example, which may be due to lack of time and space as there are only a maximum of three seconds available to present the utterance on screen. However, in that the subtitler has chosen to
reduce “en eller anden fuldstændig tåbelig forklaring” to “some shit”, he has also chosen a simpler and more informal solution although they both have more or less the same meaning. Nevertheless, the statement is uttered in informal settings that would allow the use of swear words, and *shit* is considered to be a rather mild swear word according to table 6:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Episode 7</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Person</td>
<td>Original dialogue</td>
<td>Subtitles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22:33</td>
<td>Hans Buchard</td>
<td>Hvad siger han?</td>
<td>What did he say?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22:35</td>
<td>Jan Meyer</td>
<td>Han har en eller anden</td>
<td>Some shit about</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>fuldstændig tåbelig forklaring</td>
<td>meeting the girl at his flat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>om, at han mødte pigen i lejligheden</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22:38</td>
<td>Jan Meyer</td>
<td>Ja, så er hun så ikke set siden</td>
<td>She hasn’t been seen since</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The next example is from episode 14, where Jan Meyer turns up at the town hall where the party leaders are having a meeting. He has come to arrest Troels Hartmann who has been charged with the murder of Nanna Birk Larsen. Outside of the city hall, a large number of journalists are waiting to get a picture of Troels Hartmann and ask him questions. Jan Meyer is clearly annoyed with the obtrusiveness of the journalists and tells them to *go away* in a harsh tone of voice. In the subtitles, however, he tells them to *piss off*. The two interjections can be used synonymously, but since *piss off* is considered as swearing, it can also be claimed that the subtitler has added more colour to the utterance. However, according to table 6, *piss off* is not considered to be very severe although it is ranked as the second most severe swear word in the study:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Episode 14</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Person</td>
<td>Original dialogue</td>
<td>Subtitles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15:14</td>
<td>Jan Meyer</td>
<td>Gå væk, sagde jeg</td>
<td>Piss off</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Another example is found in episode 11, where mayoral candidate Troels Hartmann is being questioned by the police. He does not seem to know why he is there, but Sarah Lund and Jan Meyer believe that he might be the murderer. Troels Hartmann asks twice about what is going on, using the emphasiser *hvad fanden* the first time to underline his dissatisfaction. This has been translated into *what the hell* in the subtitles. But *what the hell* appears twice on screen, although Troels Hartmann does not use a swear word when repeating his question in the original dialogue:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Original dialogue</th>
<th>Subtitles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10:46</td>
<td>Sarah Lund</td>
<td>Hvem har nøgler til den lejlighed?</td>
<td>Who has a key to the flat?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:48</td>
<td>Troels Hartmann</td>
<td>Altså, jeg har jo en…</td>
<td>I do, and then…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:53</td>
<td>Troels Hartmann</td>
<td>… ja, så er der et ekstra sæt til udlån i en skuffe på kontoret. Altså hvorfor?</td>
<td>… there’s a spare key in a drawer in the office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:57</td>
<td>Sarah Lund</td>
<td>Men det er dig, der bruger lejligheden?</td>
<td>But you use the flat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:58</td>
<td>Troels Hartmann</td>
<td>Sig mig, <em>hvad fanden</em> er det her? Har I noget imod at indvie mig lidt i, hvad det er, der foregår?</td>
<td><em>What the hell</em> is this? Tell me <em>what the hell</em> is going on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:02</td>
<td>Sarah Lund</td>
<td>Den bil, du kørte i, er den bil, som Nanna Birk Larsen blev fundet i</td>
<td>The car you drove is the car Nanna was found in</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the example above, the subtitler has once again chosen to make a considerable reduction in the number of characters in the subtitles at the same time as adding a swear word. Condensation is a natural consequence of the switch from the spoken to the written mode, even though there may not be any major time or space issues. Nonetheless, there is no immediate explanation for why the
subtitler has made the decision to add a swear word. In one of the previous examples, the word shit in the subtitles could be regarded as a condensed version the original dialogue, despite the fact that it is also regarded as a swear word. However, with the use of what the hell, the subtitler has placed additional emphasis on and added colour to the utterance. Since hell did not form part of the British study on swear words, it is not possible to comment on its perceived severity.

6.4.1 *Fuck* in the original dialogue

The fact that various swear words have been added in the subtitles is not what has resulted in the viewer complaint and the massive media attention. It is the word *fuck*, which allegedly appears more frequently in the subtitles than it should, in that relatively inoffensive Danish swear words have been rendered almost exclusively as *fuck*. According to the study that I have conducted, 91% of the respondents disagree or highly disagree that the subtitler may choose to use more severe swear words in the subtitles than those used in the original dialogue (Appendix 2). Although the subtitler of *The Killing* may have done this to a certain degree, it has been established that the use of *fuck* in the subtitles is not nearly as extensive as claimed in the media.

As already mentioned, *fuck* appears ten times in the original dialogue, of which it has been rendered in the subtitles eight times – each time as *fuck*. That is, the subtitler has not chosen to use another swear word if *fuck* is the word used in the original dialogue. The main reason for this is most likely the feedback effect from the verbal audio channel, as the majority of the viewers are likely to recognise the word *fuck* in the original dialogue and therefore expect it to appear in the subtitles as well. If there is no sign of a recognisable item from the original dialogue in the subtitles, the viewers may think that the subtitler has mistranslated the original dialogue, either intentionally or unintentionally.

*Fuck* is a colourful word and has been used in a variety of ways. For instance, it is has been used as the intensifying adjective *fucking* “expressing a high degree of a following gradable noun” (Ljung 2011: 33). An example of this is found in episode 14, where it is used as a means to express annoyance or contempt. Theis Birk Larsen is drunk at a bar, where a group of boys are gathered around a pool table. On his way out of the bar, Theis Birk Larsen pushes one of the boys as he walks pass him, which causes some stir. Another boy trips Theis Birk Larsen up in revenge, and he
falls down on the floor. He gets up and grabs the boy in a threatening manner, but when he calms down, lets go of the boy and leaves the bar, one of the boys calls him a “fucking nar”:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Episode 14</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Original dialogue</th>
<th>Subtitles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>39:01</td>
<td>Boy at bar</td>
<td>Fucking nar, mand!</td>
<td>Fucking idiot!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another way in which *fuck* has been used in an adjectival manner in the original dialogue is the idiomatic expression *fucked up*. An example of this is found in episode 4, where the high-school boy Oliver Schandorff is being questioned by the police regarding the murder of Nanna Birk Larsen, and he talks about what he said to her the last time he saw her. Here *fucked up* is used to express something that is considered reprehensible or terribly wrong:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Episode 4</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Original dialogue</th>
<th>Subtitles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>32:21</td>
<td>Oliver Schandorff</td>
<td>Jeg kaldte hende en masse dumme ting…</td>
<td>I called her a bunch of names… <em>fucked-up</em> names</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>fucked-up</em> ting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The English word *fuck* can be used in the exact same way in both Danish and English, which the examples above show. However, *fuck* has been incorporated into the Danish language to the extent that it can also be used with Danish morphology or as part of idiomatic expressions such as the curse *Fuck dig*. An example of this is found in episode 14 in the very same scene as in the example above, where Theis Birk Larsen falls foul of a group of boys. Here *Fuck dig* has been rendered as *Fuck you* in the subtitles and is used to express discontent or contempt:
Episode 14

