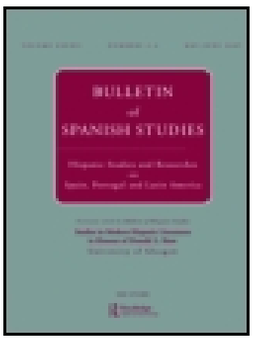

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An Approach to Audio-Visual Translation and the Film Industry in Spain and Latin America

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Research on audio-visual translation (AVT) has to date focused almost exclusively on Europe, with hardly any research on Latin-American countries. Apart from the intrinsic interest in and need to expand research to other geographic, linguistic and cultural contexts, in the case of Latin America, there is also a double motive: on the one hand, the vast magnitude of the Spanish-speaking market; and, on the other, the fact that, for many years, during the 1960s and 1970s, virtually the entire translation process into Spanish for audio-visual productions was carried out in specific Latin-American countries.[1] In particular, AVT was first carried out in Puerto Rico and Mexico, later in Argentina and, to a lesser extent, Venezuela and Colombia.[2] This would have direct repercussions on, and would heavily influence the implementation and further development of, the different translation modes (especially in the case of dubbing) in Spanish-speaking countries, and in Spain in particular.

With the exception of some historical accounts of AVT modes (by Jan Ivarsson); on subtitling (Jan Ivarsson and Mary Carroll); a brief historical review of dubbing (Frederic Chaume); and a more detailed description of the history of dubbing—focusing on dubbing companies in Spain (Alejandro Ávila and Natàlia Izard); the history of audio-visual translation in general (and that of the Spanish-speaking world in particular) is virtually unexplored.[3]

1 Adrián Fuentes-Luque, 'La historia de la traducción audiovisual en Latinoamérica: aproximación a su investigación', in *Lengua, cultura y política en la historia de la traducción en Hispanoamérica*, ed. Francisco Lafarga & Luis Pegenaute (Vigo: Editorial Academia del Hispanismo, 2012), 77–82 (p. 78).

2 Fuentes-Luque, 'La historia de la traducción audiovisual en Latinoamérica', 80–82.

3 See Jan Ivarsson, *Subtitling for the Media: A Handbook of an Art* (Stockholm: TransEdit, 1992); Jan Ivarsson & Mary Carroll, *Subtitling* (Simrishamn: TransEdit, 1998);

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In the case of Spanish-speaking Latin America, the interest and need is even greater since, for many years, all audio-visual translation for the entire Spanish-speaking market was carried out in several Latin-American countries,[4] and this eventually gave rise to a particular linguistic variation labelled 'neutral Spanish', which still characterizes Latin-American Spanish dubbing today.

This article aims to present a historical analysis of audio-visual translation in the Hispanic world. It will describe the language model (i.e., the Spanish-language variety) used in audio-visual translation in different Latin-American countries (paying special attention to Argentina); make an initial contribution to the work process and conditions of audio-visual translators in Latin America, once again, looking at Argentina in particular; and explore the use and influence of so-called 'neutral Spanish' on the implementation of the different AVT modes in the various Spanish-speaking countries. This final element is of paramount importance and relevance in the context of AVT in Latin America, as it is also linked, on the one hand, to distribution and marketing policies for audio-visual products in Spanish and, on the other, to the consequences derived from the establishment of an audio-visual linguistic policy based on an allegedly common language variety of Spanish. The notion of Spanish-speaking Latin America as a multivarious linguistic context, which produces audio-visual texts in different language varieties (which may be considered, in this sense, as multilingual texts), is consistent with Dirk Delabastita and Rainier Grutman's definition of a multilingual text as not just a text worded in different languages i.e., 'not only the "official" taxonomy of languages, but also the incredible range of subtypes and varieties existing *within* the various officially recognised languages, and indeed sometimes *cutting across* and challenging our neat linguistic typologies'.[5]

Language is the key element in enabling a given linguistic or cultural community to receive and consume audio-visual productions. Linguistic and cultural barriers can only be overcome with translation, a key tool for accessibility and intercultural and interlinguistic mediation. The technological revolution and the development of new forms of communication have also brought about an increase in the number of audio-visual platforms and formats (DVD/Blu-ray, digital terrestrial television,

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Frederic Chaume, *Audiovisual Translation: Dubbing* (Manchester/Kinderhook: St Jerome Publishing, 2012); Alejandro Ávila, *La historia del doblaje cinematográfico* (Barcelona: Editorial CIMS, 1997); and Natàlia Izard, *La traducció cinematogràfica* (Barcelona: Publicacions de la Generalitat de Catalunya, Centre d'Investigació de la Comunicació, 1992).

4 Fuentes-Luque, 'La historia de la traducción audiovisual en Latinoamérica', 80–82.

5 Dirk Delabastita & Rainier Grutman, 'Fictional Representations of Multilingualism and Translation', in *Fictionalising Translation and Multilingualism* ed. Dirk Delabastita & Rainier Grutman, *Linguistica Antverpiensia*, 4 (2005), 11–34 (p. 16; italics in the original).

digital satellite broadcasting, cable, video streaming, Internet video-on-demand etc., as well as the exponential increase in the diversity of mobile devices in recent years). None the less, audio-visual products do need translation in order that they may be distributed and received in other linguistic and cultural contexts that differ from their original versions.

From Silent Action to Silent Text

Although commonly known as 'silent movies', early films were not completely silent, as they used to be shown accompanied by music (usually piano—either live or recorded). Juan B. Heinink establishes two stages in the transition from silent to sound: an 'approximation', that is, a technological adaptation phase, in which music and sound effects are added to the film without altering the picture containing text cards or intertitles (written dialogue); and a second phase where titles are eliminated and dialogue becomes audible, and is pronounced in synchrony with the actors' movements.[6]

Jessica Taylor points out some of the main challenges the advent of sound posed:

> When the technologies of synchronized sound became widespread in the United States in the late 1920s, then, the question of how this new unification of sound and shadow would be incorporated into the already well-established film culture was a matter of great interest, revealing some of the underlying ideologies of language current at the time.[7]

Among other challenges, this translated into particular issues of accent, voice pitch and linguistic competence.

