



# The Palgrave Handbook of Audiovisual Translation and Media Accessibility

*Edited by*  
Łukasz Bogucki · Mikołaj Deckert

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Editors

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# 1

## Capturing AVT and MA: Rationale, Facets and Objectives

Mikołaj Deckert

The book is intended as a comprehensive and up-to-date resource covering the booming field of audiovisual translation and media accessibility. Given the number and calibre of international conferences, projects, publications—including prominently the newly established *Journal of Audiovisual Translation* (JAT)<sup>1</sup>—courses and diploma theses devoted to these topics, it is undeniable that there is huge and growing demand for volumes that will capture the developments in audiovisual translation (AVT) as well as media accessibility (MA) and, *nomen omen*, accessibly consolidate the body of knowledge in the areas. Even if we limit the time span to the very last few years, successful attempts along these lines have been made both in the form of single-author monographs (e.g. Pérez-González 2014; Bogucki 2013/2019; Ellender 2015; Massidda 2015; Beseghi 2017; Dore 2019; Lertola 2019; Romero-Fresco 2019), jointly authored monographs (e.g. Chmiel and Mazur 2014; Talaván et al. 2016; Hołobut and Woźniak 2017), edited volumes (e.g. Bogucki and Deckert 2015; Díaz-Cintas and Baños Piñero 2015; Díaz-Cintas and Neves

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<sup>1</sup> The journal can be accessed at <https://www.jatjournal.org/index.php/jat>. A relevant point is that while the emergence of dedicated outlets testifies to the well-grounded status of a line of research, from another angle it is a welcome case that papers on AVT and MA come out in scientific journals and books that are not primarily concerned with AVT, MA or even translation studies (e.g. Szarkowska and Gerber-Morón 2018; Díaz-Cintas and Massidda 2019).

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2015; Jankowska and Szarkowska 2015; Rentel et al. 2015; Díaz-Cintas and Nikolić 2017; Orrego-Carmona and Lee 2017; Di Giovanni and Gambier 2018; Gambier and Ramos Pinto 2018; Ranzato and Zanotti 2018; Sanderson and Botella-Tejera 2018; Deckert 2019; O’Sullivan and Cornu 2019; Ranzato and Zanotti 2019) and special issues of scientific journals (e.g. Zanotti and Ranzato 2019; Vercauteren and Mazur 2019; Díaz-Cintas and Szarkowska 2020). While some of the publications opt for a more all-embracing approach, for instance, finding a common denominator to bring together contributions dealing with different modes, methodologies and subject areas, others choose to zoom in on a selected topic and explore it in greater depth. What the current volume aspires to accomplish is to strike a balance between what could be generally called “scope”, on the one hand, and “depth”, on the other, in that sense sharing some of the premises and objectives with Pérez-González (2019).

An important feature of the current book, as evidenced already on the cover, is that it chooses to position media accessibility as a discernible field of practice and research that need not be subordinate to audiovisual translation—a decision which is not trivial even though a similar conceptualisation has been proposed before (cf. e.g. Gambier 2006; Díaz-Cintas and Remael 2007; Remael et al. 2012). Indeed, it was well over a decade ago when Gambier (2006: 4) pointed to the conceptual breadth of the field by observing that “recently, accessibility has also become an important issue in the computer and telecommunications industries, the aim being to optimize the user-friendliness of software, web sites and other applications. Distribution of AV media is also involved in this trend”. His view could possibly be taken to model accessibility as superordinate with respect to translation since he argues that “the issue of accessibility is (...) not merely a question of providing for special visual, auditory, motor or cognitive needs”. Actually, Gambier (2006: 4) goes even further by arguing that accessibility means that “services are available and that information is provided and easy to understand”. This formulation makes two points. While the first one—about availability—seems clear and uncontroversial, one could ask whether the ease of understanding should be universally prioritised as a criterion operating irrespective of parameters like function, audience profile or type of material. Still, while I would argue the criterion should not be taken for granted, it will be a valuable guiding principle in most contexts.

In fact, questions like this one or concerning the relationship between AVT and MA are pivotal among those addressed throughout this handbook. As will become apparent to the reader, some authors choose to treat the two separately—while others more or less explicitly see one of them as being a part of

the other. We believe this diversity is an asset rather than a problem because it demonstrates the current perceptions among leading scholars in the field(s) who are very likely to shape the perceptions of their colleagues and students. On this note, if that heuristic is of some use in illustrating the current dynamics of research interests, the recent Intermedia conference, held in September 2019 in Warsaw, featured as many as 19 papers devoted primarily to accessibility in the sensory sense, discussing audio description, subtitling for the deaf and (the) hard of hearing as well as sign language, which amounted to approximately 40% of all the subjects covered. It will therefore be interesting to track how the relationships between the different modes and subareas discussed throughout the handbook, and documented at a particular point in time, change in the years to come.

On another level, the handbook also critically foregrounds a systemic concern which has remained largely unresolved in many countries and pivots on the question of what scientific discipline best accommodates the work discussed in the current book.<sup>2</sup> Questions like that become relevant, for instance, when a researcher's output is evaluated, which can then have implications for individual researchers and their institutions alike. The handbook shows that it is hardly feasible, and definitely hardly productive in the scientific sense, to impose any rigid delineations on a multifarious and dynamically expanding line of research such as the one in this book. That is to say, the chapters that make up the current volume clearly demonstrate that AVT and MA will methodologically and thematically interface a range of disciplines including—but not limited to—linguistics, psychology, film studies, educational sciences, media and communications, history, law, sociology and philosophy.

The book is structured around five major sections, with a total of 33 chapters. Part I—titled “Audiovisual Translation and Media Accessibility Within and beyond Translation Studies”—comprises four contributions. This first section will outline the past and current state of the development of AVT and MA as they have functioned—with different degrees of autonomy—within the broader domain of translation studies. A major question that the section presents and seeks to answer is whether AVT and MA are discernible fields or whether perhaps one is a subfield within the other. Another subject of inquiry here is the semiotic composition of AVT and MA which will then be also

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<sup>2</sup>One viable disciplinary label could be “translation studies” which tends to be absent from formal national inventories of disciplines. Still, as surfaced, for instance, in discussions during the Intermedia 2019 conference, even that label could be too limitative on a number of occasions and a more inclusive one could be considered such as “accessibility studies”. This in turn would require some additional differentiation between the narrower understanding of “accessibility” and the much broader one, to avoid potential misunderstanding.

taken up later in the handbook. This section opens with “An Excursus on Audiovisual Translation”—an interview Łukasz Bogucki conducted with Jorge Díaz-Cintas. The chapters that follow are Elisa Perego and Ralph Pacinotti’s “Audiovisual Translation Through the Ages”, “Media Accessibility within and beyond Audiovisual Translation” by Gian Maria Greco and Anna Jankowska and “Multimodality and Intersemiotic Translation” by Christopher Taylor.

Part II centres on “Modes of Audiovisual Translation and Media Accessibility”. It surveys and fine-tunes the typology of AVT modes to map out the field and characterise in detail its differently conditioned modes, including both the more established and the emerging ones. Notably, the term “mode” is used to encompass more than the production method (e.g. subtitling or dubbing) to also denote a broader approach as exemplified by practices such as fansubbing or collaborative translation. This section comprises eight contributions. We start with Frederic Chaume’s “Dubbing”, proceeding with “Translating Non-fictional Genres: Voice-over and Off-screen Dubbing” by Anna Matamala, “The Name and Nature of Subtitling” by Jorge Díaz-Cintas and “The Drama of Surtitling: Ever-Changing Translation on Stage” by Juan Marcos Carrillo. The next two chapters deal with the notions of fan-produced translations. These are Serenella Massidda’s “Fansubbing: Latest Trends and Future Prospects” and “Fandubbing” by Rocío Baños. We then pass on to chapters focusing on accessibility: Iwona Mazur’s “Audio Description: Concepts, Theories and Research Approaches” and Agnieszka Szarkowska’s “Subtitling for the Deaf and the Hard of Hearing”. The contributions that come next further expand the scope as Pablo Romero-Fresco together with Carlo Eugeni talk about “Live Subtitling through Respeaking” and Miguel Bernal Merino discusses “Key Concepts in Game Localisation Quality”. The section is concluded by Josélia Neves who explores the subject of “Intersensory Translation Mitigating Communication Mismatches” and Lingjuan Fan concentrating on joint efforts in her chapter “Collaborative Translation and AVT”.

Part III is titled “Methodology of Audiovisual Translation and Media Accessibility” and focuses on the tools, procedures and paradigms that have been used in AVT and MA research, or are still waiting to be implemented. The collection of three chapters in this section will serve as an indispensable guide for both early-stage researchers and experienced scholars who wish or need to expand their methodological toolkit to allow for increased falsifiability of findings. First, Gary Massey and Peter Jud talk about “Translation Process Research in Audiovisual Translation”. Silvia Bruti then goes on to address “Corpus Approaches and Audiovisual Translation”, followed by the

chapter by Elena di Giovanni giving an account of “Reception Studies and Audiovisual Translation”.

Part IV, “Audiovisual Translation and Media Accessibility Focus Areas”, is again fairly large as it includes ten contributions. The objective of this component of the handbook is to identify the major facets of AVT and MA and the most salient phenomena that have been shaping the field and will have an impact on future research directions. The opening chapter is “Audiovisual Translation Norms and Guidelines” by Jan Pedersen. Then, Arista Kuo investigates subtitling quality assessment in her chapter “The Tangled Strings of Parameters and Assessment in Subtitling Quality: An Overview” and the joint contribution by Adriana S. Pagano, Flávia Affonso Mayer, Larissa Nicolau Fernandes Gonçalves titled “Accessibility of Visual Content in Mobile Apps: Insights from Visually Impaired Users” offers a receptor perspective. What follows is the chapter “Decision-making: Putting AVT and MA into Perspective” by Mikołaj Deckert and two chapters that have a number of points of convergence: “Technology and Audiovisual Translation” by Lindsay Bywood and “The Cloud Turn in Audiovisual Translation” co-authored by Alejandro Bolaños-García-Escribano and Jorge Díaz-Cintas. Then, Pablo Romero-Fresco explores the proposal of “Accessible Filmmaking”, followed by two chapters that can be read as largely complementary: “The Didactic Value of AVT in Foreign Language Education” by Noa Talaván and “Analysing Solved and Unresolved Issues of an AVT Collaborative Task through the Lens of Activity Theory. Implications for Task Design” authored jointly by Laura Incalcaterra McLoughlin and Susanna Nocchi. Part IV is concluded by Dingkun Wang’s chapter “Censorship and Manipulation in Audiovisual Translation”.

Part V—“Themes for Audiovisual Translation and Media Accessibility”—demonstrates the diversity of the subjects of inquiry in AVT and MA studies. To that end, the chapters survey a selection of relevant thematic foci that have been more or less extensively taken up in actual research. While the selection of themes in this section is necessarily limited, it is arguably nonetheless representative. We begin with Irene Ranzato’s chapter “The Problem with Culture”. The next contribution comes from Patrick Zabalbeascoa talking about “The Role of Humour in AVT: AVHT”. Two more foci are presented in the final contributions of the section and of the handbook. Delia Chiaro and Giuseppe De Bonis address “Multilingualism and Translation on Screen” while Lucile Desblache offers a perspective on “Music and Accessibility”.

As hinted at throughout this introductory text, the goals of the handbook are quite ambitious as it takes stock of AVT and MA, and also looks forward, thus hopefully serving as a resource for readers ranging from advanced

undergraduate students, PhD students and early-stage researchers to well-established scholars working in translation studies, communication studies, media studies, linguistics, cultural studies, foreign language education, performing arts studies and a host of others.

The volume brings together an international and intercontinental line-up of 40 experienced authors who comprehensively review their respective subjects, thus distilling and presenting synthetically what might otherwise be hard to access in such a holistic fashion. While these accounts will not, and should not, replace the actual works they discuss, they can serve as an invaluable starting point for anyone who wishes to research a given topic in depth or might be looking for research inspiration. What should not be overlooked is that in addition to covering an impressive body of empirical and theoretical work, on a number of occasions the contributors present and discuss new, previously unpublished findings. Also, as the authors attempt to give a perspective of what is to come, they generously suggest avenues of research that appear to be particularly appealing, sorely unexplored, or both.

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# **Part I**

## **Audiovisual Translation and Media Accessibility Within and Beyond Translation Studies**



# 2

## An Excursus on Audiovisual Translation

Łukasz Bogucki and Jorge Díaz-Cintas

**ŁB: You have been actively involved in research into audiovisual translation (AVT) for well over twenty years and are now widely considered one of the main researchers in the field. When you started out in the early 1990s, AVT was hailed as a new, dynamic, and interdisciplinary research field. Was this always the case?**

The most obvious change that we have observed in the last three decades or so is the progressive shifting of AVT from the margins to the centre of the academic debate, in a rather rapid fashion and after somewhat sluggish beginnings. Although nobody doubts these days that AVT is part and parcel of the translation ecosystem, for many years it was snubbed by scholars more interested in literary artefacts and comparative literature, who thus considered AVT to be a case of adaptation and unworthy of serious academic attention. In essence, of course, practices like subtitling and dubbing are used to transfer a message in a source language into another message in a target language, which falls squarely under the traditional criterion for translation to be considered as such, that is, the conversion of languages in an attempt to help people comprehend messages in idioms that they do not understand. From

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this perspective, AVT is not ontologically different from the translation of poetry, fiction, the Bible or the Quran, though it clearly adds a level of complexity that derives from its multimedia nature and whose investigation requires an interdisciplinary approach, including a good knowledge of the role played by technology. This is perhaps one of the reasons why interest in its study was lukewarm for so many years, for it was difficult to find the right probing angle and even to source the right material, such as dubbed/subtitled copies of films, dialogue lists, working documents with the duration of the subtitles and the like.

Establishing the remit of our field has also proved challenging as there seemed to exist many professional realities that could be considered as belonging to AVT, which then run the risk of diluting its essence: audiovisual productions, live performances, video games, accessibility services, websites, comics. In this sense, it is evident that we have had to push the boundaries of notions like ‘translation (proper)’ to make it more accommodating of new practices and ways of communicating. This is the reason why, for many years, we also struggled to find the appropriate nomenclature and resorted to terms like cinema translation, film translation, constrained translation, film and TV translation, screen translation, multimedia translation and multidimensional translation, among others, before we finally settled for audiovisual translation, abbreviated as AVT, which is the most common expression being used currently in English and in many other languages.

Nowadays, the discussion among some academics revolves around whether we can consider ourselves a proper ‘discipline’ or a ‘sub-discipline’ within the wider area of ‘translation studies’, which I guess makes more sense, even though some would still query the conception of translation as a proper ‘discipline’ and persist in including it within more established domains like ‘applied linguistics’ or even ‘comparative literature’. On the flip side of the coin, and counter to these centripetal, agglutinating forces, some investigators prefer to adopt a centrifugal approach and advocate the distinctiveness and academic independence, from (audiovisual) translation, of research fields like ‘accessibility studies’ or ‘video games studies’. To my mind, discussions of this epistemological nature have limited resonance in the wider academic world and, given the necessary interdisciplinary nature of our research, I personally would give priority to a more general, encapsulating conceptualisation of AVT.

What cannot be disputed, however, is the fact that in recent decades AVT has developed very fast, with great impetus and, to borrow from the polysystem theory premises, it can be said to be shifting from the periphery to the

centre, thus becoming a more dominant, driving notion and model within translation studies.

**LB: What is so distinct about the translation of audiovisual texts?**

Although they may look simple because of our repeated exposure to them, audiovisual texts are very complex semiotic composites in which a variety of codes coalesce in order to create meaning. Their multimodal nature is as arresting as it is challenging. Sounds, images, speech, written text and music, they all contribute their part to the final message and the challenge from the translator's perspective is that, more often than not, only the verbal input can be transformed from a source into a target language. The rest is supposed to travel across cultures frictionless, as a sort of universal Esperanto, which is clearly a problematic assumption. Manipulation of the image is less common, though not infrequent depending on the country, and tends to be in response to censorial pressures, which of course can also happen with the verbal exchanges. In this sense, we are still very far from the sort of transcreative practices that can be seen in the localisation of video games, where the internationalisation of the product is considered from an early stage and embedded into the workflow. In the media entertainment industry, translation continues to be almost an afterthought and always part of the postproduction services, which makes the recomposition of any images very difficult, if not financially unmanageable.

The other point that I would like to raise is that although we too often fall in the trap of debating AVT as if it were a single, homogeneous and unifying activity, the reality is that it is made up of a myriad of practices that can be very different from each other, both technically and linguistically: dubbing, subtitling, respeaking, audio description... And this also contributes to the quirkiness of our field.

**LB: Traditionally, nations have been divided into dubbing or subtitling countries. What are the reasons behind this dichotomy?**

The dubbing versus subtitling debate has been a recurrent, hackneyed topic in the AVT literature pretty much since its origins. In Europe, countries where the FIGS languages—that is, French, Italian, German and Spanish—are spoken, along with the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary, have traditionally preferred dubbing, while Poland, Russia, Ukraine and the Baltic states are well known for their voiceover practices. Subtitling is favoured in the remaining countries. As for the rest of the world, and to my knowledge, no studies have ventured into the delineation of a map with national borders demarcated according to the countries' audiovisual antics, though, roughly speaking, dubbing has been coveted in nations with large populations like Brazil, China, India, Iran, Japan, Pakistan, the Philippines and Turkey.

The reasons behind this situation are of course multifarious. Traditionally, dubbing has been nurtured by authoritarian regimes as viewers are not granted access to the original dialogue soundtrack and censorship strategies can then be activated in a sibylline way. Illiteracy levels have also been a resolute factor in this equation and countries with lesser educated populations have tended to go for dubbing. Similarly, children's programmes are also dubbed in all countries so that those still learning to read can enjoy the productions. For some, this practice is also better suited at recreating cinematic illusion and luring the audience to believe that the characters on screen are also native speakers of their language. In this time and age, a crucial distinction resides in the fact that dubbed audio is more easily processed than subtitles when trying to multitask. On the other hand, subtitling being much cheaper and faster than dubbing has had a decisive impact on those taking commercial decisions. Finally, people who want to experience foreign content authentically tend to prefer subtitles, perhaps so that they can also hone their foreign language skills in the process.

Convenient as they may be, drawing these sharp lines between dubbing and subtitling parts of the world is certainly misleading as the reality is far more complex and the situation was not, and is not, as clear cut as it may sound.

### **LB: How are things changing, then?**

I am not sold on the idea floated by authors like Luyken et al. (1991) that the preference for one mode or another is down to habit and that viewers favour the AVT mode to which they are most used. Tradition might somewhat influence preferences, but it is certainly not the only factor. As highlighted by the Media Consulting Group (2011: 10) in their report on the use of subtitling in Europe, a correlation seems to exist between age and number of languages spoken, as “the younger the respondents (aged 12–18 and 18–25) and the more languages they speak, the more pronounced is their preference for subtitling over dubbing”.

Then, consumption varies even within the same country. In Poland, for instance, people would watch the same foreign film voiced-over on television but subtitled in the cinema. In many countries, public service broadcasters would resort to dubbing while private TV stations activate subtitling as their main translation strategy, and social media networks have made of subtitling the main tool of globalisation all over the world.

In ‘subtitling’ countries like Greece, TV soap operas from Latin America and Turkey are dubbed and in Portugal and Japan an increasing number of programmes are also being broadcast in their dubbed version. Conversely, in ‘dubbing’ countries like Spain, Italy and China, for instance, many youngsters

prefer to watch the subtitled versions of their favourite programmes so that they can improve their command of foreign languages, principally English.

A most telling experiment on viewers' habits was the one carried out by Netflix in 2018 (Nguyen 2018). When interviewed, consumers in the USA overwhelmingly told the company that they wanted to watch foreign originals with English subtitles. Yet, Netflix decided to stream an English dubbed version of the French show *Marseille* only to discover that those who got the dubbed streams were more likely to finish the series than those who watched it with subtitles. Consequently, Netflix now set the majority of their foreign shows to English dubbed by default, while still letting users switch to the original with subtitles, if so they wish.

The debate of whether dubbing is better than subtitling, or vice versa, has become obsolete and is simply not pertinent any longer. Academic approaches have now moved well beyond value-laden comparisons between these two modes to put their emphasis instead in understanding them as equally deserving translational practices, blossoming in a booming audiovisual industry. In my opinion, the keyword in this debate is 'choice'. Since the arrival of the DVD in the mid-1990s, and more recently with the landing of the so-called OTT (over-the-top) media providers, the way in which viewers can consume audiovisual productions has been revolutionised and more and more the expectation is that any given programme will be made available accompanied by various sound and subtitle tracks in different languages as well as access services like subtitling for the deaf and the hard-of-hearing (SDH) and audio description (AD) for the blind and the partially sighted, so that individuals, who are now in the driving seat, can choose how to watch them.