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Original dialogue</th>
<th>Subtitles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>39:52</td>
<td>Boy from bar</td>
<td>Fuck dig, mand</td>
<td>Fuck you, man</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A number of times, *fuck* has also been used idiomatically as part of a phrasal verb with Danish inflexion as in the following example from episode 9, where Sarah Lund and Jan Meyers’ superior Hans Buchard uses the expression *at fucke op* to state that they have messed up or made a serious mistake, which is rendered in the past form of *to fuck up* in the subtitles:

**Episode 9**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Original dialogue</th>
<th>Subtitles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>32:29</td>
<td>Hans Buchard</td>
<td>Men det ændrer ikke ved, at I har <em>fucket op</em></td>
<td>Notwithstanding, you <em>fucked up</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nevertheless, two instances of the word *fuck* in the original dialogue have not been rendered in the subtitles at all. One example is found in episode 3, where Sarah Lund is brought face to face with a suspect, John Lynge, who is afraid and desperate and ends up jumping out of a window. In this example, *fuck* is used as the adverb *fucking* to add emphasis to the statement. There are no time or space issues, and the feedback effect from the verbal audio channel reveals the fact that the subtitler has failed to render a swear word in the subtitles. Furthermore, the non-verbal audio and non-verbal visual channels in the form of intonation and body language are very strong and reflect a man who is desperate. But maybe this is also the reason why it has been left out – that the feedback effect from the other channels is so strong that there is no need to over-elaborate:
The other example is found in episode 13, where Troels Hartmann is attacked with red paint symbolising blood. The person responsible for this action is most likely not a supporter of Troels Hartmann, and the news that Troels Hartmann is under suspicion of the murder of Nanna Birk Larsen has prompted this person to smear red paint onto Troels Hartmann and call him a murderer.

The example below shows that the adjective *fucking* is used twice in succession. The first time, it is rendered as *fucking* in the subtitles as well, but the second time, it has been left out of the subtitles.

The reason for this is most likely that it is considered redundant. The person is being pulled away at the same time as shouting at Troels Hartmann. Therefore, the second *fucking* is barely heard and sounds more like an echo:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Episode 13</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43:37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The various examples presented above show that *fuck* has been used in different ways and in different situations in the Danish dialogue, and that in all cases but two it has been rendered as *fuck* in the subtitles as well. It has been used as the adjective *fucking* to intensify a following noun and as the adverb *fucking* to place emphasis on a statement. But it has also been used as part of various idioms – the curse *fuck dig* expressing discontent or contempt, the phrasal verb *at fucke op* meaning...
to mess up, and the phrasal adjective fucked up describing something or someone that is considered reprehensible. In the following section, the translation of various Danish swear words into fuck will be dealt with.

6.4.2 Fuck in the subtitles

As previously mentioned, fuck occurs 30 times in the subtitles, which means that distributed over 20 episodes, it occurs 1.5 times per episode. However, the use of the word is obviously not distributed evenly over the 20 episodes. Four episodes contain no instances of fuck in the subtitles, while the remaining episodes contain up to five instances of the word. Eight instances of fuck have been transferred directly from the original dialogue, while 22 are translations of various Danish swear words other than fuck. The majority of these swear words have a diabolic reference, but words referring to bodily effluvia and body parts are also represented together with the only disease-related word in the Danish dialogue:

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fanden:</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helvede:</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skid:</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Røv:</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satan:</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kraftedeme:</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pis:</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9: Types of Danish swear words that have been translated into ‘fuck’ in the subtitles, and number of times they have been translated into ‘fuck’

Episode 15 contains the highest number of the word fuck in the subtitles, namely five, none of which have been transferred from the original dialogue. Therefore, episode 15 may have played an important role in the criticism. Simon Chilcott said to the Radio Times that “[i]f there are suddenly lots more uses of the f-word in one episode, we have to check it’s consistent with the script and the rest of the series.” (Crawford 2011). Episode 15 contains 31 swear words in the original dialogue,
20 of which are considered to be among the most severe. 16 out of the 31 swear words have been rendered in the subtitles, which means that slightly more than half of all the swear words have translated. Although it is not possible to establish whether episode 15 stands out in any particular way, the scenes in which the word fuck occurs are somehow characterised by fear, desperation and anger. All five instances of the use of the word fuck in episode 15 will be analysed below in order of occurrence, followed by an analysis of the various Danish swear words that have been translated into fuck in some of the other episodes.

6.4.2.1 fuck in episode 15

The first word that has been translated into fuck in episode 15 is the Danish word pis, which derives from the taboo area of bodily effluvia. It has been used 22 times in the original dialogue altogether and rendered 13 times in the subtitles, of which it has been rendered as fuck only once. Pis is not regarded as a very severe swear word, and neither are the rest of the swear words that derive from the broad taboo area of bodily effluvia and sex (apart from fuck), the mean value of which ranges from 1.59 to 1.69 according to table 8. In the example below, pis is used as the prefix pisse- in the original dialogue, which functions as a means to intensify the following adjective. In the subtitles, however, fuck is used as a curse, which can be claimed to be a more concise solution, but it may also be claimed to have a stronger effect in that it is targeted at another person.

Jan Meyer is on his way to party member Jens Holck’s house while speaking with his superior Lennart Brix on the phone. Jan Meyer is desperate and in a hurry, as he has come to believe that Jens Holck is the murderer. He also believes that Sarah Lund is there with him, and that she might be in danger. Jan Meyer is trying to convince Lennart Brix that Jens Holck should be their main focus, and that they should send some patrol cars to Jens Holck’s house immediately. Lennart Brix is very hesitant, because he does not believe that Jan Meyer has enough evidence to make such accusations and repeatedly stresses that there is every indication that Troels Hartmann is the guilty one. Jan Meyer knows that they are running out of time. He is speaking fast with a raised, firm tone of voice, and he is clearly frustrated that Lennart Brix is not listening to what he is saying, despite the fact that he has the blue lights and the sirens on:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Original dialogue</th>
<th>Subtitles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>03:22</td>
<td>Jan Meyer</td>
<td>Hans stationcar er ikke blevet set, siden embedsmanden blev kørt ned i går aften, og Lund snakkede om, at han havde en affære. Han var ved at blive skilt</td>
<td>His station wagon hasn’t been seen since the civil servant was run over</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03:28</td>
<td>Lennart Brix</td>
<td>Det er ikke noget bevis, Meyer</td>
<td>That doesn’t prove anything</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03:29</td>
<td>Jan Meyer</td>
<td>Jeg gav Lund den adresse</td>
<td>I gave Lund the address</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03:30</td>
<td>Jan Meyer</td>
<td>Nu kan jeg ikke engang få fat i hende. Jeg kan ikke få fat i Holck. Send nu bare de vogne derud, for helvede</td>
<td>Send the patrol cars out now</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03:34</td>
<td>Lennart Brix</td>
<td>Hvad med Hartmann?</td>
<td>What about Hartmann?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03:35</td>
<td>Jan Meyer</td>
<td>Hartmann er pisseligegyldig</td>
<td>Fuck Hartmann!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03:37</td>
<td>Jan Meyer</td>
<td>Du hører ikke en skid af, hvad jeg siger. Vi skal have fat i Lund, inden det er for sent. Nu!</td>
<td>Listen to me. We need to get to Lund now!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The most frequently used swear word in the original dialogue altogether, and the word that has been translated most frequently into *fuck*, namely six times, is the diabolic word *fanden*. According to table 8, it is also ranked among the most severe Danish swear words together with all the diabolic swear words, the only disease-related swear word, and the only swear word related to sex. But as established in section 6.3, there is not a major difference between the perceived severity of the most severe swear words in Danish, and they are generally not considered to be very severe with a mean
value ranging from 3.50 to 3.94. Therefore, context seems to be of major importance to how the swear words are to be interpreted. Out of the 177 instances of the use of *fanden* in the original dialogue, it has been rendered as a swear word 64 times. 50 times it has been translated into *hell*, which is also a diabolic swear word. However, this indicates that the six instances of *fanden* being rendered as *fuck* may stand out in some way.