In 1926, the Vitaphone sound system was introduced as the invention that would revolutionize the film industry and would make silent films a thing of the past. Although the first attempts to synchronize a sound track with a film were carried out by Thomas Edison in 1913, it is commonly agreed that the first film to use the Vitaphone sound system to produce a synchronized sound track was *Don Juan* (Alan Crosland, 1926). Twentieth Century Fox's fierce competition would later motivate Warner Brothers to produce *The Jazz Singer* (Alan Crosland, 1927) (released in Spain in 1931 with the title *El ídolo de Broadway* [back-translated as *The Idol of Broadway*]), considered to date to be the first sound film. The sound track consisted of a series of sentences and

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6 Juan B. Heinink, 'El transcurso del cine mudo al sonoro como motivo generador de contradicciones', in *El paso del mudo al sonoro en el cine español. Actas del IV Congreso de la AEHC (1991, Murcia)*, 2 vols (Madrid: Editorial de la Univ. Complutense, 1993), I, 25–46.

7 Jessica Taylor, ' "Speaking Shadows": A History of the Voice in the Transition from Silent to Sound Film in the United States', *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*, 19:1 (2009), 1–20 (p. 1).

several songs. It was not a proper sound film, but rather a 'pre-talkie'—a partially dialogued film.[8] In this transition period (1927–1931), films were advertised as 'all dialogue' or 'part dialogue'.[9] Sound films would not fully spread among cinemas in Spain and Argentina until 1931.

An important link between film and audience during the silent years was the lecturer, or commentator. André Gandreault[10] emphasizes that, during the first few years of the twentieth century, the commentator became a key figure for audiences (especially in rural and low literacy areas, particularly in Spanish-speaking territories) in the delivery of silent films. This meant that, at least in Spain, rather than responding to an artistic need, commentators constituted a business resource, attracting audiences into the cinema by calling out to them from the entrance.[11] Commentators, Gandreault adds, coexisted with film titles, and slowly disappeared with the implementation of (translated) intertitles. Although this character and his (it was invariably a man) functions may have been studied in other geographical contexts (for example, the *bonimenteur* in France and Quebec, Japan's *benshi* and the video-jockeys or VJs in sub-Saharan African countries), the role, functions and polyvalent character of the commentator or *explicador* (in Spanish, although other labels, such as *comentarista* and *intérprete* and *lector público* were also used in certain Latin-American countries, such as Mexico) in the Spanish-speaking context have not been the subject of much research. None the less, Daniel Sánchez Salas[12] offers a useful discussion of how the personality of the Spanish cinema narrator may be defined: part actor, part cinema employee, his oral presentations drawing on the dominant traditions of contemporary stand-up comedians. The *explicador* was commonly found in Spanish-speaking cinemas on both sides of the Atlantic, particularly in Spain, Mexico and Argentina. Some of them achieved considerable acclaim, such as Manolo Vico (who became a famous theatre actor and presenter), and Federico Mediante Noceda (who worked in both Argentina and Spain and would later become a popular writer). Film critic Felipe Sassone, in two articles published in the Spanish newspaper *ABC*,[13] praised the role of Spanish commentators like Vico while

8 Alejandro Ávila, *Así se crean doblajes para cine y televisión* (Barcelona: Editorial CIMS 97, 2000), 22.

9 Taylor, ' "Speaking Shadows" ', 5.

10 André Gandreault, 'De los gritos del lector público a los susurros de los intertítulos', trad. Alma Tafoya & Ramón Alvarado, in *El cine y la memoria: ficción e historia*, *Versión. Estudios de Comunicación y Política*, 8 (1998), 125–42.

11 For a vivid account of the origin of commentators in Spain, see Fernando Méndez Leite, *Cuarenta y cinco años de cine español* (Madrid: Bailly-Baillière, 1941), 27.

12 Daniel Sánchez Salas, 'El explicador español, a través de su reflejo cultural', *Archivos de la Filmoteca*, 48 (2004), 40–60.

13 See Felipe Sassone, '¡Queremos ver … y nada más!', *ABC*, 14 June 1933, p. 14, and 'El pelmazo del cine', *ABC*, 23 August 1933, p. 14.

commenting on the appalling work of a certain Argentinian commentator at a cinema in Buenos Aires. With the advent of sound cinema, commentators became obsolete and rapidly disappeared, or took on other jobs at cinemas (becoming projectionists, technicians or ushers, for example). However, commentators continued to work in Latin-American cinemas (including Argentina) for some time, due to the relative delay in introducing sound technology, particularly in rural areas.[14]

Multilingual Versions: Accents Galore

With the coming of sound, films suddenly lost their full potential to be automatically exportable, so the major Hollywood studios were faced, almost overnight, with the need to produce films adapted to at least the most financially and linguistically relevant markets (French, German, Spanish and Swedish). Multiple language versions were preferred as supposedly the best and definitive solution, although they were actually neither the one nor the other. Ginette Vincendeau summarizes the two strategies adopted:

> One of two strategies is usually adopted: importing directors, scriptwriters and actors from each country to Hollywood (the MGM solution) or setting up production centres in Europe (the Paramount method). Both solutions, against the background of the Depression, prove equally costly and are rapidly dropped in favour of dubbing, or (more, rarely) subtitling, as we know them today.[15]

While production and reception of multiple language versions were in general relatively successful in the various European markets, including Spain, the situation in Latin America was rather different, mainly due to two factors. First, Hollywood's excessive standardization of output—in order to increase profitability—often left audiences feeling that films did not represent them and that the characters, plots and stories depicted were a barrier rather than something they could identify with. As Vincendeau rightly points out, 'MLV [multiple language versions] were, on the whole, too standardised to satisfy the cultural diversity of their target audience, but too expensively differentiated to be profitable'.[16] Second, when Hollywood studios decided to start making Spanish-language versions, they

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14 Lisa Jarvinen, *The Rise of Spanish-Language Filmmaking: Out from Hollywood's Shadow, 1929–1939* (New Brunswick: Rutgers U. P., 2012), 21.