**LB: From a general perspective, how has the visibility of AVT evolved in the last couple of decades?**

One of the most significant changes is that audiovisual translation has expanded its horizons well beyond the translation of feature films and fictional programmes and it now encompasses countless different genres, such as documentaries, corporate videos, sports programmes, news, educational videos, cookery programmes, musical video clips, political broadcasts and many others, which in turn has resulted in an unprecedented growth in digital video consumption around the globe. According to some statistics, audiovisual content on the net makes up a staggering 80% of all the internet traffic in the world (Lister 2019). Communication in the twenty-first century has become multimodal and multimedia, making the most of the potential offered by sound. The advent of video-on-demand (VOD) platforms, such as Netflix, Hulu and Amazon Prime, and their interest in providing a global service have added to the equation, leading translation activity in our field to an all-time

high. If subtitling has traditionally been perceived as globalisation's preferred translation approach, dubbing and voiceover are these days experiencing an unprecedented boom propitiated by the OTT media services (Bylykbashi 2019). Never before has AVT been so prominent and visible on our screens.

Beyond the commercial dimension, amateur activities and internet-bred concepts such as fansubbing/fandubbing, cybersubtitling/cyberdubbing as well as the creation of user-generated material are daily occurrences. This is possible thanks to faster broadband capability, greater connectivity, peer-to-peer computing, the democratisation of technology and the ready availability of video editing suites, subtitling freeware and cloud-based platforms, audio recording applications and the like. Initiatives like TEDv ([www.ted.com](http://www.ted.com)), with their global community of volunteers in charge of subtitling their TED Talks, have inspired many other media ventures on the net, like Khan Academy ([www.khanacademy.org](http://www.khanacademy.org)) or Coursera ([www.coursera.org](http://www.coursera.org)). Also, the phenomenon of the YouTubers greatly relies on their visibility on the World Wide Web and the enticing nature of their audiovisual output. Many of them command millions of followers and, although they continue to be relatively monolingual, some are now expanding their offer into other languages by subtitling and revoicing their videos. This is a rather new development of which I expect to see more in the coming years.

Access services is another area that has grown exponentially in terms of volume of activity as well as social and legal visibility. Many countries have passed legislation that compels broadcasters to distribute a minimum percentage of their audiovisual productions with SDH, AD and Sign Language Interpreting (SLI). The accessometer created as part of the Media Accessibility Platform project (<https://mapaccess.uab.cat/accessometer>) is a useful tool to have a glimpse of how different nations around the globe fare on this front. Though at present regulations only apply to traditional TV channels, media regulators in some countries are being given new powers to force on-demand broadcasters and streaming services to follow suit (Wilkinson-Jones 2017). And while production and turnover keep raising, new practices are also being developed, like interlingual live respeaking.

**ŁB: What do you think the role of technology has been in this AVT boom?**

It has been clearly pivotal. The development of specialist technology in our field is the other front that has seen a massive evolution in the last two or three decades, not only in terms of distribution and exhibition but also production. The digital switchover at the turn of the last century marked the demise of the VHS tape and the arrival of the DVD, with all its capacity and potential for the storage and distribution of audiovisual productions. By now, the DVD

has virtually disappeared, the Blu-ray format has not really taken off and the centre stage is now being occupied by the OTT operators and their streaming programmes as well as by the social media networks.

When it comes to the production stages, AVT has been at the mercy of the twists and turns of technology and it is thanks to the instrumental role played by technology that subtitles can today be successfully produced live with minimal latency, that subtitlers can work in cloud-based environments, usually from the comfort of their own home, and that their productivity has been enhanced thanks to the development of user-friendly software that enables professionals to work at a faster pace than before. Commercial subtitling programs that were unrivalled until the early noughties—Wincaps, Swift, Fab, Spot, EZtitles—face now the fierce competition of free, easy-to-use subtitling editors such as Aegisub, Subtitle Edit and Subtitle Workshop, to the extent that in order to counter these challenges operational models have changed and a transition has taken place in the industry from capital expenditure (CAPEX), that is, investing in the purchase of tools, to operating expenditure (OPEX), whereby users rent a piece of software on a pay-as-you-go basis.

Research on the way in which technology is used in AVT (Díaz-Cintas and Massidda 2019) and on its potential to automatise processes and outputs, such as machine translation applied to subtitling (Bywood et al. 2017), is becoming more popular and mainstream in our field. While desktop subtitling programs are here to stay, at least for the foreseeable future, new opportunities are being developed around a global pool of localisation teams connected to (usually proprietary) cloud-based platforms, with the ultimate goal of improving speed, efficiency, security and scalability. Cloud-based subtitling and captioning platforms, like OOONA (<https://ooona.ooonatools.tv>) or ZOO ([www.zoodigital.com](http://www.zoodigital.com)), are browser-based systems that translators can access from any device connected to the internet to carry out spotting, translation, reviewing and other post-production tasks from any part of the world, without having to download any programs or applications (see Bolaños-García-Escribano and Díaz-Cintas in this volume).

Other exciting advances taking place in our field are related to automatic speech recognition (ASR), with great potential for human-independent dialogue transcription tasks as well as respeaking, both intralingual and interlingual. Some companies, such as the previously mentioned ZOO and VoiceQ ([www.voiceq.com](http://www.voiceq.com)), are taking these developments further, with the design of cloud-based platforms focused on dubbing and revoicing, in what some people see as the next big disruptive cycle in the industry.

In view of these developments, as argued by O'Hagan (2016), one of the main challenges faced by translation scholars is to be able to find an

appropriate theoretical framework that would allow a critical examination of the significant role that technology has on translation output and processes; a task that is proving surprisingly elusive in our discipline.

**ŁB: Can you elaborate further on the potential of CAT tools and automation in our field?**

Of course, we cannot forget the advances taking place not only in machine translation (MT) but also in translation memory (TM) tools that are clearly targeting the various fields of AVT, particularly subtitling. In addition to the more recent ASR systems that I have just mentioned, research projects have been carried out since the early 2000s on the development of MT engines for interlingual subtitling. One such example was the European-funded initiative SUMAT (Subtitling by Machine Translation), which employed cloud-based statistical machine translation (SMT) engines to automatically translate subtitles in seven bi-directional language combinations and proposed the training of post-editors in the field of subtitling in an attempt to optimise the ensuing quality.

From a more practical perspective, YouTube's accessibility services started back in 2008 with the development of an auto-captioning component, based on Google's Voice Search, to add intralingual subtitles to their audiovisual content for the benefit of the deaf and the hard-of-hearing audiences. A few years later, they went interlingual and started to provide an auto-translate feature, powered by Google Translate, which allows viewers to translate subtitles by simply clicking on the CC button that appears on screen and selecting the language of their choice from a list. Though vastly improved since its inception, quality continues to be wanting in these environments.

Paradoxically, the usefulness of CAT tools for the translation of audiovisual productions is still relatively underexplored, though developers like memoQ, Wordbee, and more recently SDL Trados, have started to adapt their TM systems for subtitling, providing video in context via a built-in media player, whilst at the same time granting translators access to their TM resources for subtitling. In our field, the use of TMs and glossaries, especially for the translation of specific audiovisual genres such as corporate videos, technical and scientific documentaries and any audiovisual text with a high percentage of linguistic repetition, could easily help to speed up the subtitling process in a substantive way. In the case of other genres, such as TV series made up of numerous seasons, CAT tools could help strengthen cohesion across episodes when dealing with idiosyncratic expressions, taboo words or proper names of people and places that are often repeated.

Last, but not least, we cannot forget that the multimodal nature of audiovisual productions opens a vast array of possibilities for the exploration of

artificial intelligence solutions, all of which could disrupt the industry (and our teaching and research) even more. The potential opened by the way in which new realities like image recognition, immersive environments or augmented reality can intertwine with the various AVT localisation practices and access services has been barely broached so far.

**LB: And how has the academic world been coping with such a panoply of changes?**

Fortunately for us, commercial success and technological enquiry have come hand in hand with academic ascendancy, as evidenced by the vast amount of publications that have seen the light in recent years, the many events that have been organised, the multiple doctoral theses that have been defended, and the numerous educational programmes focused on AVT that are part of the curricular offerings at many universities around the world. We recently witnessed, in 2018, the launch of the *Journal of Audiovisual Translation* (JAT), the first academic journal ever to be entirely specialised in our area. Yet, the drive has come mainly from some Western countries and scholars and, my contention is that we all need to do more to avoid a situation in which the debate becomes too English-focused and Eurocentric. To guarantee the healthy and sustainable development of AVT we must not only open up and embrace but also actively promote the visibility of other languages and national practices. In this respect, for instance, initiatives such as the launch of the Audiovisual Translation and Dissemination (AVTD) committee, set up by the State Administration of Radio, Film and Television and the China Alliance of Radio, Film and Television to enhance research and best practices in AVT and to improve media accessibility in China, can only be seen as one of the steps in the right direction.

From a training perspective, for instance, a collateral result from the fast growing global demand for content that needs to be localised in the entertainment industry is the perceived critical “talent crunch” (Estopace 2017) or shortage of qualified professional subtitlers and dubbing translators in the industry. Given the dearth of formal AVT training in many countries, the situation is likely to worsen in the short term, especially in the case of certain language combinations. What is certain, however, is that the demand for AVT is here to stay, as media networks and organisations around the world continue to recognise the immense value of localising their content into multiple languages if they are to extend their global reach, which in turn triggers the need for teaching AVT in a dedicated and specialist manner and in language combinations that have not been exploited thus far.

In addition to all this, and when compared with other fields of specialisation in translation, there is an absence of any robust accreditation processes in

AVT, or databases for qualified practitioners, or standard registration through a professional body, which could capture the total number of expert media translators worldwide and that could also help uphold minimum quality standards. Netflix's attempt to plug this gap with the introduction of their Hermes test, and despite its subsequent disconnection, was partially successful insofar as it galvanised the interest of stakeholders on the topic, though it has to be agreed that more efforts need to be channelled into such an initiative for it to be truly effective in the industry.

On the upside, the attraction exerted by AVT in the classroom is evinced in the strong number of students wanting to enrol in courses that deal with the translation of audiovisual materials. They are invariably some of the most popular modules in the curriculum and guarantee that there will be an infused supply of new professional and academic talent in the years to come.

### **LB: What can you tell us about amateur subtitling?**

This is a topic that, under different headings, has been widely discussed in the literature (Díaz-Cintas and Muñoz Sánchez 2006; Pérez González 2007; Massidda 2015; Dwyer 2017). The so-called democratisation of technology has facilitated not only the decentralisation of the traditional circulation of audiovisual media that was dependent on corporate strategies but also the activation of new ways of distribution that rely primarily on tactics of grassroots appropriation. Along with the multiplication of videos, the offer of subtitles on the net, whether solicited or unsolicited, has also boomed in recent decades. Fansubbing, the act of subtitling ‘by fans for fans’, is credited with having been the first instantiation of such an approach back in the 1980s with the subtitling of Japanese anime, though it was not until the 1990s, with the advent of cheap computer software and the availability of free subtitling equipment, that this practice really took off.

Activity on this front has mushroomed in recent decades and the boundaries among the many types of subtitles are not always clear cut, making their classification a terminological conundrum. Although ‘amateur’ subtitling is a sufficiently broad concept that has been frequently used in academic exchanges, the reality is that not all individuals are dilettantes and some of them are professionals. ‘Volunteer’, ‘non-professional’, ‘collaborative’, ‘errand’, ‘honest’, ‘crowdsubtitles’, ‘fansubs’ and ‘funsubs’ are also notions articulated when referring to these online practices, all of them bringing in different nuances. Elsewhere, I have delved into this topic in greater detail and proposed an encompassing concept that, in my opinion, subsumes the myriad subtitles encountered on the net: ‘cybersubtitles’ (Díaz-Cintas 2018). These can be purposely requested by some collectives, that is, crowdsourced, or generated on a voluntary basis, and the individuals behind their production can be

either amateurs or professionals. Within the core category of cybersubtitles, three main types of subtitles can be found: (1) ‘fansubs’, which I have just briefly explained; (2) ‘guerrilla subtitles’, that are produced by individuals or collectives engaged in political causes and activism, as in the case of the online group Spanish (R)evolution ([www.facebook.com/pg/SpanishRevolution/videos](http://www.facebook.com/pg/SpanishRevolution/videos)); and (3) ‘altruist subtitles’, usually commissioned and undertaken by individuals with a close affinity to a project as, for example, the already mentioned Khan Academy ([www.khanacademy.org](http://www.khanacademy.org)).

With the increasing circulation of audiovisual productions on the internet, the pervasive role of social networks in today’s communication and the growing sociopolitical awareness of certain sectors of the population, there is no doubt that cybersubtitling is here to stay and will continue to grow.

**LB: You have written extensively about the didactics of AVT. How has the teaching and learning of (audiovisual) translation evolved over the years?**

I started teaching general translation to undergraduate students in the early 1990s at Roehampton University, in London, and by the end of that decade I was already teaching subtitling. Back then, the notion of translation, and how it had to be taught, was decidedly different from what it is now. The focus was on the written word, students could not use dictionaries or reference books during the exams, never mind be granted access to the internet, and a great deal of importance was placed on memorising vocabulary and syntactical structures. On the whole, the approach was markedly philological rather than traductological. I, for one, am delighted to see that this way of teaching translation is becoming a thing of the past and that current methods are much more dynamic and professionally oriented.

Working with audiovisual material was very challenging as universities did not normally have access to specialist software and we had to make do with VHS tapes, TV sets and overhead projectors. A couple of decades later, technology has radically transformed the educational ecosystem for many of us, albeit not all. The digitisation of the images, the educational packages offered by some software developers, the availability of subtitling freeware, and the more recent advent of cloud-based subtitling platforms have all radically altered the teaching and learning experience. In principle, it is much simpler for lecturers to mimic professional practices in the classroom than it has ever been and this can only have a positive impact in the future employability of our students. The challenge, though, is to be able to somehow guarantee that AVT lecturers keep up to date with new technologies and are willing to embed them in the classroom.

Additionally, the profile of our students has changed and today's digital native learners are not only more tech-savvy than previous cohorts, but also more attracted by videos than they are by books and other written outputs, which partly justifies the success of modules on AVT, film studies, digital media and the like, but it also forces us to adapt our teaching methods to the expectations of the new generations.

**LB: And how do you see it developing into the future?**

Scholarly endeavours have been, and will continue to be, crucial in order to fine-tune and improve the teaching of a particular discipline to would-be professionals and ultimately guarantee its sustainability into the future. To prepare the professionals of the future with the right skills, forward-looking modules need to be designed and developed now, taking into account the linguacultural dimension as well as the technological possibilities and the market reality. To make sure that students are qualified to be able to functionally operate in the future, their instrumental knowledge should be honed by being exposed to the latest advances in the industry, including up-to-date technologies and translation workflows.

It is essential that the long-standing gap between the AVT industry and academia be bridged, so that the latter can benefit from learning about the current and future needs of the former, and the industry can recruit employees with the right skills. Indeed, collaboration between trainers and the industry, not only language vendors but also, and crucially, technology developers, has been traditionally minimal and this trend has to be reversed. If, say, tutors do not have access to cloud-based subtitling or dubbing platforms, how can they then train their students proficiently to meet the needs of the market? A more advantageous relationship must be explored among the interested parties, whereby trainers can be granted wider access to cutting-edge professional tools and platforms for their own interest and technical preparation. Synergies of this nature can help scholars to conduct self-reflective assessments of the curriculum on offer at their own institutions and instigate the necessary innovative and transformational changes that will secure the wellbeing of the discipline in the years to come. Also, opportunities of this calibre could be utilised from a research perspective to conduct user experience tests among practitioners and translators-to-be not only to inform future training but also in exchange for advice on potential improvements of those tools, so that the benefits are reciprocal. Encouraging progress is being made on this front with the development of cloud-based educational platforms like OOONA EDU ([ooona.net/ooona-edu](http://ooona.net/ooona-edu)), specially designed for subtitling and captioning training and offering students the opportunity to get hands-on experience in a professional ecosystem and to gain an invaluable insight into how the sector operates.

**LB:** In 1972, James S. Holmes proposed his seminal map of translation studies. Almost half a century into the development of the discipline, do you think that a new map needs to be drawn, incorporating audiovisual translation and possibly media accessibility?

Holmes's (2004/1988) map has certainly had a great impact on the discipline and, in my view, such influence derives from its simple, schematic representation of a rather complex area of knowledge. Other authors, like Munday (2008/2001), have worked on it and expanded the applied branch of translation studies, always looking at translation from a wide perspective rather than a specialised one. When it comes to AVT, Di Giovanni and Gambier (2018), inspired by Holmes's proposal, have come up with a map that tries to show the development of AVT over the last three decades, paying special attention to the research dimension. I guess these derivative activities do nothing but confirm the validity of the original map, which keeps stimulating other translation researchers and is flexible enough to accommodate new potentialities.

Although it is true that in its conceptual inception the map might have been designed with the translation of traditional, written texts in mind, the reality is that it can effortlessly account for any other textual genres. Personally, I would find it challenging, and to a large extent unnecessary, to devise a new map that will be only specific to AVT and media accessibility. If anything, one of the beauties of the existing map is precisely the fact that it can easily house the various audiovisual translation practices in existence and it is also sufficiently elastic to allow for the addition of new categories, if need be. Perhaps, the way forward could be to test that, indeed, all the different labels contained in the map do actually apply in the case of AVT, including practices like sign language interpreting (SLI), SDH and AD.

**LB:** Now that you mention it, where does media accessibility fit in all this?

As far as I can remember, it was during one of the early editions of the *Languages & the Media* series of conferences, which has been taking place in Berlin since 1996, that one of the participants, hard-of-hearing himself, raised the issue in one of the main roundtables as to whether subtitling for deaf and hard-of-hearing audiences was indeed a topic that fitted within the remit of the conference, as nobody had touched upon it on any of the presentations. And, for that matter, audio description had been equally absent from the discussions. Though many of us were aware of these professional practices, what struck me at the time was the fact that their existence in the industry was not necessarily mirrored in academia. Indeed, very little research had been carried out in the area of media accessibility in general and virtually no studies had

been conducted in these topics from a translational perspective, the first rigorous works not appearing until the mid-2000s. The territory was pretty much uncharted and some colleagues saw it as a great opportunity to revitalise and advance their scholarly pursuits.

Unlike SLI, where a change of language takes place in the communicative act, siting these other access servicers within translation studies used to be a tricky endeavour a few decades ago as none of them requires the knowledge of a foreign language and, being intralingual practices, some universities were reluctant to incorporate them into their ‘traditionally’ interlingual translation curricula. I am glad to say that we have come a long way since then and accessibility has become a major, booming topic of interest both in the translation curriculum and in research. Now, the question still remains of why topics like SDH and AD are not studied as a constituent part of other areas of knowledge like media studies, creative writing, disability studies or museum studies, to name but a few. For instance, the latter could very easily accommodate modules on the audio description of museum exhibits or classical paintings but, to the best of my knowledge, they do not.

As I have just discussed, media accessibility has been considered an integral part of AVT by many of us but given its vertiginous evolution in the last two decades and its greater visibility in academic exchanges some scholars are now foregrounding the specific characteristics of these practices and claiming that “[t]he ubiquitous effects of accessibility have led to the emergence of a new research field, namely *accessibility studies* (AS)” (Greco 2018: online). I prefer to adopt a more conciliatory stand and a wider view on accessibility and, elsewhere (Díaz-Cintas 2005), I have defined the concept as making audiovisual programmes available to people that otherwise could not have access to them, irrespective of whether the barriers are sensory or linguistic. Such conceptualisation of the term ‘media accessibility’ encompasses both traditional interlingual types of AVT like dubbing, voiceover or subtitling, and more typical media access services such as SDH or AD. Whether the communication is impeded by a language or a sensory barrier, the ultimate aim of these practices is identical, that is, to facilitate access to an otherwise hermetic source of information and entertainment. Under this prism, interlingual types of AVT are seen from the broader perspective of media accessibility and accessibility itself becomes a common denominator that underpins these practices.

**LB: An issue of concern in translation studies is the divide between theory and practice, with some academics doing research with their back to the industry and practitioners and other professionals not being sufficiently aware of academic developments. From the standpoint of AVT, what is your take on this?**

The divide between theory and practice seems to be a semipiternal one, not only in translation but also in other walks of life. From the professionals' perspective, especially if they are freelancers, it is very challenging to be actively involved in academic life as the time spent writing an article, attending a conference or giving a talk has a direct impact on their potential to earn money, and some of these activities can also be onerous on their finances. The topics of interest can also vary substantially and while research with an applied dimension tends to be preferred by colleagues in the industry, still is the case that the output of some academics is perceived as being too theoretical and far removed from professional practice, if not frontally contradictory. This approach to investigation is also perfectly understandable, particularly in educational settings in which academics are regularly assessed on their published research work and in which the criteria that regulate the quality of those publications tend to favour theoretical over applied topics. In addition, and unlike the standard practice in pure sciences and social sciences, co-writing articles in our discipline is usually treated with suspicion by the powers that be, which obviously does not incentivise collaboration.