In episode 15, *fanden* has been translated into *fuck* twice. In the first example, Jan Meyer has arrived at the address of the above-mentioned suspect, party leader Jens Holck, whom he finds pointing a gun at Sarah Lund. Jan Meyer repeatedly tells Jens Holck to drop the gun and get down on the floor, but he does not do as told. The situation is very tense, and Jan Meyer speaks with a raised and desperate voice. He knows that if Jens Holck keeps disobeying, or if he makes one wrong move, he will have no option but to shoot him, and he fears this almost as much as he fears Sarah Lund being shot. Therefore, the translation of *fanden* into *fuck* in the example below can be claimed to reflect the gravity of the situation and the desperate attempt to gain control of the situation. While *for fanden* is used as an interjection loosely tied to “*smid den pistol*” as a means to stress the significance of the utterance, *fucking* is used to place emphasis on the noun gun:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Original dialogue</th>
<th>Subtitles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18:35</td>
<td>Jan Meyer</td>
<td>Stop der, Holck!</td>
<td>Hold it, Holck!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18:37</td>
<td>Jan Meyer</td>
<td>Smid den pistol!</td>
<td>Drop the gun!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18:39</td>
<td>Jan Meyer</td>
<td>Smid pistolen, <em>for helvede</em>!</td>
<td>Drop the gun, <em>for Christ’s sake!</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18:42</td>
<td>Jan Meyer</td>
<td>Ned på jorden med dig!</td>
<td>Get down</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18:44</td>
<td>Jan Meyer</td>
<td>Smid den pistol, <em>for helvede</em>!</td>
<td>Drop the gun!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18:47</td>
<td>Jan Meyer</td>
<td>Smid den, <em>for fanden</em> da!</td>
<td>Drop the <em>fucking</em> gun!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18:50</td>
<td>Jan Meyer</td>
<td>Kom så! Ned på jorden!</td>
<td>Come on! On the ground!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The diabolic word *helvede* is the second most frequent swear word to have been translated into *fuck*, but the times *helvede* occurs in the original dialogue altogether only makes up one third of the times *fanden* occurs in the original dialogue. Nevertheless, *helvede* is perceived to be the most severe swear word according to table 8. It is rendered as a swear word in the subtitles 23 times and five times as *fuck*, of which one instance is found in episode 15.

In the following example, Pernille Birk Larsen has met a man at a hotel bar. They end up in his room, but suddenly she goes berserk. The man finds Vagn Skærbæk’s number on Pernille Birk Larsen’s mobile and asks him to come pick her up. When he arrives, Pernille Birk Larsen is completely passive and does not say a word. Vagn Skærbæk tries to get her dressed, but he is too angry, and she is not of much help. He is also angry because Theis Birk Larsen is missing, and no one knows that he has spent the day drunk at a bar and is sleeping at a shelter. Vagn Skærbæk feels that a heavy burden rests on his shoulder, in that he has to take care of the business and keep the family together. In the car on their way home, Pernille Birk Larsen is still not saying a word, and this is the last straw for Vagn Skærbæk. There is deep frustration in his voice, which Pernille Birk Larsen clearly also notices, because after this she begins to speak. Here *helvede* is used as an interjection loosely tied to “så sig nu noget” in order to stress that Vagn Skærbæk is tired of being met with a wall of silence, and *for fuck’s sake* is used in the very same way:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Original dialogue</th>
<th>Subtitles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25:47</td>
<td>Vagn Skærbæk</td>
<td>Jeg har prøvet at få fat i dig. Politiets ring er kommet.</td>
<td>I tried to call you. The police called</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25:50</td>
<td>Vagn Skærbæk</td>
<td>De siger, at de har fundet ham, der har gjort det.</td>
<td>They found the killer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25:54</td>
<td>Vagn Skærbæk</td>
<td>Forstår du, hvad det er, jeg siger til dig, Pernille? De har fanget ham, og han er død</td>
<td>Do you understand what I’m saying? They caught him, and he’s dead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26:15</td>
<td>Vagn Skærbæk</td>
<td>Charlotte har kørt drengene over til din far og mor. Så kommer hun bagefter.</td>
<td>Charlotte took the boys to your parents’ house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26:26</td>
<td>Vagn Skærbæk</td>
<td>Ved du, hvor Theis er?</td>
<td>Do you know where Theis is?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26:33</td>
<td>Vagn Skærbæk</td>
<td>Så sig nu noget, for helvede!</td>
<td>Say something, for fuck’s sake!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the second example of *fanden* being translated into *fuck* in episode 15, Theis Birk Larsen is back home from his drinking spree and is looking for Pernille. But Vagn Skærbæk is furious at Theis Birk Larsen for disappearing without notice and leaving him to take care of everything. He is shouting at the top of his voice, and he uses a swear word in nearly every utterance. Here *hvad fanden* is used to place emphasis on the entire utterance, while *what the fuck* is used as an interjection as the rest of the utterance has not been rendered in the subtitles:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Original dialogue</th>
<th>Subtitles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>38:52</td>
<td>Vagn Skærbæk</td>
<td>Ja, hvor fanden tror du, hun er?</td>
<td>Where the hell do you think?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38:54</td>
<td>Vagn Skærbæk</td>
<td>Hun er deroppe, hvor du burde være. Hvad fanden tænker du på, din idiot?</td>
<td>She’s where you should be. What the hell’s wrong with you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38:58</td>
<td>Vagn Skærbæk</td>
<td>Og lader være med at dukke op på kirkegården. Vi løber rundt og leder efter dig, mand. Hvis du har så pisseondt af dig selv</td>
<td>You didn’t come to the cemetery. We ran around looking for you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39:04</td>
<td>Vagn Skærbæk</td>
<td>Og vi står der med Pernille og drengene, mand</td>
<td>We were there with Pernille and the boys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39:10</td>
<td>Vagn Skærbæk</td>
<td>Du har ikke styr på en skid, mand!</td>
<td>You’ve completely lost it!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The last word that has been translated into *fuck* in episode 15 is *rov*. It appears six times as a swear word in the original dialogue altogether, of which it has been translated into *fuck* three times. *Røv* is one of those words that can be difficult to typecast as a swear word, and it is also one of those words whose severity may be much affected by context. *Røv* is not ranked high on the severity list in table 8 together with *pis, skid* and *lort*, but if the respondents were provided with some context and were not only to base their decision on the word itself, they would most likely have assessed it differently. More precisely, the curse *Op i røven med…!* would unquestionably be considered more severe than the intensifying prefix *rov*- in, for instance, the adverb *rovhamrende* or the adjective
In all three instances of røv being translated into *fuck*, it has been used as a curse both in the original dialogue and the subtitles.