15 Ginette Vincendeau, 'Hollywood Babel: The Coming of Sound and the Multiple Language Version', in *The Classical Hollywood Reader*, ed. Steve Neale (New York: Routledge, 2012), 137–47 (p. 137).

16 Vincendeau, 'Hollywood Babel', 140.

never even considered the fact that different varieties of Spanish, with different accents, different meanings for identical words and different systems of reference for cultural terms, existed in each Spanish-speaking country. The studios would hire (and import, in the case of Spain and Mexico, for example) US-based Spanish-speaking actors. However, these actors came from several different countries (Cuba, Mexico, Argentina, Spain etc.) and the language variety spoken by them was as diverse as it was confusing for viewers. Jarvinen describes this situation:

> Ironically, while dubbing and titling are held to have solved the problem of translation that had impelled version filmmaking, for the Spanish-speaking market, audience experience with Spanish versions and controversies such as the 'war of the accents' compromised the later implementation of dubbing and titling. Ultimately, this would open space for locally produced Spanish-language films that played to popular audiences.[17]

This 'war of accents' even had political and diplomatic repercussions, including a high-level meeting of consuls from sixteen Latin-American countries, held in San Francisco in 1931, to agree on the use of a unified version of Spanish in Spanish-speaking films.[18] This may well have been the first formal attempt at agreeing and regulating 'neutral Spanish' for audio-visual translation purposes. The Mexican consul did not attend the meeting, in protest at the alleged Spanish colonialist connotations of the meeting. None the less, Mexico would later sign up to the agreement.

Nevertheless, Spanish versions were better received in urban working-class neighbourhoods and rural areas. However, neither the press nor the cultural elite held this important sector of the audience in high esteem, and they vehemently rejected this form of audio-visual translation.

Subtitling, Dubbing … 'Hesititling'

The multiple versions paved the way for the development and widespread implementation of dubbing. Although dubbing was (and remains) considerably more expensive than subtitling, it was substantially cheaper than producing foreign-language versions. In 1932, when most studios decided seriously to embark on dubbing, they questioned the profitability of dubbing into Spanish. Thus, Warner Brothers' initial dubbing strategy included only French and German. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer opted to dub into French, German and Italian, but not Spanish, and was not planning to send

17 Jarvinen, *The Rise of Spanish-Language Filmmaking*, 103.

18 Anon., 'Un acuerdo de los cónsules en San Francisco', *Arte y Cinematografía*, 358 (February 1931), 3; available at <http://hdl.handle.net/11091/9091> (accessed 6 April 2019).

dubbed films to any Latin-American country.[19] Despite the size of the Spanish-speaking market, the major Hollywood studios' commercial priority was the European markets. Spain did count, however, as Paramount turned the Joinville studios from a multiple-language European base into a dubbing hub for several languages, including Spanish. This initiative would then be followed by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, which opened large dubbing studios in Barcelona. More than a dozen studios sprang up Madrid and other Spanish cities, and by 1935, Spain had as many as thirteen dubbing studios.[20] New opportunities opened up for Joinville's Spanish actors, as well as for sound engineers, translators etc. As more and more cinema theatres were equipped with sound, Spanish audiences, characterized by high illiteracy levels (particularly those in rural areas), rapidly embraced dubbing. Finally, on 24 April 1941, Franco issued a Ministerial Order making dubbing compulsory in Spain.

Meanwhile, Hollywood production companies did not send films dubbed in Spain to Latin-American countries, due to their previous experience and the criticism levelled against the use of the Spanish accent. However, Mexico's and Argentina's domestic film industries were booming, which forced most major Hollywood studios to redesign their market strategies for Latin America and to focus finally on distributing dubbed films in an effort to offset competition from these two Latin-American countries. Consequently, Hollywood studios were faced with two problems: on the one hand, an audience used both to listening to the original voices of American actors and to subtitles; and, on the other, the continuing issue of a form of 'neutral Spanish' that would be acceptable to all. Eventually, Hollywood companies managed to establish a balanced distribution strategy of both dubbed and subtitled versions that is still in place today throughout Latin America.

Dubbing and Subtitling in Argentina

According to Ariel Pérez the early Disney dubbings in 1938 could mark the starting point of the history of dubbing in Argentina. Pérez states that, although they did not actually yield a very positive result, they represented the onset of this AVT mode in the region, which was also heavily influenced by the arrival of television:

> En los '60 la empresa Proartel, propiedad del cubano Goar Mestre y licenciataria de Canal 13, dobló varias series. […] Luego de ese pequeño boom, llegó una mala época para el oficio. Por muchos años, la cuna del doblaje no estuvo aquí sino en el norte. En los '70, la mayoría de las

19 Jarvinen, *The Rise of Spanish-Language Filmmaking*, 112.
20 Ávila, *La historia del doblaje cinematográfico*, 24.

> series llegaban dobladas desde México—que se transformaría en líder de la industria—y desde Puerto Rico.[21]

Pérez also points out that dubbing increased again during the 1980s, thanks to the Videorecord company's dubbing into Spanish of *The Benny Hill Show* using the Umatec sound system, which was very favourably received by audiences. Although it did not gain popularity in cinemas, it was more frequently used for VHS domestic videotapes.

Carolina Liponetzky agrees with Pérez and also sets the beginning of professional dubbing in Argentina in the 1960s, with the aforementioned *Benny Hill Show*. Dubbing would later be reinforced in Argentina thanks to the recording and translation of a vast number of documentaries during the 1990s. According to Liponetzky, this implied a development of such programmes, their dubbed versions and dedicated television channels.