Of course, beyond these pragmatic factors lies a philosophical debate on what the nature of research should be, particularly in the humanities. Should it focus on theoretical conceptualisations of knowledge? Should it take a more applied slant and make sure that its results are relevant to the wider society and have a direct impact on its members? As always, the solution might well be a happy balance between the two extremes of the cline.

Having said that, it is most encouraging to see the consolidation of international spaces for dialogue, such as the recurring *Languages & the Media*, *Media for All* and *Intermedia* conferences, where all interested parties and stakeholders can come together to discuss new developments, network and strengthen collaboration. Since their inception, events like these have worked hard to project an encompassing image and provide a welcoming environment for academics, practitioners, trainees, language service providers, clients, associations and software developers to conduct fruitful debate. The many research projects in AVT that are being carried out these days is another positive sign of the collaborative links that have been increasingly forged between academic and industry partners. In this sense, translation in general, and AVT in particular, seem to be well placed when it comes to adjusting to new changes in research ecosystems and traditions. Beyond theorising about the challenges encountered when translating humour, taboo language or cultural references, it is not difficult for AVT to engage with applied topics, that are technologically driven and have a direct and measurable impact on the lives of its users, be them sensory impaired or linguistically challenged.

### LB: What is the impact on training?

Naturally, this varies greatly from university to university, particularly in this period of financial austerity, as some of them have relatively easy recourse to financial means to pay for the technology and to recruit trainers with the right expertise and language combinations while others struggle. Another issue foregrounded by some colleagues is the apparent sharp dissimilitude that exists between the professional backgrounds of academics and practising translators and the implications that this has from a pedagogical perspective, as reflected in this quote from Englund-Dimitrova (2002: 74):

University teachers are sometimes too theoretical and do not always have the necessary knowledge about the future professional reality of the students; the professional translators, on the other hand, sometimes tend to be too practical, lacking the theoretical background which the students themselves have and consequently also expect from their teachers.

Generally speaking, there is a perceived mismatch between real professional practice and what is taught in the classroom, and this can be expressly problematic in a field like AVT, which is highly technology-driven, tightly dependent on continuous software updates, and whose market ecosystem is constantly being transformed and reconfigured so as to adapt to the consumption and viewing habits of an ever-changing audience.

The high financial investment required to source the appropriate commercial tools has been traditionally blamed for their absence in the classroom, and has justified the predominantly theoretical perspective adopted in many modules. The situation, however, has been mitigated to a large extent with the availability of dedicated freeware, which is available to anyone and allows the trainers and trainees to simulate some of the most common tasks in the industry. Finding instructors with the right pedagogical experience and professional expertise to teach highly specialised modules has also been, and will continue to be, an exacting pursuit. On the bright side, the number of AVT specialists operating in the market, and willing to teach a few hours alongside their other duties, has vastly increased in line with the explosion in the volume of AVT, making this search less daunting.

Because of its eminently applied nature, the third pillar on which AVT training should rest is collaboration with the appropriate stakeholders, particularly clients, language service providers, professional translators, dedicated AVT associations and, perhaps to a lesser extent, technology developers. Educational centres are realising that this is not only good practice but also peremptory for the good health of their curricula. Many are now establishing

fruitful links with professional partners, with the aim of licensing appropriate specialist software and also increasing internship opportunities, organising workshops and company visits, and promoting real-life professional experiences to which translators-to-be and members of staff can be exposed.

### **LB: How has audiovisual translation been researched?**

Early systematic research in our field, from the mid-1990s, embraced descriptivism because that was the time when descriptive translation studies (DTS) was the theoretical paradigm en vogue. DTS's premises and postulates were also most fitting as they rejected prescriptivism outright and encouraged explorations whose ultimate aim was to dissect the object of study and map out the norms that were prevalent in the translation of audiovisual programmes. As, in that period, we did not know much about the sociolinguistic and professional intricacies of this practice, some of these studies were seminal insomuch as they provided us with a detailed radiography of the various translation modes while contributing to the recognition of AVT as a deserving research area.

The search for specific features that could justify the autonomy of AVT as a distinct branch from other translation activities was one of the main propellers in the early investigations, and publications adhering to traditional approaches with applied linguistics at their core have been numerous, particularly in the form of case studies, where the translation of humour, swearing, cultural references and wordplay, to name but a few, has been duly investigated. More recently, topics like multilingualism, fansubbing/fandubbing, ideology and activism seem to be attracting the attention of researchers. Other theoretical frameworks beyond descriptivism have also proved operative and fruitful in the investigation of the various AVT modes, such as action research (Neves 2004), relevance theory (Bogucki 2004; Pai 2017), multimodal analysis (Taylor 2013) and actor network theory (Eardley-Weaver 2014; Williamson 2015). For scholars like Chaume (2018), the way in which research has evolved in AVT can be schematised in four sequential turns—that is, descriptive, cultural, sociological and cognitive—which is a neat attempt to provide a synoptic overview of our academic efforts across the years.

### **LB: And how do you see it evolving into the future?**

It has been widely acknowledged for some time now that the way forward for our discipline has to be found in its interdisciplinarity and potential synergies with other branches of knowledge, especially within the humanities. For many years, scholars like Chaume (2004), and, more recently, Romero-Fresco (2019), have advocated closer interaction with film studies and filmmakers, and the work of De Marco (2012) has benefited from the theoretical apparatus borrowed from gender and cultural studies in order to shed light on how

the language used in the translated dialogue lines affects or is affected by social constructs such as gender, class and race. Similarly, premises and notions from postcolonial studies have proved highly operative in disentangling the role played by multilingualism in diasporic films (Beseghi 2017).

To my mind, this attachment to the arts and humanities derives from the traditional close connections that translation has shared with disciplines like linguistics, languages, philology and comparative literature. A conceptualisation of this nature makes it rather challenging for academics, and sometimes even risky, to adhere to certain methodologies, perhaps more attune to the social sciences, in favour of others with more currency and kudos in the humanities. Yet, I would like to argue that methods and approaches typical of the social sciences may well yield better dividends in the case of AVT, and particularly accessibility.

The belief that makers, as opposed to users, know best has been a dominant adage in AVT that assigns more prominence to the views of policymakers, professionals, researchers and other stakeholders in the industry than to those of the end users. In recent years, however, this approach has started to be challenged and more importance is being granted to viewers. A relatively new trend in AVT research, which is likely to endure in the future, encourages shifting the attention from the textual niceties of the original production to the potential effects that the ensuing translation has on viewers. Traditionally, reception studies have been avoided in AVT as they were considered to be too complex in their implementation, costly and lengthy. Furthermore, the right technology to conduct experimental research was not readily available and the expertise was lacking on the part of the pioneering AVT researchers. Yet, there seems to be a growing consensus nowadays that reception studies are important for the sustainability of the discipline and for the strengthening of links between the industry and academia; a cooperation that in turn holds promise for the development and provision of better products for end users. In this sense, the media industry is interested in knowing how viewers around the world enjoy their subtitled and respooken audiovisual productions; technology companies working in the development of state-of-the-art software for AVT can also benefit from the results yielded by experimental research with professionals; and language service providers can profit from the insights gained through reception research, which can help them to adapt their practices to new workflows, to update their style guides or to reconsider some of the traditionally accepted spatial and temporal considerations that have marked the translation and delivery of their audiovisual programmes.

This is why some scholars are increasingly willing to rely on technology and statistical analysis to interrogate the data under scrutiny. As two relatively

dormant and ignored areas in AVT, reception studies and cognitive processes, have become pivotal in recent academic exchanges. Researchers are no longer content with describing a given state of affairs or taking for granted certain inherited premises that have been perpetuated in the available literature. Rather, by exploiting psychometric methodologies and by embracing technologies and statistical data analysis tools available to them, they are eager to carry out experimental research to unravel the cognitive effort implicit in the translational process or to describe the effects that AVT practices have on the various heterogeneous groups that make up the audience, on translators-to-be and on professionals already working in the field. Of particular note is the application of physiological instruments such as eye trackers, which are common currency in research fields like advertising and medical sciences, to the experimental investigation of AVT, in an attempt to gain a better understanding of the users' cognitive processes while watching an audiovisual programme (Perego 2012).

In addition to the benefits of eye tracking, potential still exists to make full use of other biometric instruments that can help elucidate the reaction of the audience, such as galvanic skin response devices to measure participants' levels of arousal, and webcams to record and conduct facial expression analyses. Electroencephalography (EEG) and electrocardiograms (ECG) also open up a wealth of possibilities. EEG is a neuroimaging technique that helps to assess brain activity associated with perception, cognitive behaviour and emotional processes by foregrounding the parts of the brain that are active while participants perform a task or are exposed to certain stimulus material. ECG, on the other hand, monitors heart activity in an attempt to track respondents' physical state, their anxiety and stress levels, which in turn can provide helpful insights into cognitive-affective processes.

Another research domain that has piqued scholars' ingenuity in recent years, and I guess will continue to do so in the foreseeable future, is the didactic potential offered by the various AVT modes when it comes to foreign language teaching and learning (Incalcaterra McLoughlin et al. 2011; Gambier et al. 2015). In addition to a handsome number of publications having seen the light, the topic has been a fertile one in collaborative initiatives, with international projects like ClipFlair (Foreign Language Learning through Interactive Revoicing & Captioning of Clips, <http://clipflair.net>) and PluriTAV (Audiovisual Translation as a Tool for the Development of Multilingual Competences in the Classroom, <http://citrans.uv.es/pluritav/?lang=en>).

### **ŁB: In your opinion, what areas will develop in the near future?**

Areas like accessibility to the media, cybersubtitling and reception studies will continue to be trending topics in our discipline, but if I had to name three buzzwords or expressions that will shape the future, then I would go for user-generated content, revoicing and technology.

Without a shred of a doubt, video activity on the net via social media and the upsurge of user-generated content in platforms like YouTube or Bilibili will continue to shape and pervade the way in which we communicate. It would not surprise me if the likes of YouTubers and influencers, some of whom command millions of followers on the internet and gain their revenue from the number of visitors that click on their ads (Geyser 2019), were to discover the power of subtitling and revoicing to help them multiply those clicks.

Revoicing, in the form of dubbing and voiceover, is already experiencing an unprecedented quantitative boom and will continue to do so, particularly in the world of streaming and video on demand. This development is going to go hand in hand with the *destabilisation* of English as the language par excellence in media entertainment and the renaissance of other original languages, as intimated by players like Netflix, which has admitted that English is not going to be its primary viewing language for much longer (Rodríguez 2017) and has already embarked on the ambitious production of internationally acclaimed shows shot in other languages, like the Spanish *La casa de papel* (*Money Heist*, Álex Pina, 2017–), the German *Dark* (Baran bo Odar, Jantje Friese, 2017–) or the Danish *The Rain* (Jannik Tai Mosholt, Christian Potalivo and Esben Toft Jacobsen, 2018–).

Finally, and rather unsurprisingly, technology is bound to remain the main catalyst behind some of the future developments, and we will be well advised to keep an eye open for any disruptions caused by cloud technology, automatic speech recognition in its multiple instantiations (speech synthesis, text-to-speech, speech-to-text or speech-to-speech), blockchain solutions, machine translation, immersive environments and artificial intelligence.

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# 3

## Audiovisual Translation through the Ages

Elisa Perego and Ralph Pacinotti

### 1 Introduction

Audiovisual translation (henceforth AVT) as a practice, a product and a discipline, is linked to the advent of films, a twentieth-century cultural and visual product. The study of AVT as an independent field, however, has not started until approximately fifty years after the first film was released, with the first subtitling and dubbing activities tracing back respectively to the 1920s and the 1930s (Franco and Orero 2005; Orrego-Carmona 2013; Perego and Bruti 2015).

The establishment and the recognition of AVT as an independent discipline and research field are therefore quite recent (1980s–1990s), following a period when translation theory has largely overlooked AVT; although the practice of and the debates on translation are long-established, the discipline of translation studies (TS) only belongs to the second half of the twentieth century (Bogucki 2016; Munday 2016).

In spite of such a delay in the systematic study of AVT, nowadays the discipline is facing fast developments, constant progression and a surprising

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Both authors contributed equally to the scientific content of the chapter, and wrote the introduction and the conclusions together. E. Perego dealt specifically with 3.5 (from second paragraph), 3.6, 3.7, 3.8, and 3.9. R. Pacinotti dealt specifically with 2, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, and 3.5 (first paragraph).

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dynamism in research. This is due to two main reasons. The first is the many changes TS and AVT have undergone in the last decades, both as disciplines and as practices. These include a shift towards “relying more heavily on visual material, and integrating visual and verbal” elements in most communication products (Baker 2010), as well as the visual and multimodal nature of our culture, causing professionals to hardly ever translate purely verbal stretches of text (Taylor, this volume). Second, AVT has experienced a drastic change, thanks to collaborative and transnational (vs. isolated and mononational) research as well as the proliferation of new technologies, which have been reshaping translation practices and public perceptions for the past two decades (Jiménez-Crespo 2017). In spite of some critical aspects, mainly related to study design and sampling, measurement issues, as well as data comparability, reliability and validity, cross-national research has dramatically transformed AVT practice—with an impact on its theorization. Combined with an increased tendency to work in teams, this novel approach represents a step forward in AVT Studies (AVTS)—and TS as a whole—towards the standardization of research methods and overall cross-pollination of major findings in the AVT research community (Orero et al. 2018; Perego 2016). This has enabled the discipline to rejuvenate and evolve, to explore several new aspects of both AVT reception and production, to test new user-centred solutions, to include end users as crucial purveyors of feedback and to conduct more rigorous experiments benefitting from cross-national collaborations (Perego 2016, 2018).

If today multidisciplinarity and the joining of forces on projects of overlapping interest (Sprunger 2017) are surely identified as the way forward in AVT research, the history of AVT shows that a monodisciplinary approach has characterized most of its origins. In the following paragraphs, after defining AVT, we will offer a brief historical overview of its development through the ages, touching upon the main AVT modes, thus showing how this shift has occurred.

## 2 What Is AVT

With the now established expression “audiovisual translation”, we refer to a form of transposition whereby only a given portion of the source text is transformed (or “adapted”, Delabastita 1989) and relocated in its new shape within the same complex audiovisual (AV) ensemble. Other “overlapping umbrella terms” (e.g. “media translation”, “multimodal translation”, “screen

translation” and “film translation”; e.g. Chiaro 2009: 141) have been used interchangeably to describe this process of interlingual transfer in a multimodal context. Such variation in the designation of a discipline usually hints, as Scarpa (2008) writes with reference to technical translation, at some degree of uncertainty in framing its scope, characteristics and—to some extent—subject matter, leading to considerable academic effort in defining and laying the theoretical foundations of that particular research field. Indeed, AVT can still be considered a relatively young discipline and it would not be incorrect to say that, when it was still in its infancy, nearly all related scholarly undertakings were devoted to doing just that. However, now that AVT has come of age and has officially gained wide academic recognition (Díaz-Cintas 2008; Díaz-Cintas and Neves 2015), there is no more uncertainty about either its status or its applications. What alternative terms like “screen translation” and “film translation” drew attention to was then an interesting aspect of existing literature on AVT, namely the fact that, until recently, most research has been dedicated to the study of AVT mainly in relation to films, cinema, television, video and DVD (Chiaro 2009). While studies revolving around other AV products (like theatre plays, opera, live events, artworks and so on) are now gaining increasing critical mass, they are still a minority in comparison.

When AVT first started to be tackled by academia, defining it was in fact quite straightforward. In spite of a complex source text comprising both audio and visual channels delivering information and making meaning, the audio-visual translator normally had to care for one channel only, usually the nonvisual verbal channel in the form of dialogues, and make it accessible to speakers of a different language. AV texts were therefore either revoiced or captioned/subtitled. Revoicing and captioning/subtitling techniques were chosen and adopted in different countries depending on complex cultural, political, and economical reasons (Danan 1991, 1995; Dries 1995; Gambier 1994; Ivarsson and Carroll 1998; Luyken 1990; Luyken and Herbst 1991; O’Sullivan and Cornu 2018).

Only recently, with the advent of new text types and new forms of mediated communication (Taylor, this volume), as well as with the increased attention for audiences with specific needs (Jankowska, this volume; Neves, this volume), have existing forms of AVT started to be re(de)fined. These include subtitling for the D/deaf and hard of hearing (SDH), respeaking and live subtitling, audiodescription (AD) and audiosubtitling (AST) for the blind and visually impaired, but also surtitling, fansubbing, fandubbing and video-game localization. Table 3.1 shows which portion of the AV source text is normally associated with which type of AVT.

**Table 3.1** The AV text and its associated AVT types

Channel	Sign	Elements	Type of AVT		
Audio channel	Verbal	Dialogues	Standard revoicing techniques	SDH	Video
		Lyrics	Fandubbing	Respeaking	Game
		Background voices	Standard captioning/subtitling	Fansubbing	Localization
			Surtitling		
			Live subtitling		
	Nonverbal	Music			
		Sound effects			
		Background noises			
		Silence/pauses			
Visual channel	Verbal	Intertitles	Descriptive techniques	AST	
		Subtitles			
		Displays			
		Credits			
	Nonverbal	Images (static and dynamic)		AD	
		Proxemics and kinetic			
		Cinematic techniques			

Standard revoicing techniques (including dubbing, voice-over, narration and commentary), captioning/subtitling, fandubbing and surtitling are forms of either “spoken-to-spoken” or “spoken-to-written” (Gerzymisch-Arbogast 2007; isosemiotic or diasemiotic, in Gottlieb 1998) “translation proper” (Jakobson 1959) only adapting the verbal signs of the audio channel, typically for a foreign audience. SDH, respeaking and fansubbing transform the whole acoustic channel of the source text providing an intra (SDH and respeaking) or inter (fansubbing) linguistic translation of its verbal signs, at the same time verbalizing its most relevant nonverbal signs for the benefit of a niche target audience with specific needs (D/deaf or elderly users) or interests (e.g. Japanese anime fans). Descriptive techniques are mainly intralingual visual-to-spoken (Gerzymisch-Arbogast 2007) (intersemiotic, Jakobson 1959, or multisemiotic, Szarkowska and Orero 2014: 125) forms of transfer. Specifically, they include AD, translating the nonverbal visual channel into words, and AST, translating instead the verbal visual channel into a spoken text. Ultimately, videogame localization—perhaps the most recent AVT type—can embrace

any shift, and blend several types of AVT with software localization. The level of creativity and transformation involved to produce the target version is the reason why often this type of AVT is referred to as transcreation.

### 3 AVT through the Ages

For all its novelty as a research field in its own right, especially as opposed to other fields in TS, such as literary translation (Orrego-Carmona 2013), AVT has been around since the very early years of cinema. In this paragraph, a brief overview of the major historical developments of AVT will be outlined in chronological order.

#### 3.1 Silent Movies, Intertitles and Film Explainers

AVT studies have long overlooked silent movies on the grounds that, there being no spoken dialogue involved, they posed no particular translation problem. According to this outlook, when translation was involved, that is when dealing with intertitles (or title cards, i.e. filmed printed texts edited into the middle of the film action, which entered Europe in 1903 and the US in 1908; De Linde 1996; Díaz-Cintas 2001), the process took the form of a somehow mechanical substitution and reinsertion of titles in a different language (Ivarsson and Carroll 1998). However, this account of AVT in the silent period is an over-simplification. Silent movies required and dynamically interacted with “a vast array of translation practices” (Dwyer 2005: 301). Far from being universal products that could simply be exported and enjoyed in a variety of linguistic and cultural settings, silent movies brought about multiple issues that were tackled with a “holistic approach involving the translation of title cards, the omission or addition of title cards, film editing and paratranslation” (O’Sullivan and Cornu 2018: 16). As far as intertitles were concerned, the translation strategies adopted and the solutions devised were not devoid of conceptual and operational limitations. In a typical workflow, intertitles were often translated by technicians with no language expertise or by non-native speakers, which negatively affected the quality of the translated product, leading to complaints on the part of the spectators (O’Sullivan and Cornu 2018). Another stumbling block came into play when the original film featured ornamented title cards and the ornamentation (e.g. exquisitely ornate gothic fonts) could not be maintained or reproduced in the translated version: it is a testament to the importance of the links between film style and AVT history

that, at times when the use of illustrated title cards increased in original films (e.g. during World War I), film export decreased in an inversely proportional way (Salt 1992).