In the example below, Rie Skovgaard has found out that Troels Hartmann was in his holiday cottage on the night of the murder. It was his wedding anniversary, and he had been feeling guilty about his wife’s death for a long time, but that particular night everything culminated. He felt so depressed that he got drunk and attempted to commit suicide. The only person who knew about it was Morten Weber. Rie Skovgaard is very angry and disappointed that Troels Hartmann did not tell her anything, because three days after the incident, he asked her to move in with him as if nothing had happen. Therefore, she breaks it off with him but continues to discuss politics, which does not please Troels Hartmann, who only wants a chance to explain himself and win her back:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Episode 15</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>43:16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43:20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43:26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43:29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 6.4.2.2 *Fuck in the rest of the series*

In the following examples, the use of the word *fuck* in some of the additional episodes will be discussed, starting with episode 14. This is also an episode that contains several instances of the word *fuck* in the subtitles, namely four, two of which have been transferred from the original dialogue, while the other two are translations of the word *fanden*. However, what characterises the
use of *fuck* in this episode is that all four instances of the word are found in one scene. This is the same scene as discussed in section 6.4.1, where Theis Birk Larsen is drunk at a bar and pushes a boy on is way out, which results in a string of attempts at revenge from both sides.

The example below shows that *fuck* appears four times in a row in the subtitles. The main reason for making the decision to translate *fanden* into *fuck* in addition to the two instances of *fuck* that are already present in the original dialogue is most likely an attempt to underline that there is a certain atmosphere, and that the group of boys that Theis Birk Larsen falls foul seem to come from a certain youth environment, since they are wearing big baggy clothing, drinking beer at a grotty bar in the middle of the day and speaking in a certain way. They could even be described as a gang rather than merely a group, as they follow Their Birk Larsen when he leaves the bar and assault him in an alley.

Two of the instances of *fuck* in the example below were discussed in section 6.4.1 in connection with the use of *fuck* in the original dialogue, namely the curse *Fuck dig* and the intensifying adjective *fucking*. The two additional instances of *fuck* in the subtitles are translations of the word *fanden*, which is used as the emphasiser *hvad fanden* both times. In the subtitles, *hvad fanden* has been rendered as *what the fuck* – once as an emphasiser and once as an interjection. While Theis Birk Larsen does not say a word in the entire scene, the utterances in the example below all express contempt, discontent or annoyance with Theis Birk Larsen and his actions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Original dialogue</th>
<th>Subtitles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>38:55</td>
<td>Boy at bar</td>
<td><em>Hvad fanden</em> laver du?</td>
<td><em>What the fuck</em> are you doing?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39:01</td>
<td>Boy at bar</td>
<td><em>Fucking</em> nar, mand!</td>
<td><em>Fucking</em> idiot!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39:42</td>
<td>Boy from bar</td>
<td><em>Hvad fanden</em> laver du?</td>
<td><em>What the fuck!</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39:52</td>
<td>Boy from bar</td>
<td><em>Fuck dig</em>, mand</td>
<td><em>Fuck you, man</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Helvede was the swear word that had been translated into fuck second most frequently after fanden. One of these examples is found in episode 20. Sarah Lund has been suspended from duty, because she is suspected of having fired the shot that killed Jan Meyer. Nevertheless, she is in Theis and Pernille Birk Larsen’s new house, which is being renovated, because she believes that Vagn Skærbæk has kept Nanna Birk Larsen captive in the basement, so she calls Lennart Brix and asks him to send a technician to the house. But when Lennart Brix arrives at the house, Sarah Lund is arrested. On the way to the police station, she finds out through the police radio that Vagn Skærbæk has taken Theis Birk Larsen somewhere, and Pernille Birk Larsen wants the police to find them. So Sarah Lund becomes desperate, hijacks the car and picks up Pernille Birk Larsen. Lennart Brix contacts Sarah Lund through the police radio and tells her to turn herself in, but she has made up her mind to continue her search for Vagn Skærbæk.

In all the instances of helvede being translated into fuck, helvede is used as an interjection loosely tied to a sentence in order to stress the significance of the utterance, while fuck is either used in the same way or as a pure interjection. In the example below, for helvede is loosely tied to “kom nu”, which Lennart Brix uses as a means to stress the significance of his utterance, since he is clearly annoyed that Sarah Lund is disobeying his orders. Although for fuck’s sake is used as a pure interjection, probably because “kom nu” has been deleted from the subtitles, it still has the same function:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Original dialogue</th>
<th>Subtitles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>38:03</td>
<td>Lennart Brix</td>
<td>Du sætter det hele over styr ved at fise rundt på den måde. Vi giver besked til grænser og broer</td>
<td>You’re jeopardising everything. We’ll tell border patrol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38:07</td>
<td>Sarah Lund</td>
<td>Nej, det er spild af tid. Han er ikke ude på at stikke af med Theis Birk Larsen</td>
<td>He’s not about to skip the country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38:10</td>
<td>Lennart Brix</td>
<td>Lund, vi har fundet ammunition på Skærbæk’s bopæl. Han er sandsynligvis bevæbnet</td>
<td>We found ammunition at Skaerbaek’s house. He’s armed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38:16</td>
<td>Lennart Brix</td>
<td>Kør tilbage med Pernille Birk Larsen</td>
<td>Take Pernille home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38:19</td>
<td>Lennart Brix</td>
<td>Der er ikke mere, du kan gøre. Kom nu, for helvede</td>
<td>There’s nothing you can do. For fuck’s sake</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The second most frequent swear word in the original dialogue is *skid*, which derives from the taboo area of bodily effluvia, and it is thus one of those words that are not considered to be very severe. It is used 60 times altogether, of which it has been rendered as a swear word 18 times and as *fuck* three times. One example of *skid* being translated into *fuck* is found in episode 18. Pernille Birk Larsen has just informed her husband that the police stopped by to pick up the keys for their new house, which is currently under renovation. The police want to look for traces of Leon Frevert, who they believe is the murderer at this point. Theis Birk Larsen is not happy about this situation. He has hired a lawyer to take care of all matters related to the police, who have not been handling the case properly, according to Theis and Pernille Birk Larsen. When he arrives at the house and finds the police in the middle of their search, he is clearly annoyed and tells them to leave. In the example below, *skid* has been used idiomatically as part of the phrasal verb *at skide på* meaning not to care,
which in the subtitles has been rendered as *give a fuck*. Although the subtitler could have chosen to write either *give a shit* or *give a damn*, he has decided that Theis Birk Larsen’s discontent, sulky look and relentlessness should be given its proper weight:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Original dialogue</th>
<th>Subtitles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>46:57</td>
<td>Police</td>
<td>Goddag. I skal lige gå udenfor</td>
<td>Hello. Go outside, please</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46:59</td>
<td>Police</td>
<td>Vi har fået en nøgle af din kone, så vi prøver lige på at…</td>
<td>Your wife gave us the key…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47:01</td>
<td>Theis Birk Larsen</td>
<td>Jeg synes, I skulle gå nu</td>
<td>I want you to leave now</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47:03</td>
<td>Police</td>
<td>Vi bliver nødt til at foretage en ransagning. Jeres hus er på listen over steder, hvor Leon Frevert…</td>
<td>We have to search it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47:07</td>
<td>Theis Birk Larsen</td>
<td>Ud med jer</td>
<td>Get out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47:10</td>
<td>Police</td>
<td>Vi har en dommerkendelse. Jeg er ked af det</td>
<td>We have a warrant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47:12</td>
<td>Theis Birk Larsen</td>
<td>Jeg vil skide på din dommerkendelse. Det her sted, det sviner I ikke til</td>
<td>I don’t give a fuck about your warrant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another example of *skid* being translated into *fuck* is found in episode 9, where Sarah Lund and Jan Meyer have just found out that the prime suspect, Rahman al Kemal, one of Nanna Birk Larsen’s teachers, is innocent. A witness had seen Rahman al Kemal carrying a girl wrapped in black plastic bags down from his flat to his car on the night of the murder. The witness also said that Rahman al Kemal was not alone that night. Sarah Lund and Jan Meyer find Rahman al Kemal’s accomplice
and bring him in for questioning, and he reveals that Rahman al Kemal actually was carrying a girl that night, but it was a Muslim girl who had escaped from her family due to forced marriage. Therefore, Rahman al Kemal did not say anything to the police because he was hiding the girl. In the meantime, Theis Birk Larsen and Vagn Skær bæk have taken Rahman al Kemal to an abandoned warehouse, where Theis Birk Larsen bashes him up, but the police arrive just in time before Theis Birk Larsen kills him.