> De hecho el 50 por ciento de lo que se oye en Discovery Channel, Animal Planet, People and Arts, Discovery Health y Travel & Adventure está doblado en Argentina. En Buenos Aires existen 8 estudios que realizan doblajes internacionales: Palmera Records, Videorecord S.A., Video Dub, Civisa, Estudio Polaco, Gapsa, Imagen Satelital y Videograbadora, cada uno con al menos una sala de doblaje.[22]

In an article in the leading Argentinian newspaper *La Nación*, Santiago Craig deals with the issue of dubbing, and points out that many dubbing actors in Mexico actually come from Argentina. He comments that the number of specialized dubbing schools is increasing and that dubbing is establishing itself with a similar tone and accent throughout the whole of Latin America, in a 'neutral Spanish', devoid of local terms and expressions:[23]

> Más argentinos les ponen voz a películas, series y dibujos. […] Hasta no hace mucho, el doblaje era casi monopolio mexicano, pero variables que van desde las ventajas económicas hasta el desarrollo de talentos locales a partir de la enseñanza del neutro, han metido a la Argentina en la conversación.[24]

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21 Ariel Pérez, 'Mira quién habla ahora', *Clarín*, 21 January 2007; available at <http://edant.clarin.com/diario/2007/01/21/sociedad/s-01348673.htm> (accessed 10 January 2016).

22 Carolina Liponetzky, 'Tiene ya media sanción la reforma de la ley, que ordena doblar en el país y en español "local" ', *Diario Ámbito.com*, 9 December 2003; available at <https://www.ambito.com/-n3252791> (accessed 12 March 2019).

23 For a detailed description of some of the main morphosyntactic, lexical and semantic aspects of 'neutral Spanish', see Lila Petrella's article 'El español "neutro" de los doblajes: intenciones y realidades', Centro Virtual Cervantes; available at <http://cvc.cervantes.es/obref/congresos/zacatecas/television/comunicaciones/petre.htm> (accessed 12 March 2019).

24 Santiago Craig, 'El mundo del doblaje', *La Nación*, 24 August 2007; available at <http://www.lanacion.com.ar/937262-el-mundo-del-doblaje> (accessed 10 January 2016).

Both subtitling and dubbing can be found in today's Argentinian audio-visual landscape and on different platforms (cinema, free-to-air and subscription television, cable, DVD etc.). Subtitling is the norm in cinemas, where dubbing is essentially limited to children's films. In principle, subtitling is also the norm in public television and free-to-air channels (according to Article 9 of the Ley 26.522, de Servicios de Comunicación Audiovisual, any programme in a language other than Spanish must be subtitled). This situation, as will be discussed below, seems to be changing rapidly. Cable channels are free to decide whether to show subtitled or dubbed material.

Estefanía Giménez writes about dubbing and subtitling in Argentina, and warns of the dwindling number of cinemas showing films in their original versions with subtitles. According to her, in certain areas the vast majority of the films now shown in cinemas are dubbed. In fact, she suggests, Hollywood's strategy for blockbusters and teenage sagas includes prioritizing dubbing in countries such as Argentina, thus ensuring the biggest possible audience share:

> Hay películas, en especial las de animación, que están pensadas para un público infantil, pero también adulto, que solo pueden verse subtituladas a altas horas de la noche. Y como consecuencia de esta situación, hace unos meses, se lanzó la campaña 'No al doblaje'. […] Esta situación ha dado lugar a malentendidos y a avalancha de opiniones sin fundamento y carentes de toda crítica constructiva para el público en general y para los profesionales de la industria audiovisual en particular.[25]

According to Giménez, dubbing in Argentina has negative connotations, given that dubbed films are considered as being aimed at less cultured audiences, whom it is easier to censor and manipulate (because of the modified original message), or that they are a way of keeping people illiterate in terms of foreign languages and cultures by preventing them from receiving the original version.

In a recent interview about Argentina's audio-visual landscape,[26] Argentinian judge and film critic F. J. Lima defended showing the original version of audio-visual productions, and he has also been very vocal in his radio programme (*La autopista del sur* [broadcast on Saturdays 16:00–18:00, 750 kHz AM, Buenos Aires]) about the small number of original

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25 Estefanía Giménez, '¿No al doblaje? Sí al doblaje. Sí a la versión original subtitulada', Traductores Audiovisuales de la Argentina; available at <http://tavargentina.com/2014/11/no-al-doblaje-si-al-doblaje-si-a-la-version-original-subtitulada/> (accessed 11 January 2016).

26 Horacio Bernades, ' "Lo cierto es que no nos dejan elegir" ', *Página 12*, 2 November 2014; available at <http://www.pagina12.com.ar/diario/suplementos/espectaculos/5-33874-2014-11-02.html> (accessed 15 October 2015).

version cinemas around the country. Lima also agrees with Giménez's statement in reference to films for children that are increasingly becoming more popular among adults, and films for teenagers, which are distributed dubbed, leaving little or no choice for cinemas. He also adds that there seems to be an increasing number of superhero, horror and action films which are 'rated 16' (suitable for viewers aged sixteen years and over). Cinemas receive these films already dubbed, and it is extremely difficult to access them in their original versions with subtitles, thereby indicating that the 'films for children' theory is not entirely accurate.

It could be deduced from this that the major Hollywood studios, prefer to release dubbed films because that allows them to treat the whole of Spanish-speaking Latin America as a single market—thus saving them time, work and, above all, money—instead of carrying out customized audio-visual translations (not only dubbing, but also subtitling) for different Latin-American countries. Thus, 'neutral Spanish' is favoured as the language variety in a single dubbed version that supposedly caters for all Spanish-speaking Latin-American countries.

In his interview with Horacio Bernades, Lima outlines the major Hollywood studios' stealth strategy slowly to impose dubbing in Argentina:

> […] la cuestión es que, a diferencia de otros países, la Argentina tiene una tradición de respeto por las voces originales. Acá, hasta los años '80 y '90 era inconcebible que una película que no fuera para niños se estrenara doblada. En los años '30, las compañías estadounidenses lo intentaron, pero tuvieron que echarse atrás. Disney hizo un tanteo en los '90 y tampoco pudo. Recién a partir de 2000 las *majors* empezaron a imponerlo de a poquito, como para que pasara inadvertido.[27]

According to Lima, with the exception of children under seven years (who are still not fluent in reading skills) and illiterate adults (in Argentina this group accounts for only around 2% of the population), 'puede haber gente que por pereza prefiera no leer subtítulos'.[28] In his opinion, the issue of dubbing is directly related to a decline in reading skills among children and teenagers, who are finding it increasingly more difficult to understand what they read.