In keeping with the presentational style of early cinema, which addressed viewers directly and engaged them in an exhibition that had the character of a live event (Zanotti 2018), the translation strategies needed to make silent movies accessible to foreign audiences were not only written but also oral. The screenings of silent movies often involved the presence of live narrators, or “film explainers” (O’Sullivan and Cornu 2018), whose job was to provide spectators with real-time live explanation, translation and commentary of the movie. “Film explainers” have been studied extensively (e.g., Barnier 2010; Lacasse 2000; Lacasse et al. 2009; Nornes 2007). Variously referred to as *bonimenteurs* and *conférenciers* (in France and Quebec) or *benshi* (“orator” in Japanese, Martínez Sirés 2016), these people were responsible for explaining movies to the audience and their activity extended beyond the need to translate a foreign language (they did not always work on foreign films) to include “image-reading” and “cultural translation” tasks (Boillat 2007: 124–129), which could be seen as an anticipation of AD and of pop-up glosses. Furthermore, film explainers acted as mediators both between the audience and the technology involved in the projection of the movie, and between the audience and the movie itself (Zanotti 2018). Transition to sound did not immediately eradicate the practice of film explaining, and lecturers are reported to have resisted well beyond the silent era, especially in some countries and geographical areas (e.g. the Soviet Union and Japan, Martínez Sirés 2016; Zanotti 2018). A similar activity is still sometimes performed today through interpreting at film festivals (O’Sullivan and Cornu 2018).

### **3.2 Early Talkies and the Birth of the Main AVT Modalities**

Transition to sound in the late 1920s did, however, bring about massive changes in (re)presentational film style, reception, commercial strategies adopted by major distributors to export their products abroad and, as the latter entails, translation choices. With regard to this, given that Hollywood was already holding a hegemonic position (Taylor 2015; Zanotti 2018) among film distributors and in film market as a whole, English ended up being the most represented language in cinematic output worldwide. In the early talking period, translation practices usually involved a linguistic transfer from English into other languages, which resulted in the Anglophone world being

a major exporter of AV products and a very moderate importer of (translated) products—a situation that can still be observed today and determines noticeable differences between translation practices and preferences in English-speaking and non-English-speaking countries (Danan 1995).

One of the earliest translation choices was to avoid translation altogether (O’Sullivan and Cornu 2018; Zanotti 2018). Talking movies would be shown with intertitles translating the original dialogue in the target language (cf. *The Jazz Singer*, 1927, in France); or, alternatively, dialogues—and in some cases the whole soundtrack—would be removed, resulting in a silenced version of the original movie that could be accompanied by introductory sequences in the target language to explain key moments in the story (Zanotti 2018).

These strategies inevitably weighed down film rhythm and fragmented the flow of images (O’Sullivan and Cornu 2018). Although information about reception in this transitional period (1920–1930) is scarce, spectators’ reactions to these solutions were reported to be so hostile (Zanotti 2018) that they prompted Hollywood to try to overcome the challenge posed by the inclusion of sound in their products in different ways. Various possibilities were thus explored: having the same story and dialogue shot in multiple languages with different casts (multilingual films, also known as multiple-language version films); replacing original dialogue with translated lines in the target language (dubbing); and adding written text to the movie with a translation of the lines spoken by the actors on screen (subtitling). Each solution has been examined in depth and will also be addressed more closely in this volume. Here below, a brief account of their historical development will be outlined in separate sub-sections.

### 3.3 Multilingual Films

As mentioned above, in multilingual films the same story was shot multiple times, with the same technical crew but with multiple casts speaking the original dialogue in different languages (Castellano 2000; Chaume 2012). As O’Sullivan and Cornu (2018: 19) point out, in such productions the “boundary between multilingual versions, remakes and screen translations is very fuzzy”, but multilinguals did involve translation strategies (e.g. the translation of screenplays and dialogue) that have not been deeply investigated yet, partly because it is not clear who was in charge of the translation and what working method was adopted.

Although their reception was negatively affected by a combination of primitive sound technologies and poor linguistic choices made by production

companies (O’Sullivan and Cornu 2018), these movies represent a creative stage in the process of adaptation to the new constraints posed by sound (Barnier 2002). Generally speaking, multilinguals were very short-lived and eventually abandoned in favour of more cost-efficient and practical solutions. They were produced in Hollywood over only two years (1930–1931). In Europe, they lasted slightly longer, especially in Germany, which proved to be the largest producer of multilingual films and continued making them for a decade (1929–1939).

As multilinguals entailed hiring lesser-known actors to play in the foreign production (O’Sullivan and Cornu 2018), Hollywood studios devised a new method which would allow audiences worldwide to see the American stars on the screen while at the same time being able to understand dialogue in their own language—a result that could be achieved by substituting voices instead of actors. This is when revoicing techniques first came into play.

### 3.4 Dubbing

Some experiments were carried out (e.g. a sort of ‘live dubbing’ during the shooting of the scenes) before the technique that is universally known as dubbing today was fully developed as a form of post-synchronization (Chaume 2012; Fodor 1976; O’Sullivan and Cornu 2018: 22). Just like AVT as a whole, dubbing owes much to technological developments (Ivarsson and Carroll 1998), and this was the case both in the early 1930s (with the improvement of the re-recording technique and sound mixing, O’Sullivan and Cornu 2018) and today (with the possibilities opened up by increasingly sophisticated digital technologies, Chiaro 2009).

As it stands today, dubbing is a process that entails a complex chain of agents and of steps (script translation and adaptation, recording of the new script and its final mixing with the original soundtrack, cf. Fodor 1976; Perego and Pavesi 2006; Whitman-Linsen 1992). As more people with different expertise are involved in the process, dubbing is more expensive and time-consuming than subtitling, and it is no coincidence that it caught on in those European countries that had thriving film industries and infrastructures, for example, Germany, Italy and France (O’Sullivan and Cornu 2018; Ranzato and Zanotti 2019; Zanotti 2018).

However, the reasons for its success in most of such geographical areas cannot be put down exclusively to mere financial considerations. The link between dubbing and censorship has been explored by several authors (e.g. Danan 1991; Díaz-Cintas 2019; Mereu Keating 2016; Zanotti 2012), who have pointed out that the possibility to manipulate, replace and neutralize any

element of the original dialogue made dubbing particularly appealing to the regimes that had seized power, for example, in Germany, Italy and Spain in the 1930s. Dubbing also made foreign movies accessible to wider audiences, counteracting the high levels of illiteracy that characterized certain contexts (e.g. Italy) and ensuring larger profits (Mereu Keating 2016). Outside Europe, dubbing was also used as part of the colonial political agenda, as in the case of the Arab world, where Hollywood majors delivered French-dubbed versions of their movies in the French colonies (Zanotti 2018: 141), thus reinforcing the position of the imperialistic language and culture.

Overall, the acceptability of dubbing was never considered an option in some contexts—for example, in the US, as a way to prevent non-American films from gaining a wider audience—or was politically constructed in others and seems to have resulted from a combination of a process of habituation of the general public (e.g. in Germany, Zanotti 2018), nationalistic policies (Danan 1991) and sometimes pressures from the film industry itself (e.g. in France, O’Sullivan and Cornu 2018).

In the first half of the twenty-first century, dubbing has established itself as the preferred audiovisual translation strategy in various parts of the world (e.g. France, Italy, Germany, Spain and Spanish-speaking countries in Latin America, Brazil, India and Japan), sometimes in combination with other modalities (e.g. in Colombia, where foreign productions are dubbed on public television, but mostly subtitled on pay TV channels, Orrego-Carmona 2013: 301). As far as Europe is concerned, the traditional (yet simplistic) division between “dubbing countries” and “subtitling countries” (Danan 1991, 1995; Díaz-Cintas 1999; Dries 1995; Gambier 1994, 2008; Ivarsson and Carroll 1998; Luyken 1990; Luyken and Herbst 1991) is now fuzzier than it was, although the debate on the advantages and disadvantages of each translation modality is still open (cf. Nikolić 2018). It is generally agreed that audiences readily accept what they are used to, but in some contexts (e.g. Japan, Martínez Sirés 2016) audiences’ preferences for one modality over the other seem to be also related to the genre of the movie they are applied to. In the past few years, an increased consumption of multimodal products worldwide has led to faster distribution, with shorter waiting times between the release of the original production and its translated versions, and more exposure to different translation modalities. This is particularly true of predominantly dubbing countries, where (younger) viewers are getting increasingly open and accustomed to subtitling as a way of gaining quicker access to multimodal products available on the Internet or on streaming distributors like Netflix (Orrego-Carmona 2013; Perego et al. 2016; Perego and Bruti 2015).

### 3.5 Subtitling

Subtitling started to be practiced at the beginning of the twentieth century, in 1909 at the cinema and in 1938 on TV (Ivarsson and Carroll 1998). Various methods to incorporate the additional text to the original movie have been tested, developed and perfected—mostly in Europe, where translated products were distributed and consumed—from the early 1930s to the early 2000s before subtitles took their current shape (O’Sullivan and Cornu 2018: 20). Most of such methods—the photographic printing process, chemical, optical and laser subtitling—had to deal with legibility issues, until the problem was solved with the advent of digital subtitling (Ivarsson and Carroll 1998). Subtitles also had to be adapted to the smaller screen—which was found to have a narrower contrast range than cinema screens and to entail different reading speeds—when movies started to be shown on television (Ivarsson 2009). A variety of methods was employed in different countries over the years, until dedicated equipment for producing subtitles was developed in the 1970s (Ivarsson 2009: 8–10).

Over the decades, specific manuals and in-house guidelines have been developed to set a standard for professional subtitles, with a view to making this technique as effective and user-friendly as possible. Professionals and scholars have therefore devoted much concern and research to their evolution from intertitles, their linguistic and structural features, the quality of the translation. Over the years, the interest shifted to the usability of subtitles, and some aspects of the practice, like reading speeds and the ideal number of characters per line, are still up for debate. This is mainly because differences exist between subtitling for the cinema, for television and for the Internet (Ivarsson and Carroll 1998; Gambier 2004; Orrego-Carmona 2013); and, on the other hand, the different needs of different audiences (general public, language learners, D/deaf and elderly viewers, etc.) make it very difficult to find a “one size fits all” solution. Although the identity and translation practices of early subtitlers are quite murky, when subtitles first appeared in talkies the situation was far from homogenous between subtitles that were only meant to convey the gist of what was being said and more detailed subtitles, aiming to also reproduce the nuances of the original dialogue (O’Sullivan and Cornu 2018). Since the early 1930s, films have gradually come to contain a greater number of subtitles, which in more recent years was also made possible by the increased storage capacity of DVDs (Orrego-Carmona 2013).

As opposed to dubbing, subtitling does not require specialized technical skills or costly equipment and can be carried out by a single person who takes

care of both translation and spotting operations. It is consequently cheaper and faster than dubbing, which is part of the reasons for its success in the modern entertainment industry (Orrego-Carmona 2018), also in the form of surtitles for the stage, in and outside Europe. Subtitling is the most established AVT modality in the Anglophone world, where dubbing is virtually non-existent, and it has proven to be soaring and particularly fortunate in China, where both foreign and domestic production are subtitled (Wang 2015).

### 3.6 AVT and Accessibility: SDH and AD

The population in the Western world is undergoing major transformations, especially as far as its composition is concerned. The ageing of the population is one of the most apparent of these transformations, an ongoing trend that implies, among other things, an increased prevalence of age-related health issues like visual and hearing impairments. Modern societies are also more aware of the specific needs of particular demographics, like people with cognitive or sensory disabilities, children, recent immigrants, with the recognition that all members of society share a collective responsibility to be inclusive (Orero and Matamala 2013). Social inclusion is also achieved by allowing all people to have equal opportunities to access the information provided by the media for education and entertainment purposes. Media accessibility was already a “hot topic” back in the 1980s and 1990s and it eventually worked its way into the US and the EU legislation (Jankowska, this volume). Other countries, such as Japan, started to consider accessibility later (Martínez Sirés 2016). The growing concern for the social inclusion of people with sensory disabilities has led to more attention being dedicated to accessible forms of AVT—with the development of AD and AST on the one hand and SDH, along with respeaking, on the other. Several projects (e.g. HBB4ALL, cf. Romero-Fresco 2015) have been and are currently carried out in Europe to benchmark the quality of media accessibility services. The first project entirely devoted to quality in accessible AVT (Understanding Media Accessibility Quality, UMAQ) has been launched within the framework of the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme. The UMAQ project (<http://pagines.uab.cat/umaq/>) strives to define quality and provide a unified theoretical framework for understanding it. The ultimate aim of this project is to draw up a set of sound, research-based guidelines to strengthen EU media accessibility policies, with positive implications for all the people involved in the accessibility value chain.

### 3.7 Audio Description

As Joel Snyder has pointed out on several occasions (e.g. 2014: 13), AD has always existed, even for the benefit of sighted people, or has been performed without realizing—as in the case of the NY mayor in the 1940s reading comics on the radio during a newspaper strike and facing the issue of rendering the colourful cartoon images (p. 14).

Until recently, illiteracy was endemic in the general population all over the world, so it is no wonder that most people had to rely on some kind of mediation to access a wide variety of contents. One such mediation can be described as “prototypic AD”, that is, a verbal explanation of the meaning of visual elements, signs and symbols. Orero and Matamala (2013) cite the case of medieval pilgrims that needed to be guided in this way to decipher the pictures visible on church walls and windows and, in more recent times, the very film explainers that helped the audience understand the AV ensemble of a movie on multiple levels.

As an established translation practice aimed at making AV products accessible, however, AD is only a few decades old. Its origins as an assistive tool date back to the 1970s and are to be found in the US, Canada and the UK, where AD was used to make special theatre plays accessible to visually impaired patrons (Snyder 2014). It has also provided increased television access and cultural independence to many People with Sight Loss (PSL), whose quality of life has dramatically increased. In other European countries, AD existed mainly in the context of disability associations, like the Organización Nacional de Ciegos Españoles (ONCE) in Spain. Only after it started to be recorded and inserted in AV products that were distributed internally among members of the associations did AD gradually develop into a full-fledged professional practice and discipline (López Vera 2006). Specifically, its birth as an academic discipline is linked to Gregory Frazier and his Master’s thesis (1975), where AD concepts and guidelines for its use were first developed—and later applied at AudioVision ([www.audiovision.org](http://www.audiovision.org)), the non-profit organization he founded in 1989 that still advocates for and provides a variety of description services. Born and applied mainly in theatre and cinema, AD has slowly but steadily expanded to virtually any cultural field and can be used to describe any visual and audiovisual product, either static or dynamic, monomodal or multimodal, live or recorded (Remael et al. 2015; Maszerowska et al. 2014).

Browsing through the literature on AD, it is easy to notice how the early studies have been focusing mainly on its role and status in different countries, followed by studies on its fundamentals, (corpus-based) analyses of its

linguistic and semantic priorities and features, and in general research on guidelines (cf. the European project ADLAB, 2011–2014). More recently, AD research has shifted its focus to a more recent strand in which AD is seen as part of a wider multimodal experience, and it is currently concentrating specifically on reception (Di Giovanni 2018) and training (cf. the European, Erasmus+ project ADLAB PRO, 2016–2019), on the impact of AD on literacy and second language learning, and on a range of technological aspects including text-to-speech AD.

Such a new approach has characterized the ration and the working activities of the project ADLAB: in order to help students and professionals of AD by giving them a tool that gathers state-of-the-art knowledge about the discipline and sets a shared standard for the provision of a quality service, ADLAB, launched in Europe under the Lifelong Learning Programme, drew up reliable, consistent guidelines meant to inform AD practice at international level. As opposed to most pre-existing guidelines, which tended to be prescriptive and based on experience and common sense rather than on research (Braun 2008; Orero 2012), ADLAB guidelines are different. They are innovative, strategic, and based on a thorough analysis of the distinguishing features of AD products but also of the feedback of the target audience (Remael et al. 2015), thus showing the potential, the impact and the effectiveness of the recent approach to this AVT mode.

### 3.8 Subtitles for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Viewers

The first experiments with SDH (also known as captions, especially in the US; De Linde and Kay 1999; Neves 2008) took place in the 1940s in the US (Neves 2005). Since then, the US and the UK have taken the lead in terms of SDH provision and attention to the target audience, while other countries have tried to conform but have remained behind (Szarkowska et al. 2011). Over the following decades, SDH started to take off and their utility for other purposes, for example teaching, began to be first explored and then acknowledged (Neves 2005: 107–109). The distribution of captioned films in the US was limited until 1965, when the Public Law 89–258 guaranteed proper funding for this practice and boosted research in the field. In 1971, the First National Conference on Television for the Hearing Impaired (University of Tennessee) brought together representatives of major US TV networks and stakeholders (including hearing-impaired people, parents and teachers) to discuss important issues related to the provision of SDH. Since then it has been gradually implemented in several projects, until it made its way to US

television in the late 1970s (Romero-Fresco 2018) and went mainstream in the 1980s, when various TV broadcasters offered captioned programmes (Neves 2005). In Europe, the establishment of SDH took place over two decades, with different modalities and at different moments in time depending on the country. SDH made its first appearance in the 1970s in the UK, where the teletext system (similar to close captioning) was first implemented. Other systems were tested (e.g. the ANTIOPE in France) but did not prove as successful, so the teletext system was eventually adopted by different countries in Europe, Asia and Africa (Neves 2005: 112). In the following years, a growing demand for SDH led to an improvement of subtitling software packages and to a gradual expansion of the practice across the continent over the following decades (Romero-Fresco 2018).

Because SDH is designed for people with hearing loss, who cannot process the same quantity and quality of text hearing readers typically process at the same age (Jensema et al. 1996), it has very specific linguistic, semantic and syntactic features (e.g. Matamala and Orero 2010; Szarkowska et al. 2011) all designed to make subtitles accessible to its audience. These features have been and still are the focus of much research aiming at improving the quality of this service. A recent unpublished experiment (Bozzao 2016), however, has proven empirically that there is still a long way to go in SDH, which for most users is not yet fully usable. Current SDH seems to be too complex and cause comprehension losses. In fact, the study strongly suggests that people with hearing loss might actually benefit from extreme forms of simplification, in spite of their wish to access a full transcript of the original dialogues. In this respect, research seems to be going in this direction, as shown by the scope of the recent project EASIT (2018–2021, <http://pages.uab.cat/easit/en>) exploring the effects of simplified language on AVT products and their reception.

### **3.9 AVT and the Internet: Fansubbing and Non-professional Subtitling, Crowdsourcing, Fandubbing**

Since the advent of VHS in the 1970s, viewers have gained increasing control over the reproduction and distribution of audiovisual products. Two decades into the Internet era, users have now the means to communicate with producers—thus influencing their choices—create communities based on a shared interest with people from all over the world, and produce their own AV materials (cf. the notion of “prosumers” in Orrego-Carmona 2013, 2018; Scarpa 2005). The possibility of sharing large quantities of material quickly, easily

and with few limitations makes the Internet a very appealing space for the modern entertainment industry. As such, the Internet has also boosted AVT practices and developments, if not from a qualitative point of view, surely on a quantitative level. If Internet users want to enjoy AV material produced in other countries and to make sure that the material they in turn share is accessible to as many users as possible worldwide, it goes without saying that translation is key.

Together with an increased interest in foreign productions, the “Internet revolution” has brought about a “resurgence of subtitles” in the US (Zanotti 2018) and more exposure to subtitling in traditionally dubbing countries (Perego et al. 2016). But besides standard translation modalities, other (non-professional, “abusive”, Nornes 1999) practices have gained new impetus in the digital era: fansubbing and non-professional subtitling, crowdsourcing and fandubbing.

Fansubbing was born well before the massive development of the Internet as we know it today. It started out in the US in the 1980s, in response to a need felt by Japanese anime fans to gain access to more products than were being made available already, with a more accurate translation of the cultural elements they contained (Díaz-Cintas and Muñoz Sánchez 2006; Caffrey 2008; Orrego-Carmona 2013; Scarpa 2005). Given the technical limitations of the time, fansubbing was a painstaking, time-consuming and costly endeavour, but digital technology and teamwork have made the process much quicker and simpler. TS researchers have traditionally considered “fansubbing” as an over-arching term for all types of subtitles created by volunteers. Orrego-Carmona (2018), however, calls for the need to broaden this perspective and focus on the wider category of “non-professional subtitles”, moving away from the idea of closed communities of committed fans and including translation initiatives that might be motivated by other factors (e.g. an interest in the process of subtitling itself) and be less “transgressive” (in formal terms) and source culture-oriented than typical fansubbed products (Jiménez-Crespo 2017; Orrego-Carmona 2013).