In the example below, *skid* is used as part of the idiom *ikke en skid*, which has been translated into *fuck all*. Both are used synonymously with the pronoun *nothing*. *Skid* has been used in this sense a vast number of times, but only once has it been translated into *fuck all*. However, the situation is marked by great dejection. Jan Meyer is very angry about the fact that they have made such a huge mistake, and he also knows that it may have serious consequences for both of them:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Original dialogue</th>
<th>Subtitles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21:08</td>
<td>Jan Meyer</td>
<td>Hvad mener du? De kan ikke sigte ham</td>
<td>What are they charging him with?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21:10</td>
<td>Sarah Lund</td>
<td>Frihedsberøvelse, vold af særlig farlig karakter. Hvad havde du regnet med?</td>
<td>False imprisonment and grievous bodily harm. What do you think?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21:16</td>
<td>Jan Meyer</td>
<td>Jeg sagde jo til dig, at der var noget galt</td>
<td>I knew it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21:17</td>
<td>Sarah Lund</td>
<td>Vi gjorde det rigtige</td>
<td>We did the right thing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21:18</td>
<td>Jan Meyer</td>
<td>Det rigtige… vi har sgu ikke gjort en skid rigtigt</td>
<td>We’ve done fuck all…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21:20</td>
<td>Jan Meyer</td>
<td>Faren skal i fængsel, og Kemal er halvdød</td>
<td>The father is going to prison, and Kemal was beaten up</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Another instance of *fuck* in episode 9 is a translation of the word *røv*, which once again has been used idiomatically as a curse. This time, however, the wording of the curse is *Rend mig i røven* and has been rendered as *Fuck you*. In the example below, Troels Hartmann has summoned his group to a meeting based on the incidents that took place a couple of days earlier, when Troels Hartmann’s group gave him an ultimatum due to his alleged dishonesty, protecting a man who was presumed to be the murderer. One of the party members, Henrik Bigum, suggested that Troels Hartmann should either resign his candidacy, or they should set up another meeting the following day for a vote of no confidence. However, it appears that the presumed murderer is cleared of all accusations, and Troels Hartmann can continue his election campaign, which is not well received by Henrik Bigum. Nevertheless, Henrik Bigum chooses to apologise for the previous events. But Troels Hartmann is not ready to bury the hatchet, which results in Henrik Bigum leaving the room in anger:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Original dialogue</th>
<th>Subtitles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>36:39</td>
<td>Troels Hartmann</td>
<td>Så derfor vil jeg give dig det same valg, som du gav mig i går</td>
<td>So I’m giving you the same choice you gave me yesterday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36:46</td>
<td>Henrik Bigum</td>
<td>Hvilket?</td>
<td>What’s that?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36:49</td>
<td>Troels Hartmann</td>
<td>Enten så trækker du dig, eller også tager vi en afstemning</td>
<td>Either you step down or we take a vote on it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36:58</td>
<td>Henrik Bigum</td>
<td>Det er jo absurd. Jeg handlede kun i partiets interesse</td>
<td>This is absurd. I was only acting in the interest of the party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37:02</td>
<td>Troels Hartmann</td>
<td>Hvad vælger du?</td>
<td>What will it be?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37:10</td>
<td>Henrik Bigum</td>
<td>Fint. Fint</td>
<td>Fine. Fine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37:18</td>
<td>Henrik Bigum</td>
<td><em>Rend mig i røven</em></td>
<td><em>Fuck you</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Another swear word with a diabolic reference that has been translated into *fuck* is *satan*, which is considered to be the second most severe swear word in the Danish language according to table 8. *Satan* is only used seven times in the original dialogue altogether. Twice it has not been rendered in the subtitles at all, three times it has been translated into a swear word with a celestial reference, and twice the subtitler has chosen to render it as *fuck*.

One of these instances is found in episode 2, which is rendered in the example below. According to the police, the car that Nanna Birk Larsen was found in was a rental car belonging to Troels Hartmann’s campaign office. Sarah Lund and Jan Meyer find the parking ground where all the rental cars are parked and the person who can tell them who drove that particular car the last time. But before they get any information, Sarah Lund has spotted a mysteriously looking man, and suddenly a car drives off with an open boot. They chase the car all the way to the top of the building where they find it idling but empty. At that point, Sarah Lund utters a weak *Satans!*, which is translated into *Christ!*. But then they hear some noise, look over the railing down into a backyard and realise that driver of the car has managed to escape. Jan Meyer becomes furious and bursts out a loud *Satan da!*, which this time is translated into *Fuck!*. The reason why the two interjections have been translated differently is clearly the way in which they are uttered. While Sarah Lund’s utterance sounds like mild annoyance, Jan Meyer’s utterance is more of a shout, and his body language clearly reveals that he is furious:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Original dialogue</th>
<th>Subtitles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19:08</td>
<td>Sarah Lund</td>
<td>Meyer</td>
<td>Over here</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20:13</td>
<td>Sarah Lund</td>
<td>Det er politiet</td>
<td>Police!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20:27</td>
<td>Jan Meyer</td>
<td>Lund!</td>
<td>Lund!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20:28</td>
<td>Sarah Lund</td>
<td>Satans!</td>
<td>Christ!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20:41</td>
<td>Jan Meyer</td>
<td>Satan da!</td>
<td>Fuck!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Another instance of *fuck* in episode 2 is a translation of the only disease-related swear word in the Danish dialogue, namely *kraftedeme*. This is also the last swear word that has been translated into *fuck*. *Kraftedeme* is considered to be among the most severe swear words in the Danish language according to table 8, and it has been used 17 times in the Danish dialogue altogether. It has been translated into a swear word six times – three times into *bloody*, once into *hell* and twice into *fuck*.