Such a major shift from a traditionally subtitling culture towards a new dubbing scenario is therefore being noticed not only in cinemas but also in the context of television, as Marcelo Stiletano confirms.[29] This shift seems to be structured not only within the different TV channels but also in their television programming. Thus, most premium television channels, which

27 Bernades, ' "Lo cierto es que no nos dejan elegir" '.

28 Bernades, ' "Lo cierto es que no nos dejan elegir" '.

29 Marcelo Stiletano, 'Hollywood en castellano', *La Nación*, 19 June 2011; available at <http://www.lanacion.com.ar/1382662-hollywood-en-castellano> (accessed 20 March 2012).

used to offer high quality original subtitled versions, are now offering all their programmes dubbed in Spanish. These channels (Cinecanal, Cinemax, Space, The Film Zone etc.) are 'splitting' their output and offering fully dubbed programming in their basic packages, but leaving the original versions, with subtitles, as part of their premium packages aimed at a more select audience, sometimes under a similar or a different name (e.g., Cine**max**). Some channels also relocate their subtitled programmes to dedicated, higher technological quality (i.e., high definition) subscription channels, such as Cinecanal HD. Some channels, like TNT, also prioritize dubbing, while others opt for mixed model programming.

Although it would appear that dubbing is being imposed and is replacing subtitling in Argentina (and other countries in Latin America, like Chile and Peru), the main television planners and executives vehemently state that this is not the result of a marketing strategy, but rather they link this process to social and economic changes in different Latin-American countries: emerging sectors of society that had never previously had access to cable/ pay TV now choose it as their primary source of entertainment, and prefer to watch films in their own language.

Beyond an ostensibly natural change in terms of social and economic development among viewers, the underlying question remains: to what extent has Argentinian society—in a relatively short period of time—moved from being a traditionally subtitling country, one which not only accepts, but actually prefers, dubbing? Television channels defend themselves from the accusation that they are trying to put an end to the long-standing tradition of subtitling in the country by arguing that market studies demonstrate a change in both society and viewers' habits and preferences, hence the need to adapt to a new reality. However, this approach would tend to indicate not only the existence of these emerging social groups and viewing preferences, but also a wider gap between social strata, where wealthier, more educated people have a preference for subtitled films, while poorer, less educated people prefer dubbing. A market study of Latin America—and Argentina in particular—carried out by the powerful pay television channel HBO in 2011, confirms this point.[30] According to this market research, 52% of interviewees with the highest income show a preference for subtitles, while dubbing is preferred by a similar percentage of those in the middle-income stratum.

The premium subscription TV channel HBO2 became independent from its parent HBO group in 2009, and in 2010 it started broadcasting for Latin America. Since then, all of its programming has been broadcast entirely in Portuguese for Brazil, and in Spanish for Spanish-speaking Latin America, under the slogan 'Tuyo, en español'. Since 2012, this channel has used two

30 Stiletano, 'Hollywood en castellano'.

feeds in Spanish: one exclusively for Mexico, and the other for Argentina and the rest of Spanish-speaking Latin America, with films and TV series dubbed in studios based in Mexico. This fact, in turn, poses further issues in respect of the language variety in use (again, so-called 'neutral Spanish'—often easily recognized as actually Mexican Spanish), and the much-debated issue of the 933/2013 Decreto Reglamentario de la Ley 23.316 sobre Doblaje de Películas para Televisión en Argentina, with the aim that 'la televisación de películas o series, debe realizarse en idioma castellano neutro, respetándose el uso corriente de dicho idioma en nuestro país, pero garantizando que el mismo resulte comprensible para todo el público de la América hispanohablante'.[31]

In Argentina, dubbing as a business, as an industrial, professional and linguistic activity, is regulated by three main Acts and Decrees. The first (Ley 23.316. Utilización del Idioma Castellano en el Doblaje de Películas para Televisión) dates from 1986, and establishes the compulsory use of Spanish in dubbed films or television series. It also prescribes the language variety to be used, which shall be 'castellano neutro, según su uso corriente en nuestro país, pero comprensible para todo el público de América hispano hablante'.[32] This, in principle, posed a number of issues, that have been intensely debated amongst audiences both in Argentina and throughout the rest of the Spanish-speaking countries of Latin America during the last three decades, and which deserve further analysis: how can it be considered 'neutral Spanish' if it has to be carried out 'according to the ordinary use of Spanish' in Argentina? And, if it is Argentinian 'neutral Spanish', how do we know audiences in the rest of the Spanish-speaking countries of Latin America (since translated audio-visual products are aimed not only at the domestic market, but also—and sometimes especially—at foreign markets) will understand all the nuances and expressions included in the dubbed version?

Later, in 1988 the Argentinian government issued a decree (the Decreto Nacional 1.091/1988) regulating the legal, fiscal, technical and linguistic aspects of the dubbing process for audio-visual productions, including TV series and feature films. Among various aspects, the decree defined 'neutral Spanish':

> […] se entenderá por 'idioma castellano neutro', al hablar puro, fonética, semántica y sintácticamente, conocido y aceptado por todo el público hispano parlante, libre de modismos y expresiones idiomáticas regionales de sectores. Su utilización no deberá desnaturalizar las obras,

31 The 933/2013 Decreto Reglamentario de la Ley 23.316 sobre Doblaje de Películas para Televisión en Argentina is available at <http://servicios.infoleg.gob.ar/infolegInternet/anexos/215000-219999/217418/norma.htm> (accessed 5 April 2019).

32 The 1986 Ley 23.316 is available at <http://servicios.infoleg.gob.ar/infolegInternet/anexos/20000-24999/23775/norma.htm> (accessed 5 April 2019).