Instead of involving self-organized online communities, crowdsourcing brings together participants in response to an open call by a particular organization or institution that sets a task and initiates a dedicated platform where the translation process takes place (Jiménez-Crespo 2017). Participants are usually motivated by an interest in that organization, institution or company’s activity and/or products and are thus willing to take it upon themselves to translate their contents through collaborative (usually voluntary) work (Orrego-Carmona 2013). Many typologies of crowdsourcing have been identified (cf. Estellés and González-Ladrón-De-Guevara 2012b; Brabham

2008, 2013) and virtually any text can be crowdsourced (Jiménez-Crespo 2017), but at the basis of crowdsourcing as a task there must lie some kind of “mutual benefit” for both users and crowdsourcers (Estellés and González-Ladrón-De-Guevara 2012a: 198). A sense of belonging is often behind users’ commitment and is encouraged by the organization or company, which uses crowdsourcing as a way to secure customer loyalty, promote their products and cut the costs (Orrego-Carmona 2013: 310). Although collaboration in translation processes and practices can be traced back to very early accounts (e.g. the first translation of the Bible) and has been a constant in the history of the discipline, crowdsourcing as we know it only started to emerge in the late 1990s, when the first online platforms were created in Japan to harness “the collective intelligence of crowds” to translate dictionaries and post-edit machine translation output (Jiménez-Crespo 2017: 50). In the early 2000s, much work in the field of TS was focusing on the development of translation technologies and overlooked the birth of this novel practice, which, however, went mainstream in the years between 2005 and 2010, fuelled by successful collaborative practices (e.g. Wikipedia) and crowdsourcing models (implemented e.g. by Facebook) (52–53). Over the past decade, the limits of crowdsourcing (e.g. the effort required of the crowdsourcer to manage the crowd and their output or the difficulty in having all contents translated by volunteers who are in control and free to choose what to translate) have begun to be identified and explored, and so have the new solutions and resorting to hybrid models (e.g. paid crowdsourcing) devised by companies and by the language industry to deliver “fast and efficient content to customers that might value lower rates or speed over quality” (60).

As the name suggests, fan/fundubbing (e.g. Chaume 2013) is akin to fan/funsubbing in that it is home-made dubbing produced non-professionally by fans for fun. Fan/fundubbers translate the dialogues and use their own voices to replace and lip-synch the original lines. In order to deliver quality dubbing, they need to have the right equipment (starting with a good microphone), some technical expertise to use the specialized software available, and good translating skills. Tracing back to the 1990s, fan/fundubbing has not gained the same popularity of funsubbing, and it is especially used for cartoons, above all anime, short-form videos such as trailers, TV series and parodies of famous scenes from blockbuster movies, which are very common on YouTube (Orrego-Carmona 2013: 309). Given its young age, fan/fundubbing has not been researched as much as fan/funsubbing. Yet its features and effect on the audience could open new trajectories and new debates in the field of AVT research (Baños 2019, this volume).

## 4 Taking Stock: Current and New Trajectories

The development of AVT as a research field was significantly delayed with respect to the birth of cinema due to issues like the academic perception of both translation and film as “popular” subjects, and the difficulty to physically access primary sources (e.g. film dialogues) that were volatile by nature (Franco and Orero 2005; Gambier 2008; O’Sullivan and Cornu 2018). This is also one of the main reasons why AVT history is still a new research topic within the discipline. Since the early 1930s, however, when the first study on AVT (“Le dubbing” by Valentin Mandelstamm) was published in the journal *Cinés* (Franco and Orero 2005), scholarly attention to AVT has kept growing over the years, which has led to an increase in the volume of research produced on AVT topics, as well as in the number of conferences and university courses revolving around this sub-discipline of TS and its many applications.

Regarding the numbers, Franco and Orero (2005) offer an interesting quantitative overview of the AVT publication trend in the period 1930–2000. They empirically demonstrate that the increase has been neither massive nor steady, with an average of ten publications per decade between 1941 and 1980, a static transition period from 1981 to 1990, and a peak in the number of publications (450) between 1991 and 2000, passing from 1% to 4% in AVT against TS in general. The first decade of the following years (2001–2010), characterized by a fervent activity, shows a rise to 6.7% in the percentage of AVT-related publications and later to 9.8% of the total from 2001 to mid-2016, thus confirming the consolidation and exponential growth of the discipline (Orero et al. 2018).

From a qualitative point of view, research undertaken in the 1990s had started to grow wider in scope and to be better organized, overcoming the methodological limitations that had characterized previous works, such as their prescriptive and conceptual nature and their focus on case studies, which often made it difficult to generalize conclusions (Gambier 2008). It also started to tackle issues that had been ignored up until the late 1980s, like translator training and working conditions, as well as reception of translated works or authors (Franco and Orero 2005). However, numerous studies produced in the early 2000s remained limited in scope. The current types and nature of AVT have called for more applied, less descriptive approaches and consequently to new and stronger methodological frameworks, all described in this volume, borrowing from several disciplines.

A look at the history of AVT shows major shifts both in the extension of the portion of the source text being the focus of research and practice—which

has extended considerably to include the whole AV source text (Table 3.1)—and in the approach favoured to study and to translate it. We move from very small visual-verbal elements (intertitles), to virtually the whole source text ensemble, as in the case of videogame localization.

Another major shift in the approach to AVT traces back to the 1980s and is characterized by a strong focus on users as opposed to texts. This is when empirical research has started to make its way into AVT. Based on observation and evidence and particularly effective to assess user reactions and preferences to given translation methods and/or solutions (Perego 2016), empirical research is not, however, a new entry in the AVT field, having first appeared in the 1980s in Belgium with the studies conducted by a team of Belgian psychologists led by Géry d'Ydewalle.

Research into film audiences traces even further back in time to the very inception of cinema and it prospered before, during and immediately after the two World Wars. This encompassed a variety of methods (including analyses of box-office revenues (Sedgwick 2011), data about the audience made available by the industry (Sullivan 2010), letters and other traces left by historical film fans) and resorted to the contribution of different disciplines, spanning from ethnography, to psychology, to sociology (Biltiereyst and Meers 2018). The main problems posed by this research area are linked to the difficulty in finding reliable sources and traces of the presence of the audience (O'Sullivan and Cornu 2018; Plantinga 2009; Stokes 1999; Zanotti 2018).

Following two decades (1960s and 1970s) in which film experiences were studied as textually constructed phenomena and the audience was conceived as an abstract construction (Biltiereyst and Meers 2018), since the 1980s film reception and audience studies have benefitted from a great amount of empirical research focusing on the “real audience” (Stacey 1994: 54), combining different disciplines and methodologies in order to better understand and even revise theories, concepts, and the very history of film and cinema (Biltiereyst and Meers 2018; Hill 2018; Romero-Fresco 2018).

Empirical research has become even more important when accessible AVT methods have started to be provided and studied (Perego 2016). The right of persons with a disability and of the elderly to be included in the social and cultural life of their countries—as enshrined, for example, in the EU Directive 2010/13/EU, Article 46—is indissolubly linked to the provision of accessible AVT.

In spite of its growth over the past decade, AVT research still needs more establishment (Bogucki 2016; Orero et al. 2018). In such framework, it is apparent that teamwork is key to meaningful contribution to one or more fields of knowledge (Perego 2016) and the fact that co-authorship in AVT

contributions has recently reached an average of 19.1% (whereas the figure in TS is 15.8%, Orero et al. 2018) could be seen as an encouraging indication that research is moving forward in this direction.

Given the close connection between AVT and the ever-evolving technological environment (Bogucki 2016), current trends and future developments also deserve scholarly attention. The expansion of the audiovisual market, the interconnectivity made possible by technology and the emergence of new consumption habits (e.g. binge watching) have resulted in the birth of new global audiences of empowered viewers whose preferences, expectations, viewing styles and needs have considerable repercussions on the production, distribution and, consequently, translation of AV products. The way new audiences influence translation practices and vice versa should be investigated more closely, especially in developing countries (Orrego-Carmona 2018).

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# 4

## Media Accessibility Within and Beyond Audiovisual Translation

Gian Maria Greco and Anna Jankowska

### 1 Introduction

Audiovisual media play a crucial role in the cultural life and leisure activities of modern society. In 1988, the British Film Institute carried out the *One Day in the Life of Television* project: 20,000 viewers were asked to record and report their experience of television on one day, 1 November 1988. The process was captured in a documentary broadcast exactly one year later on ITV (Kosminsky 1989), and the results were later discussed in a book (Day-Lewis 1989). Both clearly showed the degree to which television had permeated the daily lives of British people at that time. A few years later, following the introduction of satellite television in Britain, the British Film Institute decided to further the analysis by conducting a longitudinal study: 500 people filled out questionnaire-diaries over a period of five years. The book containing the analysis of the data showed how, more than ever before, television had

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increased its centrality in British society (Gauntlett and Hill 1999). Twenty years have passed since then, characterised by the advent of new technologies, which have produced new forms of creation, distribution and consumption of audiovisual content. Technologies that have also made audiovisual media central in contemporary societies, as exemplified by the proliferation of video-on-demand platforms and their disruption of traditional forms of production and enjoyment (Lotz 2014; McDonald and Smith-Rowsey 2016). At the same time, this technological boom has also increased the risk of discrimination and the exclusion of people from enjoying media products and services. The framework within which this situation is addressed is identified by the concept of *accessibility*. Although accessibility has now come to play a leading role on the world's stage, it is not an entirely new concept to audiovisual translation (AVT). Just consider that, as far back as 2003, Gambier stated that "the key word in screen translation is now accessibility" (Gambier 2003). Since then, accessibility has become an ever more pivotal concept in AVT. Along the way, it has given rise to an area referred to as "media accessibility" (MA), which nowadays includes some of the liveliest and most socially relevant research topics in society. Initially, MA was considered to be a subdomain of AVT and was strictly confined within the borders of translation studies. Over time and through the formulation of different accounts, however, MA has been steadily moving beyond those borders, driving the process which has led to the emergence of a new interdisciplinary field, *accessibility studies* (Greco 2018).

## 2 Theoretical Foundations: Accessibility and Human Rights

In order to introduce the different accounts of MA, discuss their implications and sketch possible future paths, we shall briefly focus on accessibility within the human rights framework. Introducing the landscape of MA through a focus on human rights is relevant for at least three reasons. Firstly, because the discourse of human rights, though often restricted to persons with disabilities, has been frequently used to promote MA and has been central in its growth within and outside AVT. Secondly, because the proponents of various accounts of MA often justify them by framing them within specific interpretations of accessibility in relation to human rights. And thirdly, because highlighting the possible misunderstandings and risks lurking within specific interpretations of accessibility in the human rights framework will provide insights into some

of the theoretical problems related to accessibility and translation, which will be discussed towards the end of this text.

At first glance, accessibility may seem to have become a kind of buzzword in the context of human rights. Is this merely a temporary trend or is it pointing to something more fundamental? In order to formulate a reply, a deeper look will help. An analysis of how accessibility is conceived within the human rights framework will allow us to identify two main positions, each with a radically different interpretation of accessibility. A situation that Greco (2016b) calls the *Accessibility as a Human Right Divide (AHRD) problem*. On the one side, we find those who interpret accessibility as being a human right *per se*. On the other side, there are those who interpret accessibility as an instrument for human rights.

Positions of the first type are based on variations of the claim that the approval of the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* in 2006 established accessibility as a human right, and frequently refer to the fact that Article 9 of the Convention focuses entirely on accessibility. Usually, supporters of this position first make this claim and then address it referring exclusively to some specific group, often persons with disabilities. An early case is the presentation by the then director of the Telecommunication Development Bureau at the 2010 Plenipotentiary Conference of the International Telecommunication Union (Al-Basheer Al-Morshid 2010). A more recent example can be found in the jointly published *Work Programme 2017* of the European Committee for Standardization and the European Committee for Electrotechnical Standardization (CEN & CENELEC 2016). Both documents share two traits. They state that accessibility is a human right recognised by the aforementioned Convention, and they also exclusively limit it to some groups: the latter to persons with disabilities and the elderly, the former only to persons with disabilities. An even more extreme position is endorsed by the European Economic and Social Committee in an official *Opinion* adopted in 2015. In the document, the Committee “calls on the EU institutions to acknowledge that Article 9 of the United Nations Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities constitutes a human right in itself” (European Economic and Social Committee 2014: 1). Then it carries out its argument claiming we should consider “accessibility as a human right for persons with disabilities”, as stated even by the very title of the document.

As critically analysed by Greco (2016b), positions of this first type lead to controversial conclusions. First, claiming that accessibility is a human right, either for all or for some specific groups, raises conflicts with other human rights. As acknowledged by Lakoff in his analysis of freedom as a metaphor, accessibility is crucial for freedom because one is “not free to go somewhere,

get something, or do something if access is blocked, or if there is no path (or road or bridge) to it" (Lakoff 2006: 30). Interpreting accessibility as a human right would then imply that it is more essential than many, if not all other human rights, even those considered to be the very fundamental ones, such as freedom. That is, it would make accessibility a sort of *über-human* right that trumps all the others. This leads to a contradiction, since it would require a complete reformulation of human rights theory, the very assumption upon which the argument is grounded. Even more controversial is the conclusion reached if one adopts the extreme version mentioned above, that is, if one considers accessibility to be a human right only for some specific group. Consider the case of persons with disabilities. Roughly put, human rights are rights one has because one is a member of humankind. The justification for one having human rights lies in their humanity. Claiming that there is a human right that is specific to only one group of people lies in sharp contrast with the definition of human rights. But beyond this, it also implies that the justification of that right is not rooted in the humanity of those people, but rather, in what sets them apart from other human beings, as otherwise every human being would share that right. Claiming that accessibility is a human right for persons with disabilities then means that they possess that human right not because they are human beings but because they have disabilities. This interpretation may be inspired by a willingness to highlight the vital importance of access for persons with disabilities. Nonetheless, the result is the use of human rights rhetoric to reinforce these same people's discrimination by setting them apart from the rest of humankind, thus producing or reinforcing a *ghetto effect* (Greco 2016a, b). The intentions may be good, but the effects are bad.

On the other side of the AHRD problem lies the idea that accessibility is instrumental for the human rights of all, but neither a human right *per se* nor one pertaining only to some groups. This is the reason why human rights—for example, the right to education—are often expressed in terms of access—for example, using the formula "the right to access to education". This second interpretation permeates a vast array of very different documents, even some exclusively focused on disability. A clear case in point is indeed the aforementioned Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The Convention is the result of years of careful discussion and working groups which involved major actors all over the world. The final text never states that accessibility is a human right, nor that it is a human right specific for persons with disabilities. It calls accessibility a "principle". It then goes on to reformulate the human rights already presented in the *Universal Declaration* in the case of persons with disabilities. Indeed, some are reformulated precisely in terms of

“access”, underlining how accessibility is an essential element for the achievement of human rights. A second case in point is the *World Report on Disability*. Given the topic, one would expect at least a chapter of the report to be exclusively focused on accessibility. This is not the case however. Recognising that the Convention “applies human rights to disability, thus making general human rights specific” (WHO and WB 2011: 9), the Report defines accessibility as “the degree to which an environment, service, or product allows access by as many people as possible, in particular people with disabilities” (World Health Organization and World Bank 2011: 301). Accordingly, accessibility is discussed throughout the entire document in relation to the many barriers faced by persons with disabilities, from education to health services, and it is always presented as instrumental for overcoming them. It is worth noting that it says “as many people as possible, in particular people with disabilities” and not “exclusively persons with disabilities”. The use of “in particular” simply highlights how crucial accessibility is for groups at higher risk of social exclusion, but it does not restrict it to these groups. Going back to Lakoff’s metaphorical account of freedom as freedom of motion, “freedom requires not just the absence of impediments to motion but also the presence of access” (Lakoff 2006: 30). It is to say that, as showed by Greco (2016b), access is a *necessary requirement* for the enjoyment of human rights for all.

In a nutshell: on the first side of the AHRD problem, accessibility is interpreted as being a human right and usually restricted to some specific groups, often only persons with disabilities. In doing so, this position reinforces their discrimination by reiterating a ghetto effect. On the other side, accessibility is considered an instrument for achieving the human rights of all. As we shall see in the next section, these two positions are intertwined with the different accounts of MA that have been formulated over the last few decades.

### 3 Media Accessibility: Accounts and Definitions

The history of MA as a recognised scholarly area is relatively recent. Clear signs include the steadily increasing number of: researchers who frame their work within this area, specialised publications and research projects supported by public funding. However, the explicit connection between accessibility and AVT goes back much further. Just consider that the first edition of *The Arts and 504: a 504 Handbook for Accessible Arts Programming*, published by the National Endowment for the Arts in 1985, dedicates substantial content to

what it refers to as “captions” (i.e. subtitles for the deaf and hard of hearing, henceforth SDH) and “verbal description” (i.e. audio description, henceforth AD). That is, the practical history of the explicit connection between accessibility and AVT dates back to before the latter started to take its first steps as a proper area of translation studies. Its academic history, however, is quite different. Accessibility started making its way into the scholarly environment of AVT between the late 1990s and the early 2000s, thanks to the work of some researchers who had long envisioned the theoretical and social relevance of accessibility for AVT. In time, scholars adopted different accounts of accessibility, which can be classified into two families: on the one hand, one that comprises a series of *particularist accounts*, on the other, a *universalist account* (Greco 2018). Particularist accounts are similar to the restricted interpretations of accessibility we discussed in the context of human rights. Actually, proponents typically base their accounts of MA on the implicit or explicit notion of accessibility as a human right for some groups. Particularist accounts narrow accessibility down to some specific groups or types of barriers, and ultimately limit MA to (some or all) translation-based modalities. On the contrary, the universalist account embraces the broader conception of accessibility as an instrument for the human rights of all (Greco 2016b). That is, it does not confine MA to any specific group of people or barriers, nor within the sole borders of translation studies. The movement from particularist accounts to a universalist one should not be considered a linear evolution. All these accounts still coexist nowadays, even though more and more scholars are increasingly embracing the universalist account, recognising the discriminatory traits of the particularist ones as well as the limitations they impose on notions of accessibility and translation. The analysis carried out in the following paragraphs is a testimony of the lively fermentation brewing within MA, as well as the commitment scholars in the field have been putting into the consolidation of this area.

In the introduction to a seminal special issue on “screen translation” by the journal *The Translator* in 2003, Gambier starts off by presenting a broad list of modalities, namely interlingual subtitling, dubbing, consecutive interpreting, simultaneous interpreting, voice-over, free commentary, simultaneous (or sight) translation, multilingual production, translating scenario/script, intra-lingual subtitling, live (or real time) subtitling, surtitling and audio description. He then moves on to discuss how they serve not only traditional audiences, but also migrants and, more generally, a “wide diversity of [...] audiences with different socio-cultural and socio-linguistic backgrounds and expectations (children, elderly people, various sub-groups of the deaf and hard of hearing, and the blind and visually impaired)” (Gambier 2003: 178).

A few lines after, he states that “the key word in screen translation is now accessibility”.

Around the same time, some AVT scholars began to adopt the term “media accessibility”. Instead of referring to Gambier’s broader list of audiences and modalities, albeit still restricted to specific groups, they used it to indicate a subdomain of AVT. It is in this period that expressions like “media accessibility [sic]: subtitling for the deaf and the hard of hearing and audio description for the blind and the visually impaired” began cropping up (Orero 2004: VIII). This initial version of the first particularist account of MA applies a twofold restriction on both modalities and audience. It limits MA exclusively to AD and SDH and only to persons with sensory disabilities. Other variations have been advanced over time: from “media accessibility, i.e. audio description, subtitling for the deaf and hard of hearing and audio subtitling” (Orero 2012: 15), to “clean audio, [...] subtitling, audio description and signing” (Armstrong 2016: 16), to “subtitles for the deaf and hard of hearing; audio description; spoken subtitles; sign language interpretation” (Moledo 2018: 8). While proponents may differ as to which modalities should be included in MA, they all narrow MA down to sensory disabilities.

In these very years, some AVT scholars began to note that “to lip-sync, to subtitle or to voice-over a programme shares as much the idea of accessibility as SDH or AD. Only the intended audiences are different. Whether the hurdle is a language or a sensorial barrier, the aim of the translation process is exactly the same: to facilitate the access to an otherwise hermetic source of information and entertainment” (Díaz-Cintas 2005: 4). This awareness led to a broadening of the previous definition of MA. According to this second particularist account, MA concerns both sensory and linguistic barriers. As for the first one, versions of this second account can still be found in our days, for example, “media accessibility has become a key concept in [AVT], devoted to studying how linguistic and sensory barriers can be overcome to make audiovisual products accessible” (Baños 2017: 485). While the first particularist account frames MA as a subdomain of AVT, the second particularist account makes it overlap with AVT itself. Given that the core of AVT is to translate audiovisual products to make them accessible to those who would otherwise face linguistic barriers—so the argument goes—then MA includes not only the modalities specific for persons with sensory disabilities but all AVT modalities. That is, all the variations of this second account share two points: (a) they restrict MA to linguistic and sensory access, thus still framing MA in terms of specific groups of people; and (b) they extend MA and make it coincide with AVT. Gambier’s aforementioned account of AVT is a variation of this second particularist definition of MA. As we have seen at the beginning

of this section, while he reinterprets AVT modalities under the light of accessibility, he still frames their scope in relation to some restricted types of groups. Even scholars who have, over the years, heavily supported the first particularist account (Remael 2010, 2012, 2014, 2015; Remael et al. 2016) have been moving towards the second particularist account as of late. While maintaining that “the development of standards and methods to make media content accessible falls within the domain of AVT research” (Remael 2012: 97), they have also acknowledged how the challenges posed by modalities like AD and SDH “blur the borders between what is traditionally considered (audiovisual) translation and media accessibility” (Remael et al. 2016: 256).