In the example below, Sarah Lund and Jan Meyer are on the scent of the driver of the car. They have found out that he has previously been in jail, and that he may be hiding at the place of one of his voluntary visitors. But since it appears that she is out of town, Sarah Lund and Jan Meyer knock on the door of the neighbour, whose odd behaviour suggests that something is wrong, and that the suspect may be hiding at her place instead. Sarah Lund goes back down to the car and calls for backup, and she insists on waiting in the car. However, Jan Meyer strongly disagrees, as he wants to capture the suspect before it is too late. Furthermore, he is very dissatisfied with the fact that Sarah Lund does not carry a gun. Therefore, the adverb *kraftedeme* is used as means to place emphasis on Jan Meyer’s very firm utterance, which is rendered as the emphasising adverb *fucking* in the subtitles.

At the beginning of every episode, there is a short summing up of what has happened in the previous episodes. At the beginning of episode 3, there is a flashback to the scene in the example below, which has already been established is from episode 2. However, there has been a slight change in the subtitles in episode 3, in that “I don’t fucking think so” has been changed into “The fuck we are!”, which is an interjection expressing denial. This does not change the meaning of the utterance, but it could be an indication that different subtitlers have subtitled the episodes independently of each other. But it also shows that *fuck* has been considered to be the proper translation in both cases:
6.4.3 Discussion on qualitative analysis

The previous analysis showed that the various Danish swear words that have been rendered as *fuck* in the subtitles range from the most severe to some of the least severe swear words, according to table 8. However, the majority of the words – that is, 15 out of 22 – are considered to be among the most severe and include *helvede, satan, kraftedeme* and *fanden*, all of which derive from the taboo areas of religion and diseases. But the words *pis, røv* and *skid* from the taboo areas of bodily effluvia and sex have also been translated into *fuck*, although they are not considered to be very severe.

However, what has also been established is that the perceived severity of a swear word is not only based on the swear word per se, but rather on the context in which it appears. That is, a relatively mild swear word may be translated into a quite severe swear word in the subtitles if the context calls for it, while a relatively severe swear word may not even be rendered in the subtitles at all if
considered redundant. In some cases, it may also be the way in which the swear word is used that decides how it should be translated, and how severe it is perceived. An example of this is the word *røv*, which seems to be considerably more severe when used as a curse than when used as an intensifying prefix. This may also be a natural consequence of the function of curses, since they are targeted directly at another person. Furthermore, factors such as intonation, body language and facial expression seem to have a large impact on how a swear word is translated.

What also seems to characterise the most severe Danish swear words is that they are perceived to be quite similar in terms of severity, and there does not seem to be one word that stands out from the rest in the same way as *fuck* stands out as the most severe English swear word. The word *fanden* turned out to be the most frequently used swear word in the original dialogue by far, although it is also considered to be among the most severe swear words in the Danish language. But because it is considered to be quite severe may also be the reason why it is the most frequently used swear word – otherwise it would not have any effect. Nevertheless, it was also established that Danish swear words are generally not considered to be very severe. But does this mean that no Danish swear word besides *fuck* should be rendered as *fuck* in the subtitles?

*Fuck* is a very common swear word, but also one of the most colourful swear words in the English language, as it can be used in a variety of ways. However, it is also considered to be the most severe swear word by far. The reason for this is without a doubt the taboo area from which it derives, namely sex. While words such as *bloody* and *damn* seem to have lost their original meaning, *fucking* evokes strong associations to the sexual activity. The Danish language does not have any swear words relating to sexual activities besides the English word *fuck*, which does not seem to be as severe in Danish as it is in English. This is most likely due to the fact that it is not a Danish word, and because it is not used in its literal sense in Danish, it does not automatically evoke associations to the sexual activity. Why there are no Danish swear words relating to sex is not possible to say, but if *knep* (the Danish word for *fuck*) were used as a swear word in the Danish language, it would unquestionably be considered more severe than *fuck*.

The studies on the perceived severity of various swear words presented in section 6.3 gave an indication of which swear words in the original dialogue may have been referred to in the media as ‘relatively mild’, as no information was provided on this matter. Nevertheless, the subtitling
company stated that a word such as faen could be translated into shit, fuck or something entirely different (Crawford 2011). This underlines the fact that the severity of swear words is merely perceived and not fixed and may therefore also change according to context.

According to the British media, the subtitler of The Killing had clearly mistranslated mild Danish swear words. However, this accusation seems to reflect a rather misguided perception of what translation is. Given that no swear word similar to fuck exists in the Danish language, any translation could be claimed to be a mistranslation. The claim that certain swear words have been mistranslated, and that the translation of certain words is unjustified must be based on certain knowledge of subtitling and the severity of various swear words in both English and Danish. Therefore, I asked the BBC who had filed the complaint that resulted in the huge media coverage, as this could be a decisive factor in the matter. However, the BBC stated that:

“The complaint regarding the subtitling of the swear words was sent to a daily newspaper and not the BBC and we do not know the nationality of the complainant or whether they had any knowledge of translation or subtitling.” (Midjord 2012b).

Hence, the question arises whether BBC’s reaction to the viewer complaint and the subtitling of the second series reflects a fear of making mistakes, offending the viewers or scaring them off – especially since The Killing proved to be so popular. Subtitled foreign-language films and programmes do not constitute a large part of what is broadcast on the BBC, which means that the BBC may not yet have developed strong subtitling norms in the way that DR has in Denmark with many years of subtitling experience. This may also imply that the expectations of the viewers are based on their general attitude towards swearing and swearing on television. Nevertheless, one viewer complaint may not necessarily reflect the attitude of all viewers.
6.5 Swearing in everyday life and on television

Swearing is a very complex phenomenon in various ways, and there are a great deal of questions that remain to be answered. According to Rathje, who is the only linguist in Denmark conducting research into swear words, research is particularly lacking is the actual use of swear words. Swearing has not received a great deal of attention in language research until recently, the reason for which may be a lack of prestige in working with swear words scientifically or a fear of not being taken seriously. Furthermore, Swedish professor Lars-Gunnar Andersson states that another reason why swear words have been neglected in the research is that they are characteristic of the spoken language, which makes it much more difficult to study the actual use of swear words (Olsen 2012).

It seems that many people are appalled at the alleged brutalisation of language today, but whether people actually swear more today than previously is one of the questions that still remains to be answered. Nevertheless, especially young people are being accused of swearing far too much. One of the reasons why this may be the case is that new swear words have entered into the Danish language – words that mainly young people have embraced. While swear words relating to religion have been part of the Danish language for hundreds of years, swear words referring to bodily effluvia and sex are relatively new. Therefore, English swear words such as fuck and shit as well as the Danish pis and lort may seem more offensive to those who have not incorporated them into their vocabulary. However, this does not necessarily mean that young people swear more than elderly, but they simply use different swear words (Olsen 2012). Nevertheless, Rathje also claims that there has been a twofold increase in the use of these particular types of swear words in Danish newspapers in recent years, which reflects a significant development in the language use (Thorsen 2010).