> particularmente en lo que se refiere a la composición de personajes que requieran de lenguaje típico.[33]

Again, this new regulatory instrument raises additional questions, since the decree seems rigorously to dictate the language variety and how it should be used in dubbing, but does not describe in detail the textual, syntactic, phonetic or semantic aspects of that language variety. Moreover, it is at best risky to state that such a variety of Spanish should be 'conocido y aceptado por todo el público hispano parlante', in a potential audio-visual market of over 500 million Spanish speakers.[34] This statement conveys an obvious commercial purpose for the marketing and distribution of dubbed films and series in other Spanish-speaking Latin-American countries. However, it could also be argued that this ruling may draw accusations of language manipulation and audio-visual colonization, opinions which are often held by viewers from Argentina and other Latin-American countries, with regard to allegedly 'neutral Spanish' dubbing produced in Mexico. Although in a different linguistic, ethnic and geographical context from that proposed by Paul Bandia,[35] this premise would be consistent with how the colonizer's language is appropriated, adding a typically local or regional flavour to it, thereby turning it into the so-called 'third code', in line with Homi Bhabha's theory of the 'third space'.[36]

Finally, in 2013, Argentinian president Cristina Fernández de Kirchner's administration issued a controversial decree on the dubbing of films for television purposes (the Decreto Reglamentario de la Ley 23.316 sobre Doblaje de Películas para Televisión). This piece of legislation made it compulsory to dub all types of programmes (including advertisements) into the official language (Spanish) or the languages of the countries or indigenous peoples. Additionally, it establishes the obligation for all dubbings to be made in Argentina, and into the aforementioned domestic variation of 'neutral Spanish'. The law also stipulates hefty fines for those companies and networks who fail to carry out dubbing activities within Argentina or to use national dubbing casts, the money collected in this way being assigned to fund Argentina's filmmaking industry.

From the point of view of the dubbing industry, this law was very well received, since it meant a considerable boost for the sector. In this sense,

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33 The Decreto Nacional 1.091/1988 is available at <http://www.saij.gob.ar/legislacion/decreto-nacional-1091-1988-doblje_peliculas_yo_tapes.htm> (accessed 5 April 2019).

34 Juan Manuel García Campos, '¿Cuántas personas hablan español en el mundo?', *La Vanguardia*, 29 June 2015; available at <http://www.lavanguardia.com/vangdata/20150629/54433056876/cuantas-personas-hablan-espanol-en-el-mundo.html> (accessed 5 July 2015).

35 Paul Bandia, 'African Europhone Literature and Writing As Translation: Some Ethical Issues', in *Translating Others*, ed. Theo Hermans, 2 vols (Manchester/Kinderhook: St Jerome Publishing, 2006), II, 349–64 (p. 351).

36 Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London/New York, Routledge, 1994), 354.

prominent professionals agree that having legislation which states that all dubbing in Argentina has to be carried out by Argentinian dubbing actors is an extremely positive outcome.[37] According to them, the law also lays excellent groundwork for a collective bargaining agreement (including intellectual property rights for films) to protect all professionals involved in the dubbing process.

These arguments are also supported by six leading Argentinian audio-visual translators who were interviewed anonymously for this article, who believe it only fair that audio-visual products should be dubbed in the country where they will be broadcast. In their opinion, if distribution companies want their products to reach viewers, they will have to invest in this sector. All the translators interviewed agreed that another positive consequence of this law is that specific training in audio-visual translation has progressively advanced in Argentina since it came into force. However, as Valeria Agis points out, the decree 'left many questions unanswered and provided for several major exceptions. It ruled out new voice-overs for imported content that arrives already dubbed in another country's Spanish. It applies only to broadcast television, not cable TV or films shown in movie theaters'.[38] Furthermore, as highlighted by Argentina's main newspaper, *Clarín*, this law could have serious and damaging implications for the other major AVT mode, subtitling: 'Dentro de pocos meses, los subtítulos para películas, series y publicidades extranjeras quedarán desterrados de la televisión abierta y serán competencia única de las señales por cable'.[39]

AVT in Argentina: Professional and Technical Aspects

Information regarding professional and technical aspects of audio-visual translation in Spanish-speaking Latin-American countries is virtually non-existent, and Argentina is no exception. Dubbing and subtitling companies are highly reluctant to release information regarding working protocols, translation rates and deadlines.

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37 Audiovisual Télam, 'Ali-Darín: "Lo que soluciona el tema del doblaje es la voluntad política del estado" ', YouTube Video, 19 July 2013; available at <http://www.telam.com.ar/multimedia/video/1664-ali-darin-lo-que-soluciona-el-tema-del-doblaje-es-la-voluntad-politica-del-estado/> (accessed 1 March 2016).

38 Valeria Agis, 'Argentina's Dubbing Decree Praised and Parodied', *Associated Press*, 23 August 2013; available at <http://www.apnewsarchive.com/2013/Argentina's-dubbing-decree-promises-voice-overs-in-a-'neutral'-local-accent/id-c4184cc8da604f03bd099c138e029f2c> (accessed 10 March 2016).

39 'Ley de Doblaje: en la TV abierta, todas las producciones extranjeras deberán se dobladas al castellano neutro', *Clarín*, 17 July 2013; available at <http://www.clarin.com/politica/Gobierno-reglamento-doblaje-multara-cumplan_0_957504444.html> (accessed 19 March 2015).

The following information was obtained in the course of interviews with eight (out of a total number of fourteen contacted) professional Argentinian audio-visual translators, all of whom have at least five years experience in AVT (ranging from five to fifteen years). Half of the respondents had a university degree in translation or in modern languages (with some specialization in translation). Out of the remaining respondents, one had a degree in engineering, while the other three had no university degree or specific translation training. Most of them were freelance professionals working for Buenos Aires-based dubbing and subtitling companies, but they also worked for multinational companies operating in the region, such as Turner International, Fox, HBO and, more recently, Netflix. In general, the vast majority of audio-visual translators in Argentina work as freelancers for dubbing and subtitling companies (Civisa, MediaPro, Antártica etc.) or directly with audio-visual content distributors (such as Disney and Turner). Translators sign a services contract and a confidentiality agreement, together with a copyright transfer document for any translated content.