The third, more recent definition of MA differs radically from the previous two. According to the universalist account, MA concerns access to media and non-media objects, services and environments through media solutions, for any person who cannot or would not be able to, either partially or completely, access them in their original form (Greco 2016b, 2018, 2019a, b). This new definition diverges from the previous ones on a number of substantial points.

Firstly, as mentioned above, the two particularist accounts are grounded upon the idea that accessibility is a human right, often referring to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. In fact, it is not unusual to find proponents of the two particularist accounts stating that “accessibility to all aspects of life (including both to communication and information) is a human right recognised by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities” (Matamala and Ortiz-Boix 2016: 12; see also Díaz-Cintas et al. 2010; Remael 2012) or, even more controversially, that “media accessibility is a human right” (Luyckx et al. 2010: 1; see also Matamala and Orero 2007). This means that they ultimately face the same quandaries of the first side of the AHRD problem. Claiming that accessibility is a human right means confusing the means with the end. Even more so if the claim is restricted to MA, as in the latter case. Again, this is a problem that does not concern the universalist account, which is steadily grounded within the instrumental view of accessibility and does not limit itself to any specific group. The universalist definition focuses on the functional processes involved in the interaction between users’ specificities, the particular contexts in which they act or are placed, and the means to address said specificities in those contexts. Thus, MA tools are instruments through which the vast majority of human rights—from information and communication to cultural life to education—can be guaranteed for all.

Secondly, particularist accounts firmly anchor MA within the borders of translation studies (Díaz-Cintas et al. 2007: 13–14; see also Remael 2012). That is, they restrict MA to solutions that involve translation, which is a

position that bears major theoretical, pedagogical and practical hazards. We will address the former two in Sect. 6. From a practical point of view, limiting MA exclusively to translation-based solutions excludes a vast series of practices that are indeed media access, even if one restricts accessibility to persons with disabilities. Consider the case of clean audio, which has long been acknowledged as one of the main media accessibility services for broadcasting by scholars, industry, service providers, international bodies and organisations of persons with disabilities (e.g. Cappello 2014; European Telecommunications Standards Institute 2009; Focus Group on Audiovisual Media Accessibility 2013; NEM-ACCESS 2016; SENSE 2006; Shirley and Kendrick 2006; Slater et al. 2010; Varney 2013). Together with subtitling, AD, audio introductions, audio subtitles and sign language interpreting, clean audio has even been the subject of HBB4ALL, a multi-year project funded by the European Commission and led by translation studies scholars (Orero et al. 2015). Roughly put, clean audio is an audio mix that makes the different parts of an original soundtrack of an audiovisual product more intelligible, for example, by reducing background noise and enhancing the dialogue (Shirley and Oldfield 2015). There is no doubt that this is an instrument to make broadcasting media more accessible, yet it involves no forms of translation. Similarly, the design of an accessible mobile app may involve some forms of translation, but neither exclusively nor mainly. As we shall see in Sect. 6, limiting MA to forms of translation is not just a theoretical technicality. It bears a whole series of critical consequences, for example, at the pedagogical level.

## 4 Media Accessibility: Epistemological and Methodological Shifts

The movement from particularist accounts to a universalist account is but one of the shifts experienced by MA during its development as a research area. As in the case of the first shift, the others have also been having heavy repercussions on AVT. Although one with substantial implications on many levels, we could classify the shift towards a universalist account as ontological. Other shifts have been occurring at the epistemological and methodological levels as well. Here the distinction between ontological, epistemological and methodological levels should be considered as a mere matter of convenience.<sup>1</sup>

The creation of media artefacts, including audiovisual products, has long been based on the idea that “maker’s knowledge was the only one that

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<sup>1</sup> For a more in-depth discussion of the three shifts, see Greco (2018).

mattered. [That is,] the main assumption was that makers know best and that users had neither place, nor their knowledge any value for the design process” (Greco 2018: 212). In some other cases, artefacts were created on the maker’s paternalistic speculation about users’ needs and capabilities, ultimately providing users with “what [they] think they want or need or ought to want” (Thompson 2014: 79). This approach has generated an intricate array of gaps, such as the ones that Greco (2013b, 2018) calls the *maker-user gap* and the *maker-expert-user gap*, which place makers, experts and users at opposing ends of the design process. The increasing focus on accessibility and a long case history of failures have ultimately proved that users’ knowledge cannot be ignored. The consequence has been a shift from maker-centred to *user-centred approaches*. While this is now a cornerstone of MA, where reception studies chiefly dominate the area, this shift has been having considerable repercussions on AVT as well. Let us return, yet again, to Gambier. In the 2003 paper mentioned before, he noted that “very few studies have dealt with the issue of reception in screen translation, and even fewer have looked at it empirically, even though we continually make reference to readers, viewers, consumers, users, etc.” (Gambier 2003: 184). The central role accessibility was gaining in AVT led him, a few years later, to forecast that it would have been precisely through accessibility that reception studies would come to play a key role in the field of AVT, because accessibility “can help us to better understand the effects of screen translation [...]. What we need now is to discern the needs of different users, to know the viewers’ needs and reception capacity, whatever the modality of AVT being offered” (Gambier 2006: 5). Nowadays this is reality. Reception studies are now leading the way in AVT research and practices, casting new light on the most diverse corners of the field, stimulating “audience-based, empirical research even with reference to more traditional AV modalities” (Di Giovanni 2018: 226).

A third shift has been taking place at the methodological level and concerns the question “What is the place of accessibility in the process of creation of media artefacts?” If we classify the design process of an artefact into (a series of) ex ante, in itinere and ex post stages (Greco 2013b, 2018; Greco and Pedone 2015; Greco et al. 2012), it becomes a question of at which stage accessibility concerns should be placed. For quite some time, access issues have been addressed through reactive approaches, that is, at ex post stages. Once more, years of research and a long series of failures have shown the many shortcomings of reactive approaches. Dealing with accessibility after the artefact has been created drastically limits the range of actions one can take to make that artefact accessible. The result is often very partial access. In some other cases, it is not possible at all, for making it accessible would require

re-creating that artefact from scratch. This has led to a shift from reactive to *proactive approaches*, which move accessibility concerns up to the *ex ante* stages of the design process and keep it constantly present during the *in itinere* stages, that is, for the whole duration of the process. AVT and MA are a case in point, where modalities like subtitling have been relegated to the *ex post* stages for years. Often, they are not even dealt with as part of a post-production phase, but relegated to distributors. Plenty of studies have shown how this has frequently led to the partial or complete alteration of the original artistic intention or to a radical change of its aesthetics, ultimately having a negative impact on the experience of the viewer (Romero-Fresco 2019).

## 5 A First Classification of Media Accessibility Modalities and Services

As showed by Greco (2019b), current classifications of MA modalities and services are influenced by particularist accounts. Although framed within a social model of disability, their categorization of MA modalities and services according to specific groups of users (and their impairments) may lead to a ghetto effect. The universalist account, conversely, allows for an access-based classification of MA modalities and services, which avoids the risk of discrimination. Rooted in what Greco (2013a, 2019a, b) calls a *social model of accessibility*, this classification “focuses on the processes involved in the interaction between users’ specific needs, abilities, and capabilities, the particular contexts within which they act or are placed, and the means to address those specific needs, value those specific abilities, and empower those specific capabilities in such contexts” (Greco 2019b, 28). The various modalities and services included in the universalist definition of MA could then be classified according to different sub-criteria, being access the primary criterion. Discussing in detail the implications of the universalist classification, presenting an exhaustive list of MA modalities and services, and providing a detailed discussion in light of all the sub-criteria would require more space than that at our disposal. Given the venue that hosts this chapter—a handbook of AVT—its primary readership and introductory scope, we will briefly present only some modalities and services relevant for audiovisual media, organised according to only one of the many criteria, that is, translation. Following this criterion, MA modalities and services can be divided into two groups: translation-based and nontranslation-based. While the former group refers to the creation of new content through interlingual, intralingual or intersemiotic translation or

interpreting, the latter refers to the provision of access through means that do not involve translation and interpreting, for example, via digital processing of existing content (Jankowska 2019). Some services may blend translation and nontranslation factors, as in the case of enhanced subtitles presented in the next sub-section. However, it is possible to analyse a mixed service according to the translation-based vs nontranslation-based distinction by looking at its core features. Once more, in coherence with the scope of this handbook, we will focus more on the translation-based group and only mention a few cases from the nontranslation-based group.

Some of the MA services presented in this section are the subject of various chapters in this book. We refer the reader to the relevant chapter(s) for more detailed information as well as to Jankowska (2019).

## 5.1 Translation-based

Taking canonical AVT and translation studies texts as a starting point, we may attempt to define translation-based modalities in terms of three major approaches: (1) the classical division of translation into interlingual, intralingual and intersemiotic (Jakobson 1959) (see Table 4.1); (2) the distinction between translation and interpreting (Pöchhacker 2004) (see Table 4.1) and (3) the well-rooted classification of four types of signs that compose an audio-visual text, that is, audio-verbal, audio-nonverbal, visual-verbal and

**Table 4.1** Translation-based MA modalities according to translation type

	Translation	Interpreting	Interlingual	Intralingual	Intersemiotic
Audio description	✓		✓		✓
Audio narration	✓		✓		✓
Dubbing	✓		✓		
Enriched subtitles	✓		✓	✓	✓
Extended audio description	✓				✓
Live audio description		✓			✓
Live subtitles		✓	✓	✓	✓
Sign language interpreting		✓	✓		✓
Subtitling	✓		✓		✓
Transcripts	✓		✓	✓	✓
Voice-over	✓		✓		✓

**Table 4.2** Translation-based MA modalities according to type of translated signs

	Source signs				Target signs			
	AV	ANV	VV	ANV	AV	ANV	VV	VNV
Audio description		✓	✓	✓	✓			
Audio narration		✓		✓		✓		
Dubbing	✓	✓			✓		✓	
Enriched subtitles	✓	✓					✓	✓
Extended audio description	✓		✓	✓	✓			
Live audio description	✓		✓	✓	✓			
Live subtitles	✓	✓					✓	✓
Sign language interpreting	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	
Subtitling	✓	✓					✓	✓
Transcripts	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	
Voice-over	✓		✓		✓			

visual-nonverbal (Chaume 2004; Delabastita 1989; Zabalbeascoa 2014) (see Table 4.2).

1. *Audio description* is a verbal description of (audio)visual media content. It can be pre-recorded or delivered live—in both cases either by a human voice-talent or by text-to-speech software, which in that case is called TTS AD (Szarkowska 2011). AD can be classified as an intersemiotic translation practice in which audio-nonverbal, visual-verbal and visual-nonverbal signs are translated into audio-verbal signs. If AD is created through script translation (Jankowska 2015), it can also be classified as interlingual translation and pivot translation, since in this case the (audio) visual material is the source text.
2. *Audio narration* is a verbal description of (audio)visual media content that provides access through an integrated and coherent narrative that, unlike AD, does not always follow the on-screen action (Kruger 2010). Audio narration can be classified as an intersemiotic translation in which audio-nonverbal, visual-verbal and visual-nonverbal signs are translated into audio-verbal signs.
3. *Dubbing* refers to the replacement of the original track of source language dialogues with a track with dialogues translated into the target language (Chaume 2012), which tries to reproduce the original timing, phrasing and lip movements (Luyken et al. 1991). Dubbing can be defined as an interlingual translation of audio-verbal and audio-nonverbal signs into audio-verbal and audio-nonverbal signs.
4. *Enriched subtitles* are subtitles that contain verbal and non-verbal information of an audiovisual product and refer to what is more commonly

known as SDH or *closed captions* (Neves 2019). They are a restricted case of the so-called *enhanced subtitles* (Jankowska 2019; Brewer et al. 2015), that is to say, subtitles supplemented with additional information such as definitions of acronyms, foreign terms, difficult language, idioms, jargon, cultural references as well as links to email addresses or phone numbers. Enriched subtitles can be edited or verbatim; they may be open (burnt in permanently) or closed (superimposed); they can be pre-recorded or delivered live; and they may contain verbal as well as non-verbal information (e.g., emotions, sounds, accents, speaker identification). Enriched features can be introduced with the normal display as an overlay, a call out or a hyperlink. They can be classified as intersemiotic, interlingual or intralingual translation in which audio-verbal and audio-nonverbal signs are translated into visual-verbal and visual-nonverbal signs.

5. *Extended audio description* is a verbal description of (audio)visual media content. As opposed to standard AD, extended AD uses “freeze-frame” to pause the audiovisual media and introduce longer and more detailed descriptions (Jankowska 2019; Brewer et al. 2015). Extended AD is usually pre-recorded either by a human voice-talent or by text-to-speech software. Similar to AD, extended AD can be classified as an intersemiotic translation in which audio-nonverbal, visual-verbal and visual-nonverbal signs are translated into audio-verbal signs.
6. *Live audio description* is a verbal description of (audio)visual media content. It is both created and delivered live, and this is why it can be classified as intersemiotic interpreting from audio-nonverbal, visual-verbal and visual-nonverbal signs into audio-verbal signs.
7. *Live subtitles*, also known as real-time subtitles, are a way of providing immediate access to the media content by real-time speech to text conversion. They can be either inter- or intralingual. Live subtitles can be created, amongst other methods, through velotype, stenography, respeaking or automatic speech recognition (Romero-Fresco 2012). They can be classified as interlingual or intralingual interpreting in which audio-verbal and audio-nonverbal signs are rendered as visual-verbal and visual-nonverbal signs.
8. *Sign language interpreting* is used to transfer spoken, written and audio content into sign language (Leeson 2009). Sign language interpreting can be either pre-recorded or performed live. It can be classified as interlingual interpreting from audio-verbal, audio-nonverbal and visual-verbal signs into visual-verbal signs.
9. *Subtitling* consists of written text that recounts the original dialogue in the target language as well as other discursive elements contained in the

image and the soundtrack. Subtitles are usually presented as two lines of text placed on the lower part of the screen; however, in some languages, they may be presented vertically (Díaz-Cintas and Remael 2007). If needed, subtitles might be raised or moved to the left or right. They can also be designed in a creative way and placed in other parts of the screen, in order to be more integrated with the action and story. In this case, they are sometimes framed as an instance of enhanced subtitles (Zdenek 2015). When used in theatre, opera or during film festivals, they may be displayed under or in/above the stage. Subtitles are pre-recorded but they may be delivered live. They may be open (burnt in permanently) or closed (superimposed). Subtitling may be classified as an interlingual translation in which audio-verbal and visual-verbal signs are rendered as visual-verbal signs.

10. *Transcripts* are textual versions of the (audio)visual media content that, aside from spoken word, may include on-screen text as well as key visual and key audio elements. They can be classified as an interlingual or intra-lingual translation from audio-verbal, audio-nonverbal, visual-verbal and visual-nonverbal signs into visual-verbal signs.
11. *Voice-over* involves the translation of the original dialogues into a target language, where the new audio track overlays the original one, which is played at a reduced volume level. It can be classified as an interlingual translation of audio-verbal and visual-verbal signs into audio-verbal signs.

## 5.2 Nontranslation-based

As mentioned before, the universalist account extends MA beyond translation and includes nontranslation-based modalities and services. Below are a few cases limited to audiovisual media.

1. *Audio introductions* are usually short pieces of prose that provide information about the (audio)visual content. They often include details about characters, costumes, cast, filmic language or even the plot or the creative team (Fryer 2016; Fryer and Romero-Fresco 2014).
2. *Audio subtitles*, also known as spoken subtitles, consist of vocal rendering of interlingual subtitles. They are usually combined with audio description (Remael 2014). They can be pre-recorded or delivered live by either a human voice talent or text-to-speech software.

3. *Clean audio* is a selectable audio track enhanced through signal processing to improve intelligibility of dialogue and vital non-verbal information with regard to ambient noise (Brewer et al. 2015; Shirley and Kendrick 2006).
4. *Speech rate conversion* allows broadcast speech rate to be decreased (or increased) while maintaining the original sound quality and immediacy since the processed speech still fits within the broadcasting time. While slow reproduction improves listening experience and understanding, fast reproduction is in high demand since many listeners seem able to efficiently receive and process information delivered faster than at the usual broadcasting speed (Takagi 2010).
5. *Screen reading* is an umbrella term used to describe a vast array of software solutions that allow visual information to be conveyed through non-visual means, such as text-to-speech and refreshable braille display (American Foundation for the Blind n.d.).
6. *Tactile reproductions* are three-dimensional representations of (audio)visual media content, for example, three-dimensional printed figures of the main characters or of some story-relevant objects.

## 6 Theoretical and Pedagogical Implications

Discussing the position of MA in relation to AVT, and to translation studies in general, is not a merely trivial exercise. It has considerable implications at many levels. In this section we will briefly discuss some of the impacts at the theoretical and pedagogical levels.<sup>2</sup> Let us start off with some of the pedagogical issues. Consider the Master of Arts in Audiovisual Translation offered by the Autonomous University of Barcelona (MUTAV). On the website of the course, the section on career opportunities states that graduates might find “work as a freelance translator or staff member for specialized agencies in the fields of audiovisual translation, such as dubbing, subtitling, voice over, multimedia translation and videogame translation, as well as *media accessibility, that is, audio description and subtitling for the deaf*”.<sup>3</sup> This is then instantiated in the programme course with a module titled “Audio Description and

<sup>2</sup> For a more detailed discussion, we refer the reader to Greco (2019a, b).

<sup>3</sup> Emphasis added. The original text reads: “las principales salidas profesionales son trabajar como traductor autónomo o en plantilla para agencias y estudios especializados en los campos de la traducción audiovisual, como el doblaje, la subtitulación, las voces superpuestas, la traducción multimedia y la traducción de videojuegos, así como la accesibilidad a los medios, es decir, el audio descripción y la subtitulación para sordos”; see <https://www.uab.cat/web/estudiar/la-oferta-de-masteres-oficiales/informacion-general/x-1096480309770.html?param1=1345695508608>.

Subtitling for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing". Even more explicit is the case of the Master of Arts in Audiovisual Translation at the University of Roehampton, which includes a module called "Media Access: Audiodescription, Subtitling for the Deaf and Respeaking".<sup>4</sup> A similar trait can be found throughout all the major courses on AVT currently being offered, which shows that they have been designed with the most restrictive version of the first particularist account of MA in mind. They limit accessibility as pertaining to persons with disabilities and restrict MA to a few modalities, specifically framed as only related to sensory disabilities. As recently shown by a study of the 2018–2019 students of the Barcelona course, this may lead to controversial outcomes (Greco 2019b). Within the module "Theory of AVT" of that academic year, MA was explicitly introduced from a universalist perspective. The aforementioned study was conducted some months later, at a time in which students had completed most of teaching programme and thus had already been extensively exposed to the main concepts, theories and practices of the MUTAV curriculum. Despite having been presented MA from a universalist account, all students but one were shown to have embraced one of the particularist accounts. Actually, the vast majority of them displayed to have set their mind on the most restrictive version of the first particularist account. For example, when asked to define accessibility in relation to AVT and MA, many replied along these lines: "accessibility is whatever makes it easier for people with visual or hearing difficulties to use these products". Some students displayed use of controversial, discriminatory language. Following the analysis of the different accounts of MA presented in Sect. 3, we can infer that, after having completed nearly all of the programme, the vast majority of students displayed a biased mindset. A mindset that could potentially overlook, accept or even produce discriminatory practices, because these courses train the researchers, practitioners and policy-makers of the future. This evidence indicates the need for a complete curriculum overhaul in education and training courses. Part of this reform requires the inclusion of *critical learning spaces* within AVT and MA courses (Greco 2019b). Such spaces should: (a) become the backbone upon which the other modules and topics are placed and (b) permeate the other modules. Critical learning spaces are where students can acquire, practice and sharpen the critical attitude required by the theoretical and social implications of accessibility. They also serve as a red line connecting the critical attitude through all modules, and as such, are necessary to avoid the formulation of a biased mindset.

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<sup>4</sup> See <https://www.roehampton.ac.uk/postgraduate-courses/audiovisual-translation>.