According the study commissioned by the ASA, the BBC, the BSC and the ITC (2000), British people also seem to have noticed a rise in the use of swear words in everyday language. This is generally frowned upon, especially among people with young children. Although swearing is becoming less taboo – but also because of this – great emphasis is placed on the adherence to the watershed in order to protect especially children from overhearing strong language. In fact, there is a general dislike of the use of all types of swear words on television, particularly in the hour before the watershed, as children are likely to be among the audience.
Being a public service broadcasting corporation, the BBC has special responsibilities towards its viewers. Therefore, no programmes containing the strongest language are to be broadcast before the watershed, which is set to 9pm and continues until 5.30am, and editorial justification and appropriate signposting of strong language is always of vital importance to ensure that no one is offended. Although the strongest language is allowed on the BBC post-watershed, it is essential that the use of such words is not excessive. Strong language in general must not be used before the watershed if it is likely that children are among the audience, and it must not be included in programmes for younger children (BBC Editorial Guidelines).

Nevertheless, dissatisfaction with the use of offensive language on television has been expressed in British newspapers. In 2008, the Sunday Telegraph made an investigation into the use of swear words in programmes such as Jamie’s Ministry of Food, Traffic Cops and Natural Born Sellers broadcast post-watershed on the five terrestrial television channels, and it was found that the use of swear words such as *fuck*, *shit* and *pis* was excessive. The results gave rise to criticism despite the fact that the investigation was conducted into programmes broadcast after the watershed. But it was claimed that many young viewers might still be watching television after 9pm. Therefore, using the strongest language immediately after the watershed should not be considered appropriate. The investigation also led to discussions on curbing the use of strong language on television. According to Mediawatch-UK, broadcasters are ignoring the wishes of the majority of viewers who are offended by swearing and find that there is too much of it on television (Nikkhah 2008).

According to Andersson, it is generally agreed that swearing is more common on television today than 30-40 years ago, which may be a sign that swearing has become a more accepted phenomenon, although it is still regarded as bad language (Olsen 2012). Nevertheless, swearing in Scandinavian countries such as Denmark and Sweden is not subject to any media-related restrictions. There is no watershed which broadcasters should adhere to, and swear words are used at all hours. However, some discussions have taken place in Denmark in connection with the use of strong language on television – but on an entirely different level. One example is the recent discussion on the use of strong language in a children’s series entitled Pendlerkids broadcast by the Danish children’s channel DR Ramasjang, which is one of DR’s six television channels. The excessive number of very offensive words in the series gave rise to dissatisfaction among thousands of parents, who found that such language does not belong on a children’s channel.
Fuck, bitch and svin (which literally means pig) were some of the words used in the series, and which aroused a storm of indignation. The editor of Ramasjang did not understand the reaction and claimed that the series had an interest in showing how children actually speak, but also how they should not speak. Furthermore, she did not agree that the series inspired children to swear. On the contrary, the aim of the series was to encourage children to speak properly to each other. It showed how children play with the language and learn which words are appropriate to use, and that calling someone a bitch may have serious consequences (Rasmussen 2012).

Both the BBC and DR are national public service broadcasters funded by compulsory license fees, which is also one of the reasons why such discussions are taking place. People may find it unsatisfactory that they have to pay license fees for the promotion of offensive language. Nevertheless, the discussions on curbing the use of swear words on television, despite the fact that the watershed is already regulating the use of the strongest language, seems to indicate that British people may be less relaxed when it comes to the use of swear words than Danes are. Or is there actually more swearing on British television than on Danish television?

Was the criticism of the subtitles of The Killing merely a reaction caused by the general dislike of swearing, which ostensibly seems worse on screen, especially when people are not used to subtitles? Or can no swear words be compared to fuck in terms of severity? The BBC states that the use of the strongest language should be justified and in context, but it seems to be very unclear when or whether fuck should be used in subtitles. Hopefully, more research will be conducted on this matter in future.
7. Conclusion

The English subtitling of the popular Danish crime series *The Killing* was subject to heavy criticism when it was broadcast on BBC Four in 2011, as the subtitler had allegedly rendered relatively mild Danish swear words almost exclusively as *fuck*, which prompted the BBC to ask the subtitling company to tone down the swearing in the second series. Therefore, the aim of this thesis was to study how the subtitler of *The Killing* has dealt with the translation of various Danish swear words, and attempt to ascertain what might have caused the criticism.

Subtitling is a type of audiovisual translation that differs from other types of translation in that it entails a switch from the spoken to the written mode. Together with the time and space constraints, this often results in heavy reduction of the dialogue, which especially affects various features characteristic of the spoken language such as swear words. The audiovisual media contains four semiotic channels – the verbal audio channel, the non-verbal audio channel, the verbal visual channel and the non-verbal visual channel. Since subtitles are added to the screen without replacing any of the channels, the feedback effect may be released and either support or constrain the subtitling process. Subtitling is the most common type of audiovisual translation in Denmark, while the UK can neither be characterised as a subtitling nor a dubbing nation, since foreign-language material is not common on British television. Therefore, subtitlers have to be particularly careful when subtitling swear words, as British viewers are not used to seeing swear words on screen.

Swear words derive from various taboo areas in our lives, which is why they may have such a strong effect. What characterises swear words is that they are not used in their literal sense, but as a means to express emotions and attitudes in various ways. Some swear words have lost their literal meaning and are not considered swear words anymore, while others still have the power to evoke a reaction despite having lost their literal meaning. The taboo areas dealt with in this thesis are religion, diseases, sex and bodily effluvia and euphemisms. There are no Danish swear words that derive from the taboo area of sex, but the English word *fuck* has been incorporated into the Danish language in recent years. Swear words can be used in various ways – as interjections, curses and emphasisers, and they can also be used in idiomatic expressions. The reasons for swearing are manifold, although swear words are generally regarded as a sign of anger, frustration or pain.
The use and translation of swear words is often controlled by so-called norms. Norms are not observable per se, but they can both be reflected in and account for translational behaviour. While product norms represent the expectations of the target audience, process norms derive from the translational behaviour of professional translators. However, the two are highly interdependent. Norms are more binding than conventions or idiosyncrasies and less binding than laws or rules, but there seems to be some disagreement on whether to define norms as descriptive or prescriptive. Nevertheless, norms play a major role in the subtitling industry and are reflected in various subtitling guidelines. There seems to be a general norm that swearing should be toned down in subtitles, either in terms of quantity or severity, due to its increased effect in writing, and studies indicate that this norm is followed.

Norms are therefore one of the various parameters that may have an influence on the outcome of a translation. Such parameters are found in connection with decisions made in connection with the overall subtitling situation and also include the style of the ST, the TT audience’s knowledge of the ST language and broadcaster obligations. Furthermore, these parameters affect the decision-making in connection with individual translation problems. But the function of various ST elements and media-specific constraints may also be decisive for how individual translation problems are dealt with.