Until recently, translators were provided with a DVD containing the audio-visual material to be translated. Dialogue and continuity dialogue lists were not always available, which increased their workload as they had to transcribe this material for no additional fee. In 2010, companies started to use File Transfer Protocol (FTP) software and cloud-based tools (such as Dropbox, Google Drive, WeTransfer etc.) to transfer audio-visual material. Scripts and dialogue lists are now sent via email. Other companies have more advanced proprietary virtual platforms that can be accessed through coded passwords. Translators do not need (nor do they have the option) to download the material, and all translation, editing and cueing is done on the virtual platform, using the company's proprietary software and protocols. Thus, some international companies, like Turner, have developed their own subtitling and dubbing software. In the case of dubbing, cueing is done using software of this type, generating a code for each entry which is decoded at the studio. Most distribution companies and dubbing and subtitling studios have quality assurance units which revise translations. However, according to at least three of the translators interviewed, not all the people in these units have the necessary levels of linguistic and cultural competence.

Translation rates vary greatly depending on whether the client is a private individual, a distribution company or a dubbing/subtitling studio. In general, the rates of the dubbing and subtitling studios are less than half of those recommended by professional translators' associations, such as AATI (156 Argentinian pesos per minute of video [around €6]) and CTPCBA (215 Argentinian pesos per minute of video [around €8]). Thus, Turner's rates for 2016 were the equivalent of less than €2 per minute of video. Professional translators' associations can only recommend translation rates, but the legal void regarding audio-visual translation and the lack of regulation and

regulating bodies hinder fair and equitable working conditions. This is very similar to the situation in other Spanish-speaking countries, including Spain.

In terms of visibility and recognition, the names of Argentinian translators only appear in the credits in the case of certain films aimed at cinema release, provided that the film has been dubbed in Argentina. In the rest of the cases, audio-visual translators are completely invisible and their work is not given any legitimate credit or recognition. According to the translators interviewed, this state of affairs prevents the general public from forming a true, fair and unbiased perception of what audio-visual translation is and the work done by translators. This situation will surely improve as more translation training programmes are put in place and legislation regulating the recognition of audio-visual translators is introduced.

Although the recent changes in the Argentinian audio-visual landscape might suggest a swing from a country which mostly subtitles to one which mostly dubs (as opposed to Spain, where there has been a move towards subtitling over the last few years), audio-visual translators declare that their workload is largely equally split between dubbing and subtitling. In any case, despite the efforts of the Argentinian media and the government to praise the benefits of promoting dubbing in the country, translators still believe that viewers are finding it difficult to adapt to the new dubbing situation, and remain strongly in favour of subtitling.

This lack of consolidated practice involves accessibility issues too. Although Argentina was the first Latin-American country to introduce audio-described films (e.g., *… en fin, el mar* [Jorge Dyszel, 2005], a co-production between Argentina and Cuba), media accessibility was not regulated until 2009: the Ley 26.522, Servicios de Comunicación Audiovisual en Todo el Ámbito de la República Argentina establishes that all television broadcasting (whether terrestrial or cable) must incorporate closed caption (CC), sign language and audio-description. Not all television channels offer CC, and no cinemas offer specific subtitles for the hearing-impaired. In this vein, there is serious concern among groups representing the hearing-impaired, which have circulated an online petition insisting that dubbing should not replace the subtitles that make watching television possible for more than half a million Argentinians who have hearing disabilities.[40]

Colourful Language: Dubbing and Subtitling Animated Films

Another controversial question in audio-visual translation in Latin America, and more particularly in Argentina, is that of animated films. In Argentina,

40 Agis, 'Argentina's Dubbing Decree Praised and Parodied'.

animated films are usually released in both subtitled and dubbed versions for cinema screenings. According to the translators interviewed, the dubbed version usually shows a higher degree of cultural references and idiomatic expressions, while the subtitled version is, as one of the interviewed translators stated, 'generally more respectful of original references' (meaning a more literal translation of the source text).

Although Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937) was initially considered the first animated feature film dubbed into Spanish, since it was first released in Buenos Aires in 1938 (entitled *Blanca Nieves y los siete enanos*),[41] it has recently been discovered that this film was not dubbed in Argentina, but in Los Angeles, with a multinational cast of Spanish-speaking actors that included Argentinians, Mexicans, Americans and Spaniards.[42]

Two possible factors could have led Walt Disney to decide subsequently to contract the Spanish dubbing of his films to Argentinian dubbing studios first (1930s–1943), and then to Mexican studios (mid 1940s onwards). On the one hand, there is the linguistic/cultural factor: the mix of diverse Spanish accents which characterized the first dubbings into Spanish (like the aforementioned *Blanca Nieves y los siete enanos*, dubbed in Los Angeles) was apparently not well received by audiences on either side of the Atlantic.[43] On the other hand, there is the political factor: as Iglesias Gómez suggests,[44] once the Des Reservoirs studios in Joinville-le-Pont, near Paris closed in 1937—and since Spain was already immersed in a civil war that brought the whole country to a state of collapse—Latin America seemed the natural choice for the relocation of Spanish dubbing activities. A number of the translators interviewed linked the recent boost of dubbing in Argentina to Disney's shift from a long-standing tradition of Mexican dubbing for the Spanish-speaking world, which eventually became too expensive.

Perhaps animated films are the best example of language variety in the Spanish-speaking context: some animated films have yielded several dubbed versions e.g., *The Little Mermaid* (Ron Clements & John Musker, 1989) [*La sirenita* (1989)], *Sleeping Beauty* (Clyde Geronimi, 1959) [*La bella durmiente* (1959)], *Finding Nemo* (Andrew Stanton, 2003) [*Buscando a Nemo* (2003)]. In 1991, Disney started a new business and language strategy, producing two Spanish versions (one for Spain in European Peninsular Spanish, the other in 'neutral Spanish', made in Mexico) of the

41 Luis Alberto Iglesias Gómez, 'Los doblajes en español de los clásicos Disney', PhD dissertation (Universidad de Salamanca, 2009), 45.