Briefly moving on to some theoretical implications, let us start by saying that the universalist account of MA does not imply that AVT is now a subfield of MA. Claiming that accessibility is a form of translation or vice versa (Díaz-Cintas et al. 2007; Remael 2012) may work as a catchy metaphor, but it becomes rather controversial when taken literally. While accessibility and translation are deeply connected, we must avoid falling into a situation that Greco (2019a) calls the *hypernym game*, which can lead straight into a *hypernym trap*. We should avoid the temptation of considering translation as subordinate to accessibility or vice versa. That is, we should avoid strong ontological commitments to translation and accessibility, and privilege minimalist/intuitionistic accounts. If we consider translation a form of accessibility under a strong ontological commitment, then accessibility runs the risk of becoming an *über-concept* (like in the case of human rights discussed in Sect. 2). A similar problem, though now the other way around, occurs if we consider accessibility a form of translation. The hypernym game could be reiterated for many other cases. For example, one could say that design is a form of translation or that engineering is a form of translation. Taken literally, the fields of design and engineering would then become subfields of translation studies. In turn, translation and translation studies would become too vague, so as to become useless. Since Tymoczko's call for the need to enlarge translation theory beyond traditional boundaries (Tymoczko 2014), many scholars have discussed or even proposed more complex, refined and wider interpretations of translation (e.g. Blumczynski 2016; Marais 2014, 2018). However, none of them ascribe to translation, nor to translation studies, such a powerful status. Accessibility and translation pertain to different fields: the former to accessibility studies, the latter to translation studies. It is not a matter of which one is the subfield of the other, but how they can fruitfully interact and help humanity progress.

## 7 Future Prospects: Towards Accessibility Studies

Given the picture presented so far, what lies ahead of MA? Recently, this area has witnessed a number of proposals about concepts like "integrated access" (Fryer 2018) or "participatory accessibility" (Di Giovanni 2018). Having explained in the previous pages the main traits of MA, speaking of "integrated access" or "participatory accessibility" may seem redundant. Actually, from a general point of view, it is as such, for accessibility always entails the

participation of both users and experts as well as its integration from the conception phase. “Partial accessibility” is the term that should be given when participation and integration are either ignored or limited. Still, referring to “integrated access” or “participatory accessibility” does have some value. First, by having those terms in their names, they constantly remind us of the importance of integration and participation for pursuing accessibility. Most importantly, they are signs of a growing movement that lies at the core of the current status of MA and speak about its future.

The shifts discussed in the previous pages are not exclusive to MA. They can be found in a variety of very different fields, where accessibility has slowly but steadily become one of their most fruitful concepts. In doing so, accessibility has created new areas within those fields, precisely like MA within AVT and translation studies. Over time these areas have been detaching from their original fields and moving towards one another, intertwining and cross-contaminating, producing a wealth of new methods and models. One of the areas where this process is clearly evident is that of MA. This convergence process has slowly but steadily led to the rise of a new field, namely *accessibility studies*, defined as “the research field concerned with the critical investigation of access problems and accessibility processes and phenomena, as well as the design, implementation and evaluation of accessibility-based and accessibility-oriented methodologies” (Greco 2018: 219). The unprecedented changes brought about by information and communication technologies are radically changing not only the world, but also the ways in which we access it. Many of these changes fall within the scope of MA. In order for its potential to blossom and successfully address the many challenges faced by our society, MA needs to move beyond translation studies. It should fully embrace its status as an area of accessibility studies and proactively contribute to the consolidation of this new field. What lies ahead of MA may be a demanding task, but it is indeed a necessary one.

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# 5

## Multimodality and Intersemiotic Translation

Christopher Taylor

### 1 Introduction

Studies in multimodality and audiovisual translation (AVT) have now moved out of their infancy, and have been joined by those on media accessibility (MA); all three have developed greatly over recent years along with the dawn of the digital age, the rapid advances in technology and the concern for providing universal access to all. Now all three fields are inextricably linked within a blossoming research area and promising new university disciplines. This area encompasses the traditional sectors of AVT, namely the interlingual translation of screen products through dubbing, (live) subtitling, surtitling, voice-over and so on, while the intralingual “translation” of such products has provided a new focus for researchers, particularly within the domain of accessibility. Subtitling for the deaf and hard of hearing (SDH) and audio description (AD) in various guises for people with sight loss have now aroused great interest in the AVT sector. All these areas, and in particular SDH and AD, take us clearly into the realm of intersemiotic translation.

In terms of multimodality, the translation of text for dubbing and subtitling now transcends the mere transposing of written words in a screenplay, bringing into the equation other multimodal elements that make up a video product. The images, the accompanying music, the sound effects and all the

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multimodal components together contribute to making meaning in a film, and often have to be taken into account in arriving at translation decisions. So already in these cases, multimodality can be described as a defining feature of AVT, but in the cases of SDH and audio description this is all the clearer, as it is the verbal and visual elements respectively that receivers lack and that need “translating” intralingually and intersemiotically into written and spoken words.

In the case of AD, this concept has been succinctly captured by Snyder’s now well-known assertion that audio description is “the visual made verbal” (2008: 191), and by the title of the AD manual produced by the ADLAB project “Pictures painted in words” (Remael et al. 2015).<sup>1</sup> In the case of foreign films, AD texts may also then be translated interlingually, where a reliable original version exists, including the use of audio subtitles to cover the dialogue, thereby further extending the range of multimodal, intersemiotic transfer. Furthermore, when AD is extended to other areas such as the description of museum exhibits or architecture, the role of intersemiosis is yet more complex. The sense of touch, and even the senses of smell and taste are brought into play, in an attempt to further extend accessibility to the sensorially disabled. This chapter will thus examine the three interacting strands of multimodality, audiovisual translation and accessibility in its various guises, and how these impact on society today.

## 2 Definitions

Audiovisual translation (AVT) is the term that has been used to refer principally to the transfer from one language to another of the verbal components contained in audiovisual products. Feature films, television programmes, theatre plays, musicals, opera, web pages and video games are just some examples of the vast array of audiovisual products available and that require translation. Especially with the many advances in media communication that have revolutionised our ways of constructing and interpreting meaning over the last few decades, the above definition is a useful yardstick up to a point, but debate continues as to what exactly is entailed in audiovisual translation, as the scene shifts so rapidly. New types of text, new genres, are continually emerging, attracting new audiences, and existing forms of AVT are being refined accordingly (see Perego 2016, 2018). These new genres include, as mentioned above, various forms of accessible translation, subtitling for the deaf and hard

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<sup>1</sup> [www.adlabproject.eu](http://www.adlabproject.eu).

of hearing (SDH), respeaking, artificial voicing, audio description (AD) and audiosubtitling (AST).

The attention to social inclusion has had a huge impact on the new developments in AVT. According to EU legislation:

The right of persons with a disability and of the elderly to participate and be integrated in the social and cultural life of the Union is inextricably linked to the provision of accessible audiovisual media services. The means to achieve accessibility should include, but need not be limited to, sign language, subtitling, audio-description. (<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/>)

Thus the definition of AVT gets ever more complex, and its connection to multimodality ever closer.

However, a definitive or even satisfactory definition of multimodality is also elusive. “At the current stage of development and in keeping with the goal of a grand unified approach to multimodality, we propose to define it as a *modus operandi* for conducting research on human communication, both mediated and face-to-face” (Seizov and Wildfeuer 2017: 3). This definition is elastic enough to be useful and wide enough to be non-binding. The *modus operandi* thus concerns the search for an explanation as to how films, websites and so on relay information and make meaning, and how this meaning is interpreted by receivers. As Seizov and Wildfeuer continue (op cit: 5), “How that information is structured in its different forms and how it is perceived by recipients naturally belong in the field of multimodality”.

### 3 A Historical View

The history of translation, in general, can be traced through the many illustrious names who have paved the way to creating what is now known as translation studies. From Cicero through the ages up to the second half of the twentieth century, through Mounin, Holmes, Catford, Nida, Vermeer, Reiss, Nord, Toury, Newmark, Venuti and many others, various theories have been formed, discussed, adopted and rejected. Equivalent effect, skopos theory, polysystems, the (in)visibility of the translator are just a few of the contributions made to an ongoing debate. Although the translation of audiovisual products began quite early in the twentieth century, first with subtitling and later with dubbing, it was for a long time not regarded worthy of theoretical discussion, and only came into its own in the latter part of the century. How to describe this aspect of translation was a matter of some debate. Various

terms such as “film translation” (Snell-Hornby 1988) and “screen translation” (Mason 1989) gradually gave way to “audiovisual translation” when used by specialist scholars such as Diaz-Cintas (2001) and Gambier (2003). From this period, interest in AVT has blossomed into the standard research profile of other established disciplines, consisting of the publication of special issues of prestigious journals (*The Translator*, *Target*, *Perspectives*, etc.) and regular international conferences (Media for All, Languages and the Media, Intermedia, etc.).

As regards multimodality, it could be said that the study of the interaction of the spoken voice, gesture and expression, already multimodal, goes back to the classical period and then throughout the history of rhetorical debate. Indeed, before the age of film, multimodality was alive and well, and always had been, in the sense that spoken language had always been accompanied by gesture, pitch and volume change, and environmental surroundings. Written language had at times been distinguished by creative calligraphy and, especially following the invention of printing, had been accompanied by marginal illustration and editing techniques designed to distinguish chapter headings and so on. Otherwise, the archetypal multimodal text of yore was the painting. In medieval times, painting provided meaning, mostly religious meaning, to largely illiterate populations, but in later years many other elements of meaning contained in art have been revealed through scholarly art history studies. Whether such subtleties are obvious to the lay public is doubtful, but whoever views a painting, a famous masterpiece or schoolboy effort, is bombarded by semiotic resources that combine to provide a meaning, with or without a spoken explanation or description.

But to be useful to today’s discussion, we should be looking at the advances in the discipline that have manifested themselves over the latter part of the twentieth century up to the present day. Early in this period we had the ground-breaking work of Kress and van Leeuwen (1996), Baldry (2000), Thibault (2000), Thibault and Baldry (2001) and others, which involved cognitive research into the conceptualisation afforded by visual images and their accompanying semiotic modalities. These modalities, or modes, or resources as they have been variously termed, refer to the many different signs that come together to make meaning in a multimodal text.

The semiotic resources of signs can be analysed as the inventory of communicative actions one can perform by means of these signs. It is obvious that this functional approach to meaning works for all types of signs, sound, pictures, design, music and colour, as well as for linguistic units. (Bucher 2017)

This line of inquiry has been carried further, by the same authors and by many others, as the twenty-first-century proceeds (Kress 2003; Bateman 2008; Jewitt 2009, 2014; Bateman and Schmidt 2011; Seizov and Wildfeuer 2017). In particular, there has been outreach on the part of multimodality scholars towards many other disciplines, from linguistics to film studies, from art history to media studies, from semiotics to IT. This has resulted in a two-way traffic as scholars in other areas have become interested in the multimodal aspects of their disciplines. Certainly one of the most obvious, and most fruitful, examples of reciprocal interest has been that between multimodality and audiovisual translation. In reiterating the title of this contribution, multimodality has become most definitely a defining feature of AVT.

## 4 Theoretical Foundations

Audiovisual translation, like translation in general, should ideally be focused on the constant attempt to find the right balance between equivalence with the source text and fidelity to the culture of the target language, always bearing in mind that the product must sound natural and credible to the reader. In the case of AVT the sounding natural has particular importance, in that the audio has to complement and be synchronous with the visual.

The main aim of multimodality studies, on the other hand, has always been, and will continue to be, that of making sense of the combination of semiotic resources, or modes, that comprise a multimodal text. The theoretical perspective is neatly subsumed by Jewitt (2014) in four assumptions: (a) all communication is multimodal, (b) analyses focused solely or primarily on language cannot adequately account for meaning, (c) each mode has specific accordances arising from its materiality and from its social histories which shape its resources to fulfil given communication needs, and (d) modes concur together, each with a specialised role, to meaning-making, hence relations among modes are key to understanding every instance of communication. The setting out of these assumptions was felt to be necessary in order to dispel the long-held other assumption that language was the key to communication, simply aided by extra-linguistic resources such as sound, gesture, colour and so on. These latter non-verbal modes can express the same types of meaning as language, that is experiential, interpersonal and textual meaning, referring to the tripartite division of language (meta)functions proposed by Halliday (1978), all within the broader concept of social semiotics. Adami (2016) points out that “social semiotics is a theoretical approach to multimodal analysis: it sees human communication as the expression of social processes and it

sees it as intrinsically multimodal". Continuing the comparison between language and other semiotic modalities, Van Leeuwen (2005: 3) speaks of "grammars", extending the notion of "linguistic grammar" to other semiotic modes which he defines as

the actions and artefacts we use to communicate, whether they are produced physiologically—with our vocal apparatus ... or by means of technologies.

These approaches seek to discover which resources are at work in a multimodal text and to what extent each mode contributes to meaning, and ultimately how this affects social relations and values. The fact that the meanings transmitted by particular modes in one culture may vary when transferred to another underlines the importance of translating audiovisual products with due attention to all the resources deployed.

## 5 Research on Multimodality and AVT

O'Toole (1994) brought a linguistic approach to the interpretation of art with his systemic-functional analysis of paintings, including Rembrandt's *The Night Watch*. This was an early attempt to show how semiotic modalities other than words create meaning, and obviously had done so for centuries. With the arrival, first of still photography which captured reality in picture form, but particularly with the advent of moving pictures, the multimodal nature of communication was plain to see. The digital revolution now prevalent in most of the world has given us the Internet and website technology, which have taken multimodality studies several steps further on the road to understanding how meaning is conveyed and interpreted. The spoken word with gesture and facial expression and the written word with illustrations, both alluded to above, have given way to messaging, interfacing with artificial voices such as Siri and emailing with emoticons. A well-known football manager, in his autobiography (Allardyce 2015: 315), wrote that when his players travel on the coach to away matches, they do not communicate with each other unless they phone or send messages, perhaps with photographs, videos or podcasts. Ways of communicating and thereby making meaning are changing, but remain inherently multimodal.

In 2000 Thibault's detailed study of a short television advertisement illustrated all the power of a multimodal product designed to persuade a wide viewing audience in Australia of the benefits of banking with the Westpac organisation. The advertisement contained very little spoken language, and

even less written language. An accompanying song provided oral input but also functioned as soundtrack and melody. The rest of the meaning, as Thibault's meticulous analysis showed, was relayed through a wide range of semiotic resources. The vehicle used to reveal the multimodal basis of the text's meaning was the multimodal transcription, a graphic illustration in the form of rows and columns charting the various semiotic modes deployed in creating meaning. The visual image, the kinesic action visible on screen and the soundtrack (spoken language and other sounds), described in terms of their various components, are presented frame by frame in order to achieve a comprehensive picture of how this text works. The rationale behind the exercise was explained by Thibault (2000: 312):

Rather than separate communicative channels which are ancillary to, or in some way supplement, a primary linguistic meaning, the guiding assumption is that the meaning of the text is the result of the various ways in which elements from different classes of phenomena—words, actions, objects, visual images, sounds and so on—are related to each other as parts in some larger whole. Meaning-making is the process, the activity of making and construing such patterned relations among different classes of such elements.

However, Thibault and other pioneers in the field of multimodality were not yet thinking in terms of the connection between multimodal studies and translation. Even as late as 2009, in *The Routledge Handbook of Multimodal Analysis* (Jewitt 2009) there was no mention of translation in the index. Nonetheless, some timid explorations of this connection had been made. Returning to Thibault's work, in order to demonstrate the potential usefulness of these considerations for AVT, Taylor (2004) adapted the multimodal transcription, adding a column for translation, for dubbing or subtitling. The purpose of this exercise was to reveal how much meaning is expressed by semiotic resources other than words, thereby providing the possibility to condense the translated version of an audiovisual product. This is particularly useful in translating for subtitles, as condensation, deletion and decimation (see Gottlieb 1992) are among the most used strategies. To illustrate this procedure, Taylor (2004: 159) discussed the subtitling into Italian of a BBC nature documentary *Echo of the Elephants* (Colbeck 1972) in which the reaction to a crippled calf by the rest of the herd of pachyderms can be observed. The scene in question begins with the documentary voice-over *But feeding and drinking meant abandoning Echo and the new calf*. The image shows the animals doing precisely this, and in the subtitle proposed *Ma per mangiare devono abbandonare Eco e il piccolo* (*But to eat they have to abandon Echo and the calf*)

the *drinking* is omitted, subsumed in the generic *mangiare*. The next example shows more clearly the power of image. Describing another elephant, the voice-over tells us of *Ella, with her ragged ears*. The subtitle deletes the physical description as the camera focuses precisely on the animal's head, thereby leaving time to describe other elements that cannot be easily understood from the images.

Still on the subject of subtitling, Rundle (p.c.), making reference to the film *Raging Bull* (Scorsese 1980), pointed out how an entire scene in a film could be “translated” with only a bare minimum of oral input. The scene in question involves the boxer Jake La Motta and his wife, who are having a bitter row in the kitchen of their humble home in the Bronx while the lady cooks him his dinner. The baleful looks and the angry gestures tell us exactly what is happening in this domestic tiff. As Rundle says, the only thing that really needs verbal translation is the cause of the row. La Motta explains that he has not been “foolin’ around” while he was away. It is clear that the wife is angry, firstly about his absence, but also her strong suspicion of his infidelity. This is the part that needs to be clarified, especially as a colloquial Americanism is used. “Fooling around” means having sex, and thus the line “You think I’ve bin foolin’ around!” explains the two reasons for the wife’s anger. The rest of the dialogue is largely superfluous. The semiotic modalities of gaze, gesture, facial expression, movement and tone of voice tell it all.

An episode from the Italian television soap opera *Un posto al sole* provides a similar example of such a scene. The row is caused by the daughter in a traditional Neapolitan family wanting to go and live with her boyfriend, thereby provoking her parents. Again the gestures, the tone and volume of voice, the facial expressions and so on are sufficient for the viewer to realise what is happening. The line spoken by the daughter “E’ un crimine voler andare a vivere con Franco?” (Is it a crime to want to go and live with Franco?) provides the input.

The question of how much dialogue can be left out in these cases is debatable, but it could be interesting to analyse subgenres like “row scenes” to see how much predictable material could be left to semiotic modes other than language. Other such examples would include such much-repeated scenarios as “breakfast table chat”, “hotel reception procedures”, “police interrogations” and so on. The question of predictability was addressed by Taylor (2008: 178) in terms of high, medium and low predictability and how to translate accordingly. Using examples from the popular Italian television series *Il Commissario Montalbano*, it was observed that certain typical features of the series, particularly relating to food and drink in subgenres such as “restaurant scenes”,

“coffee drinking” and “eating in” were repeated in predictable patterns. As the Sicilian atmosphere of the programme needs to be maintained, including the use of Sicilian dialect, translations should ideally be foreignised, for example, *Spaghetti con sugo di ricci, risotto a nevuro di siccia, na cassata, and spigole freschissime pescate stanotte* can be left in the original and understood as Sicilian dishes. If they can be seen, the translation can be even further curtailed.

One of the suggestions made in this regard was that a judicious use of translation memory tools could be brought into play if certain scenes were represented with a certain frequency and predictability. Although these instruments are more usually associated with texts such as European Union fisheries reports or insurance contracts, if a homogeneous combination of visuals, colours, music and accents (and dialogue) were to occur and re-occur in a series like Montalbano, then the repetition of exchanges could be dealt with by translation memory tools, followed naturally by the necessary editing. And if the afore-mentioned co-occurrences of items other than the dialogue were to become familiar, there would be further opportunity to condense translation.

## 6 Intersemiotic Translation

The translation of audiovisual products, especially moving images was, until recently, usually thought of in terms of dubbing, subtitling or voice-over in that what is translated is the spoken or written word, and involving a transfer between languages. However, in view of the above-mentioned consideration of other semiotic modes in translating audio-visual products, the concept of translation takes on a different light. The scene of the elephants eating (and drinking) affects the translation of the spoken accompaniment to the extent that a subtitle can be curtailed, an item “deleted” to use Gottlieb’s term. This translation is thus influenced by a visual input, an intersemiotic transfer of meaning. The audience are able to perceive meaning through the interplay of the various modalities. But perhaps the power of intersemiotic translation can be seen most clearly, as mentioned earlier, in the practices of audio description (AD) and subtitles for the deaf and hard of hearing (SDH), in which the visual elements or the audio elements of an audiovisual product are described for the benefit, respectively, of the blind and visually impaired population and the deaf and hard of hearing. For people in these categories, one of the key semiotic modalities is wholly or only partially perceived. Consequently, any translation (intersemiotic or linguistic) must compensate for these deficiencies, and this is where AVT relies most heavily on multimodality.