In the UK, the watershed regulates the use of the strongest language on television. Therefore, programmes containing the word *fuck* are not to be broadcast on the BBC before the 9pm watershed. Despite the fact that *The Killing* was broadcast post-watershed, the use of the word *fuck* was subject to heavy criticism, as it was claimed the mild Danish swear words had been translated almost exclusively into *fuck*. In response to this criticism, the company responsible for subtitling *The Killing* informed that they had looked through the subtitling of the series and could establish that 75% of the instances of *fuck* in the subtitles were transferred from the original dialogue, while they had added the last 25%. However, these figures did not correspond with the analysis conducted in this thesis, which established that ten instances of the word *fuck* were found in the original dialogue, of which eight were rendered in the subtitles. Furthermore, there were 22 additional instances of *fuck* in the subtitles. This means that the results in the quantitative analysis state the exact opposite of what the subtitling company claimed to be the case. However, this inconsistency may be due to a misunderstanding between the subtitling company and the media.
Furthermore, it was found that the original dialogue contains 493 swear words. Since only 22 instances of *fuck* were found in the subtitles besides the ones transferred directly from the original dialogue, it can be established that only a small fraction of the Danish swear words have been rendered as *fuck*. It was also found that only 150 swear words have been rendered in the subtitles out of the 493 swear words in the original dialogue, which means that approximately 70% of the swear words in the original dialogue have been omitted. Therefore, it can be established that the subtitler has toned down the use of swear words considerably in terms of quantity. The need to reduce the number of swear words in subtitles due to their increased effect in writing is expressed in various subtitling guidelines. Furthermore, high reduction figures are also found in other studies on swear words in subtitling, which points to the existence of strong subtitling norms in connection with the subtitling of swear words. Although it was found that a number of swear words had been added in the subtitles where no Danish swear word could be found, none of these were instances of the word *fuck*.

It was also established that the majority of swear words in both the original dialogue and in the subtitles are diabolic and derive from the taboo area of religion. Furthermore, it was found that most of the Danish swear words that have been translated into *fuck* in the subtitles are diabolic or related to diseases, namely 15 out of the 22. What characterises these words is that they are considered to be among the most severe swear words in the Danish language. This also means that seven out of the 22 instances of *fuck* in the subtitles are translations of swear words that are considered to be relatively mild. Nevertheless, this is a very small number given that the series contains 20 episodes.

Episode 15 contained most instances of the word *fuck*, none of which were transferred from the original dialogue. However, it was established that the context in which the swear words appear together with intonation, body language and facial expression all seem to have had a major influence on why various Danish swear words have been rendered as *fuck*. The inclusion of all the communicative channels in the translation of various words is also what characterises subtitling. According to the study that I conducted among Danes, which was to establish the severity of all the swear words used in the original dialogue, Danish swear words in general are not considered to be very severe. It seems that this also reflects the attitude of the viewer who filed the complaint regarding the subtitling of *The Killing*. 
Not only are Danish swear words generally not considered to be very severe, but there does not seem to be one word that stands out in terms of severity in the same way as *fuck* does in English. The reason why *fuck* is considered to be so severe is that it arouses much stronger associations to the taboo area from which it derives than any other English swear word. Since there are no similar Danish swear words, it can be claimed that any translation of Danish swear words into *fuck* will result in intensification. But the fact that the BBC reacted so strongly in connection with the criticism may reflect a fear of offending the viewers, since it seems to be the case that the use of swear words on television is generally frowned upon in the UK.
8. List of references


9. Abstract

From January to March 2011, the Danish crime series *The Killing* was broadcast in the UK on BBC Four. It was written by Søren Svejstrup and produced by DR, Denmark’s national broadcasting corporation. In November 2011, before the second series was to be broadcast, various British newspapers wrote that the BBC had told the company responsible for the subtitling of *The Killing* to tone down the swearing. The reason for this was that a discontented viewer had claimed that relatively inoffensive Danish swear words had been translated almost exclusively into *fuck*.

Therefore, the aim of this thesis is to study how the subtitler has dealt with the translation of Danish swear words in the subtitling of *The Killing* with special focus on the alleged overuse of the word *fuck* and intensification of relatively mild Danish swear words.

The data that will be analysed comprise all Danish and English swear words that occur in the 20 episodes of *The Killing*, and both a quantitative and a qualitative analysis will be conducted. The quantitative analysis will aim to establish the number and types of swear words in the original dialogue and the subtitles, while the qualitative analysis will aim to establish which Danish swear words have been rendered as *fuck*, and why this may be the case.

A great deal of research has been conducted into audiovisual translation and subtitling by scholars such as Henrik Gottlieb. Subtitling plays a major role in Denmark, but audiovisual translation in general is not very common in the UK. What characterises subtitling is that it entails a switch from the spoken to the written mode and is constrained by time as space. This often results in a heavy reduction of the original dialogue, which especially affects features of the spoken language such as swear words. Swear words derive from various taboo areas in our lives, which is why they may be considered to be offensive. Swear words are not used in their literal sense but derive from taboo areas such as religion, diseases, sex and bodily effluvia. *Fuck* derives from the taboo area of sex, which seems to be particularly taboo in English. There is no similar swear word in Danish, but *fuck* has been incorporated into the Danish vocabulary. One of the few scholars to have conducted research into the use and severity of swear words is Marianne Rathje.
The use and translation of swear words are highly controlled by norms, which can be described as collectively held preferences or beliefs. Norms derive from both the translation behaviour of professional translators and the expectations of the readers. Norms play a major role in the subtitling industry, some of which have been presented by Ib Lindberg, Jan Ivarsson and Mary Carroll. Swear words are controlled by norms because they are considered taboo, but they also have a stronger effect in writing. Therefore, norms are one of the parameters that highly influence the subtitling process, as the number of swear words both should and tends to be reduced in subtitles.

Another important parameter is the broadcaster of the programme, who in this case is the BBC. Programmes containing the use of swear words such as *fuck* are not allowed to be broadcast on the BBC before the 9pm watershed.

However, *The Killing* was subject to criticism despite being broadcast after 9pm. In response to the criticism, the subtitling company informed that in a review of the subtitles in the series, they found that 75% of the instances of *fuck* in the subtitles could also be found in the original dialogue, while they had added the last 25%. However, the analysis conducted in this thesis established the exact opposite. Ten instances of *fuck* were found in the original dialogue, and eight of them had been rendered in the subtitles. Furthermore, there were 22 additional instances of *fuck* in the subtitles. Therefore, it seems that there may have been a misunderstanding between the subtitling company and the media.

It was also found that the original dialogue contained 493 swear words, while only 150 had been rendered in the subtitles, which means that there has been a 70% reduction. Furthermore, since only 22 Danish swear words out of the 493 have been rendered as *fuck* in the subtitles, it can be established that only a fraction of the Danish swear words have been rendered as *fuck*, the majority of which were either diabolic or related to diseases. What characterises these swear words is that they are considered to be the most severe in the Danish language. A few swear words considered to be relatively mild have also been translated into *fuck*, but the context can be said to justify their use together with factors such as intonation, body language and facial expressions.

Nevertheless, according to a study that I conducted among Danes on the perceived severity of swear words, it was established that swear words in Danish are generally not considered very severe, and because *fuck* in English arouses strong associations to the sexual activity, it is considered to be the
strongest swear word by far. Therefore, any swear word in Danish can result in intensification if translated into *fuck*. Nevertheless, it is likely that the BBC reacted so strongly to the criticism due to a fear of offending its viewers.