42 Ramón Corretgé & Miguel Navarro, 'Blanca Nieves y los siete enanos', *DoblajeDisney.com. La base de datos de los doblajes Disney* (2009); available at <http://www.doblajedisney.com/pelicula/?id=1> (accessed 4 May 2016).

43 Ávila, *La historia del doblaje cinematográfico.*

44 Iglesias Gómez, 'Los doblajes en español de los clásicos Disney'.

film *Beauty and the Beast* (Gary Trousdale & Kirk Wise, 1991) [*La bella y la bestia* (1991)]. This strategy would later lead to a wider diversification of Spanish versions, in a clear attempt to cater for the demands of specific geolinguistic and cultural contexts. Thus, *The Incredibles* (Brad Bird, 2004) [*Los increíbles* (2004)] was dubbed into Mexican Spanish, Argentinian Spanish (highly praised by some of the translators interviewed and by the audience in Argentina, though it also received some criticism) and European Peninsular Spanish. It is worth noting that the Argentinian version was markedly adapted, even containing some references to locations in the city of Buenos Aires. This would be in line with the opinion of Reine Meylaerts and Adriana Şerban with regard to multilingual production processes and audiences in film, and would also highlight the fact that 'more research is needed on collective and multilingual production processes, and on their implications for translation'.[45] Similarly, *Ratatouille* (Brad Bird, 2007) and *Cars* (John Lasseter, 2006) were released in four different Spanish versions: European Peninsular Spanish, Mexican Spanish, Argentinian Spanish and Latin-American 'neutral Spanish'.[46] However, Disney/Pixar seems to have discontinued this practice from 2008 onwards. For example, for the films *Wall-E* (Andrew Stanton, 2008) and *Up* (Peter Docter, 2009), Disney/Pixar reverted to producing only two dubbed versions, one for Spain and another—made in Mexico in 'neutral Spanish'—for all Latin-American countries.[47]

It is worth mentioning the case of the Argentinian animated film *Metegol* (Juan José Campanella, 2013), which has been widely discussed and praised by translators, critics and viewers alike, both in Spain and across Latin America. This film is a highly interesting example of adaptation: originally produced in Argentinian Spanish (more specifically, the *rioplatense* dialect, the language variety of the Buenos Aires region), it was not translated, but adapted (successfully creating a brand new audio-visual work in the target culture), to two other varieties of Spanish, namely, Mexican 'neutral Spanish' and European Peninsular Spanish. This involved eliminating or adapting accents, pronunciation, local expressions, idioms, cultural references etc. The film title has also been adapted: table football is known in Argentina as 'metegol', but that term does not exist in Spain (where the game is known as 'futbolín'). The film has also been adapted in various ways in other countries sharing the same language. Thus, in Australia, Canada, France, New Zealand and the USA it is entitled *Underdogs* (somewhat of a plot spoiler); while in Ireland, the Philippines and the UK it was released as *The Unbeatables* (also a substantial clue to the film's plot).

45 Reine Meylaerts & Adriana Şerban, 'Introduction', in *Multilingualism at the Cinema and on Stage: A Translation Perspective*, ed. Reine Meylaerts & Adriana Şerban *Linguistica Antverpiensia*, 13 (2014), 1–13 (p. 3).

46 Iglesias Gómez, 'Los doblajes en español de los clásicos Disney', 54.

47 See Corretgé & Navarro, 'Blanca Nieves y los siete enanos'.

Conclusion

The development and implementation of audio-visual translation modes in the Spanish-speaking context on both sides of the Atlantic, has gone through different stages. From silence to intertitles, subtitles, version filmmaking and, finally, sound with the widespread audio wiring of cinema theatres both in Spain and in Latin America. The arrival of sound also assisted in the development of cultural nationalisms, particularly in Mexico, but also in Argentina and Spain. Literacy rates and the speed of implementation of sound technology in the various territories also contributed to differences in film translation mode preferences among audiences. But perhaps one of the most significant challenges was (and still is, almost a century later) that of language: the major Hollywood studios' initial idea that a single language version would work equally well in any of the Spanish-speaking countries proved to be wrong. This had important implications in the production, translation and distribution of films in the Spanish-speaking world.

As we have shown, the task of tracing cinema history, particularly when it affects a considerable number of countries which share (at least a large basis of) a common language proves to be a shifting, meandering and almost palaeontological exercise; but it is also a fascinating and essential enterprise. All the countries concerned, and all Spanish-language speakers, require and deserve to have the spotlight shone on the not-so-ancient history of the film industry and audio-visual translation in the Spanish-speaking world. It can prove extremely difficult to obtain information from the different audio-visual stakeholders in Latin America, particularly about working conditions, translation tariffs, deadlines, nationalities of their translators, cultural and linguistic guidelines relating to the language variety used etc. For that reason, this article contains some data that will provide particularly valuable insights into the relevant area of AVT in Latin America and Argentina in particular. However, more in-depth analysis is both desirable and necessary in order to advance and develop the profession of audio-visual translation in Latin America.

As we have demonstrated, the development and implementation of audio-visual translation modes in the Spanish-speaking context on both sides of the Atlantic has gone through various stages. Rather than stagnating, the translation and film sectors in Latin America and Spain are in a state of constant flux, and the needs and expectations of viewers continue to be debated. In 1932, a leading Spanish film critic and writer, Juan Piqueras (who disliked all forms of audio-visual translation, and was especially opposed to double versions), wrote that too much time and energy was wasted criticizing multiple-language versions, then dubbing and, ultimately, he predicted, subtitling.[48] All those efforts were (are) fruitless;

48 Juan Piqueras, 'Panorama del cine hispánico', *Nuestro Cinema*, 6 (1932), 175–79.

the only solution is to educate the audience in order to make them appreciate and value good cinema.*

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