## 7 Audio Description

The skills required to produce an effective AD are many, but the judicious selection of the elements to describe is paramount. It is at this point that a describer is faced with the important decision as to which of the innumerable visual affordances are essential to providing meaning. The description of a static work of art such as Velazquez's *Las Meninas* could already fill pages of an art history book, but in the case of, for example, a two-hour feature film, the visual bombardment is constant and constantly changing.

Taking as an example of AD the BBC's version of Charles Dickens' novel *Little Dorrit*, it can be seen how the visual elements have been handled skilfully in order to give the person with sight loss a clear "vision" of what is happening on screen, plus insight into the more subtle meanings emanating from the video and which originated in the novel (see Taylor 2017: 159–160). The questions of where the choice should be made among the semiotic modalities, what the salient images/sounds/symbols are, and what lies behind the immediate visuals, are addressed. The text in question first appeared in serial form in 1855, to be published as a novel two years later. In 2008 the BBC created the televised version, which was released as a DVD in 2009 (Davies) and this was accompanied by audio description. Davies pointed out that whilst adapting the story, one image was dominant in his mind: *Little Dorrit going out in the early morning, emerging from the gates of the Marshalsea ... hurrying through the mean streets, with the dark, gloomy buildings looming over her*. The novel is set in Victorian London, hence the mean streets and gloomy buildings. The Marshalsea was a debtors' prison in which Mr. Dorrit was incarcerated. As was the custom at the time, his daughter Amy (Little Dorrit) lived with him, though she could come and go as she pleased. Dickens (1857/2008: 78) himself described the situation as follows:

An oblong pile of barrack building, partitioned into squalid houses standing back to back ... hemmed in by the high walls duly spiked at top.... She had begun to work beyond the walls ... to come and go as secretly as she could between the free city and the iron gates. Her original timidity had grown... and her light step and her little figure shunned the thronged streets while they passed along them. This was the life of Little Dorrit, turning at the end of London Bridge ...

The opening scene is audio described thus:

A neatly dressed man in his 20s with short brown hair unlocks a small wooden door.

Wearing a smart grey dress and white pinafore, a straw bonnet and light blue cape, Amy climbs through the door carrying a wicker basket and walks into the busy streets outside.

She passes a horse-drawn carriage and two men in top hats on their way across a bridge.

A tiny figure dwarfed by its enormity.

There is little dialogue at this point, so the describer is able to use the time available to the best advantage. However, judicious choices have had to be made. The description of the man is restricted to his age and his hair and the fact that he is neatly dressed, although what he is actually wearing is not mentioned. He is, however, dressed normally for the historical epoch and therefore the describer has relied on his and his audience's world knowledge to fill in the gap. Amy, on the other hand, is described in more detail; she is the protagonist of the story and we need to be able to visualise her in some detail. We also need to know that the streets are busy, that transport was largely horse-drawn and that the upper classes sported top hats, this time reinforcing the image of the Victorian city. The bridge is London Bridge, though for some reason the describer does not label it. This could perhaps be criticised, though the final line in this snippet, *A tiny figure dwarfed by its enormity*, is masterful. In seven words it captures the image both Dickens and Davies wished to portray of the small girl in a situation much bigger than herself trying to live her life in the large city, a powerful example of the multimodal interplay of the verbal and the visual in providing access to those who are semiotically deprived of a major meaning resource.

To return to the AD text, starting with the line *A neatly dressed man in his 20s with short brown hair unlocks a small wooden door*, the image has gone from the verbal (this was scripted) to the visual, back to the verbal as a spoken utterance. The transition from the written word, adapted for television, set in a convincing environment, directed and acted, to an AD script which is then recited takes us through the whole intersemiotic transfer. The description gives us the basic visual message, whereas the line *A tiny figure dwarfed by its enormity* goes further by providing, as well as a physical description, a comment on one of the main themes of the narrative, Amy's relation to the world at large. It is arguable that even in the first case, the body language that the young man displays on meeting Amy shows that his interest in her is more than platonic. Here, however, lies a controversial issue. Should this intersemiotic transfer convey messages that could be gleaned by the person with sight loss through intuition, much in the same way the sighted person understands such subtle messages. For instance, the man's tone of voice when he addresses Amy *Good morning, Amy*, may betray his intentions. The blind and sight-impaired do not appreciate condescension and this must be borne in mind by the describer.

## 8 Tactile Exploration

The audio description of film and television involves a complex array of intersemiotic transfers, though essentially it is restricted to the intermodal move from the visual to the verbal. The audio description of static art, on the other hand, which has increased in importance in AD circles in recent years, is increasingly involving senses other than sight and sound. “Tactile tours” of museums, for example, are now offered by many institutions in one way or another. The person with sight loss may be accompanied by an expert guide who assists the visitor in touching an exhibit while listening simultaneously to a spoken explanation, or instructions as to what can be described and how may be incorporated in an audioguide, which may or may not also include directions as to how to navigate within the museum. This has taken intersemiotic translation to another level where the person with sight loss receives a transfer of meaning from the visual to the verbal and the haptic. Interestingly, while a “translation” can be purely from the visual to the spoken, as discussed earlier in relation to moving pictures or static art, the purely visual to tactile transfer is usually unsatisfactory in terms of comprehension. The touching of objects generally needs to be accompanied by a spoken description. And thus the most effective way to describe, for example, a sculpture is to guide the blind visitor’s hands while giving a verbal explanation. As Fryer (2016) explains “In the absence of sight, speech is essential to the integration of sensory input and therefore to perception. Speech is an effective replacement for directly experienced visual input”.

Static art consists of sculpture but also, and perhaps primarily, of paintings and other two-dimensional artefacts, which can be described verbally and successfully. However, it is now possible to experience paintings in a three-dimensional way. The Anteros Museum in Bologna, for example, which caters exclusively for blind and sight impaired patrons, has prepared a number of famous masterpieces in plaster bas-relief form. Visitors are invited individually to touch the exhibits while listening to a description. The purpose of this multisensory approach of touch and words is outlined on the museum website.

to know how to see with the hands and touch with the eyes ... and how to convey the ambivalent/hidden/connotative/implicit elements to a blind audience.

Neves (2012) describes the visit of a young girl to the Anteros where she was personally taken through Mantegna’s *The Lamentation over the Dead Christ*.

After an initial tactile exploration on her own, which elicited little understanding, Elena was guided through the touch tour. Her hands were taken and guided to explore the painting and ‘her face lit up’. But the whole thing was performed to the sound of words.

As the limits of intersemiotic translation are pushed ever further, inroads have been made into the use of the remaining senses. A multisensory exhibition on “Women, Mothers, Goddesses” held in the Archeological Museum at Udine Castle in Italy in 2018 provided audio description, exhibits that could be touched and plastic reproductions of the more delicate artefacts, and also strips containing a scent designed to evoke an essence used in Roman times. AD has recently made inroads also into the field of tourism. A touch tour of Victoria Market in Melbourne contains the background chat of the vendors and the customers, the chance to touch objects of interest and also appreciate the smells of fruit, coffee and so on. Audio description thus provides practical instances of the interplay of sensory channels, which must in some way feed into any theory of multimodality.

## 9 Subtitles for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

SDH (subtitles for the deaf and hard of hearing) has existed since the 1970s in the USA and more recently in Europe to cater for the needs of people with hearing loss. The deaf community had always had access to the subtitles provided for the public at large when viewing a foreign film or television programme. The change arrived with the provision of intralingual subtitles designed specifically for the deaf or hard of hearing. These were often simpler lexically and syntactically to take account of lower reading speeds in some cases, and also included a gloss of all the other sounds present in the film. Consequently, in parallel with the use of sign language, SDH has provided cinema and television viewers with a means to compensate for the lack of the sound modality. Thus the subtitles have to intersemiotically translate the dialogue in a film and all the other sounds that contribute to the meaning of the audiovisual product, and this goes beyond such simple cues as “door opening” or “car pulling up”, as illustrated by Reviers (2017), who explains the importance of the accurate reporting of sound in audio description, but the relevance to SDH is also readily apparent.

We don't see the same thing when we also hear; we don't hear the same thing when we also see. (Chion 1990: 3)

Thus, audiences interpret sounds through the visuals, but while the blind have only the sounds, the deaf have only the visuals. While some sounds are self-explanatory and can be inferred from the visuals, for example, “a slap on the face”, others may have a source not immediately connected to the visual, for example, “a car pulling up outside”, while others need further contextualisation, for example, an eerie background music accompanying the approach of an alien in a science-fiction movie. Moreover, the sound may need to be described in a more detailed way: the explanation “car pulling up” may need enhancing to “car screeching to a halt” to provide the necessary level of urgency or tension. Vocal properties such as volume, pitch and timbre need to be rendered, for example, “whispering”, “in a high pitched voice”. Volume also signals distance as in the arrival of a train as it approaches a station. In many film scenes, both diegetic and non-diegetic sounds can be heard concurrently. The lobby of a busy hotel will feature various conversations, the opening of lift doors, the bell calling the receptionist and so on, accompanied by an anonymous musical background. The scene is familiar also to deaf people, who can imagine the typical cacophony, and can be dealt with by an “indistinct chatter” caption, but when a scream is heard, and the screamer not seen, the subtitle must be synchronous with the surprised faces. These and many other considerations are the concern of the SDH subtitler who again is providing an intersemiotic “translation” from sound to sight.

## 10 Conclusions

This chapter, after providing a general and theoretical overview of what audiovisual and multimodality studies have achieved and hope still to achieve, has concentrated on some specific aspects of both disciplines which illustrate most clearly what is meant by intersemiotic translation. The practices of subtitling, dubbing and voice-over, the cornerstones of audiovisual translation from the beginning, have moved from a purely linguistic approach to an at least partial understanding of how all the semiotic resources contained in an audiovisual product create meaning, each in their different way, but all important. This is a first point of contact between AVT and multimodality, a symbiosis that affects all aspects of life and communication. In fact, it must be pointed out that the terms “audiovisual” and “multimodal” do not only apply to the screen products discussed so far but to many everyday activities. Consider the interfaces displayed on the screens of ATM machines or those for purchasing a train ticket (Adami 2016).

However, it is with the rise in interest in accessibility issues that the term “intersemiotic translation” has come to the fore. Certainly subtitling and dubbing are already vehicles for accessibility as they provide foreign audiences with access to films in different languages. For many years the accent was certainly and primarily on translated “language” as the means of conveying meaning. It was the meeting with multimodality that led to more attention being paid now to all the other semiotic resources comprising an audiovisual product. Serious translators will now look further than the simple script or transcript in their attempts to render the explicit and implicit meaning of a screen product.

But it is where an audience is deprived of an important semiotic modality that a more complete approach to intersemiotic translation is required. People with sight loss or hearing loss need the sight mode or hearing mode provided by other means. The job of the audio describer or the subtitler for the deaf is that of “translating” the visual or the verbal into other semiosis. The purpose of this chapter has thus been to confirm multimodality as a defining feature of audiovisual translation and to discuss the concept of intersemiotic translation and describe some of its practical applications.

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# **Part II**

## **Modes of Audiovisual Translation and Media Accessibility**



# 6

## Dubbing

Frederic Chaume

### 1 Introduction

In 1976 István Fodor published his acclaimed seminal work *Film Dubbing: Phonetic, Semiotic, Esthetic and Psychological Aspects*, now acknowledged as the first monograph on dubbing. Fodor, a translator and adapter (or dialogue writer), set the scene for research in dubbing. Adopting a genuinely professional perspective, he focused mainly on the phonetic aspects of dubbing, especially phonetic synchrony (isochrony and lip synchronisation), character synchrony and content synchrony (which today are no longer considered synchronies as such), as well as exploring the skills required to produce a quality dubbing in terms of interpretation, vocal performance and mouth articulation. Since then, research on dubbing has grown exponentially, in parallel with scholarship in audiovisual translation in general, ushering in a wide array of work on professional and sociological studies, linguistic studies, descriptive studies, ideological studies, cognitive studies and case studies in the new field of audiovisual translation.

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## 2 Definitions and Typologies

Dubbing is a linguistic, cultural, technical and creative team effort that consists of translating, adapting and lip-syncing the script of an audiovisual text. This text is then segmented into takes or loops (by a dubbing assistant, or sometimes the translator, dialogue writer or dubbing director), or inserted into a *bande rythmo*, performed by actors or voice talents usually under the direction of a dubbing director, and recorded on a new soundtrack. The resulting soundtrack is then edited by a sound engineer and mixed with the other tracks of the audiovisual text. Whenever possible, the translation and the recording will be revised by a quality control department, where proof-readers check that all the dialogues have been translated, look for any serious mistakes in the translation, ensure that the sound mixing complies with the standards of quality required by the client and confirm that the client's guidelines have been followed. Teamwork is vital in the production of a high-quality end product.

Dubbing is a deeply entrenched practice in some countries where it is used to prepare foreign audiovisual products for their home markets. It is particularly widespread in media like TV and VoD platforms, where it tends to be more popular than in cinema. It is now also gaining popularity in the localisation of high-quality videogames and some commercials. For historical, economic and cultural reasons (Chaume 2013), it has become the common mode of localising foreign audiovisual products into many languages, and is starting to be used in languages and cultures where dubbing was almost unknown, such as English. Digitalisation has radically transformed the world of dubbing. Digital technology has changed the way voices are recorded; for example, engineers now simply make the recorded lines in the target language match the sound waves of the original voice track to ensure perfect isochrony, instead of repeatedly re-recording badly synced lines. Voice talents can now record their takes or loops from any country in the world, provided they have a high-quality microphone and good Internet connection. Cloud dubbing is starting to find a place in the market, and is opening up possibilities for agents to work in a collective environment where the project manager can keep track of all stages of the dubbing process, glossaries are constantly updated and available to everybody, episodes can easily be split between several translators, who can work online and consult each other, voice talents can dub online under the supervision of the dubbing director and so forth. This groundbreaking shift allows companies to work on the same project in many different locations.

The term *revoicing* is also sometimes used as a synonym for dubbing. However, it is actually a hypernym that also includes intralingual post-synchronisation, that is, when the original film dialogues are subsequently recorded in a studio in the same language to prevent noise and interference when filming on location; voice-over in all its varieties and terms (see Matamala, in this volume); narration; fandubbing, fundubbing and gag dubbing (see Baños-Piñero, in this volume); simultaneous film interpreting; and audio description. Voice-over can also be found as a synonym for dubbing, since some authors and professionals understand that it does not necessarily imply the simultaneous reproduction of both the original and the target dialogues at the same time. It is also “the voice communicating unseen on an audio track used in radio, television, film, multimedia, or the business world” (Wright and Lallo 2009). Nevertheless, this is a broader definition of the term, largely used in the American voice talent industry. Narration is simply a kind of dubbing, where the translation has been summarised and is usually delivered by an off-screen narrator. Fundubbings are a variation of dubbing, where a comedian, or any user for that matter, manipulates the translation for political, sociological and comedic purposes. Simultaneous film interpreting is another mode used in some film festivals, where an interpreter, who in the best of the cases has watched the film and taken notes a few hours before it is screened, delivers a translation that the audience hears through headsets in the screening. It is slowly being replaced by subtitling, which has gained ground as a faster, cheaper solution for film festivals, thanks to technological advances in new software and the option of showing the subtitles using an overhead projector.

### 3 A Historical View

The history of dubbing is still unexplored territory. Film-history academics seldom refer to localisation of films, and even less to the role of translation in the localisation of film and the reception of audiovisual content in each country (see Fuentes Luque 2019, for a detailed review of some of these sources). Nevertheless, the history of audiovisual translation and dubbing is not only a fascinating topic, but is also essential to understand current practices.

From a historical perspective, the introduction of written language on screen in silent movies to accompany the iconic representation of images spawned the birth of audiovisual translation in most parts of the world. As soon as the first titles were inserted in movies, translation became fundamental to the full understanding of filmic narration. The first silent movies acted

as a kind of universal visual Esperanto, which could be potentially understood by almost all spectators in the world. However, this romantic idea of a universal Esperanto, which for many scholars and directors only vanished with the advent of the talkies, faded long before the end of the 1920s and the demise of the silent movie. From their inception, the first titles—interestingly called subtitles—were inserted between film scenes and obviously written in the language of the film producers. These intertitles had an essential function: since the movies were silent and directors needed to edit the film in order to tell a whole story in no more than 100 minutes, the intertitles contained the information needed to bridge the spatial, temporal and narrative ellipses that were necessary to condense the story. The intertitles provided essential information about where the action was taking place, or the time and place following a fade-out, a change of scene or any other mechanism used to synthesise the visual narration. Film directors gradually aimed to reach larger audiences, and to achieve this end, they needed to shorten plot developments, speed up the events and tell more in a shorter time. Soon after the invention of cinema, it became obvious that every screen actor's movement could not be filmed, and written texts were then introduced as a complement to the visual narration.

Initially, language was strictly limited to just a few intertitles, which were translated in two different ways (see Chaume 2009 for a detailed review): either orally interpreted by a man in the theatre, or translated, photographed and then inserted in place of the original titles. Simultaneous interpreting was usually carried out by the pianist or another man working alongside the pianist. The resulting oral translation was not always a faithful rendering, but usually went beyond the traditional borders of linguistic and cultural transfer into the domain of dramatic art. These men (*bonimenteurs* or *maitre de cérémonie* in France, *explicadores* in Spain, *spielers* in the US) tended to overact in their renderings of the titles (and also at other points in the film when no titles were on screen), added new information, made use of histrionic intonation and even pre-empted the plot. This practice was also observed in Japan, as well as many other countries. The *benshi* were Japanese performers who provided live narration for silent films; they stood at the side of the screen and introduced and related the story to the audience (Chaume 2012). With a background in the theatre, the *benshi* spoke for the on-screen characters and played multiple roles (Viviani 2011: 69–70). This tradition was also adopted in most other Asian countries, such as Thailand, Taiwan and Korea (*byeonsa*), and may be at the root of Russian voice-over.

The talkies prompted one of audiovisual translation's most popular formats: dubbing. Although the first large-scale attempt to translate films

consisted of producing subtitled versions of American films in French, German and Spanish, the film industry faced a major challenge at that time: in the early 1930s millions of cinema-goers could not read. In some countries, however, the subtitling mode was more easily accepted, given the low cost of subtitles compared to dubbing, and also the higher levels of literacy than in countries speaking a major language, where subtitling did not gain popularity until the twenty-first century.

Another ambitious attempt to overcome the language barrier was a new production system known as multilingual movies or double versions. Films were shot in various languages at a time, either simultaneously or very shortly afterwards. Sometimes the same film director worked on all language versions, but other times each version had a different film director. Different actors starred in the various versions, except in certain famous cases, such as the now-iconic films starring Oliver Hardy and Stanley Laurel, or Buster Keaton, who used flashcards to read their translated dialogues with a distinctive accent that made their films even more comical. Interestingly, when the first dubbings of Laurel and Hardy's films were made in some countries, local talents opted to keep that particular accent in their delivery. However, multilingual versions were too expensive and were not welcomed by audiences, who preferred the original actors. Following this short-lived experiment, they disappeared in 1933.

In 1928, two engineers from Paramount Pictures successfully recorded a synchronised dialogue matching the lips of on-screen characters in the film *Beggars of Life* (William A. Wellman 1928), and months later in their first all-talker, *Interference* (Roy Pomeroy 1928). Edwin Hopking invented post-synchronisation to revoice actors whose voices were not considered to be up to the standard of potentially international artists. Jakob Karol applied post-synchronisation to substitute original dialogues with others recorded in another language. The technique involved recording the dubbed dialogues onto a new track, which was later synchronised with the track containing the images and the music and effects track (the 'M & E' track). The commercial potential of this new localising mode was quickly recognised. Only one year later, in 1929, Radio Pictures dubbed the film *Rio Rita* (Luther Reed 1929) into French, German and Spanish. United Artists, 20th Century Fox, Paramount Pictures and Metro Goldwyn Mayer soon introduced the dubbing process for their productions. The universal essence of cinema, which was called into question with the advent of sound, was revitalised through dubbing.

Although the fascist agenda played a major part in driving the introduction of dubbing in certain European and Asian countries in the 1930s and

1940s—dictators saw dubbing as the ideal tool to keep democracy outside their borders—the fact that the population in many of these countries had low levels of literacy, that some of these countries had a major language, and that they could meet the costs of dubbing, cannot be ignored. Dubbing soon became firmly embedded in these countries also for these reasons.

Almost one century later, digital technology has fortunately helped to stifle the futile debate around these localisation modes. Digital technology speeds up the process, reduces costs and provides multiple recording tracks and software applications to manipulate recorded voices and sounds. But above all, it allows dubbings, subtitlings, voice-overs, accessible versions and combinations of these modes to be produced in many languages, consumed through streaming, downloaded to computers, tablets or smartphones, or selected with the remote control. Audiences now decide how (and when, and where) they want to watch a film, a TV series or just a clip.

## 4 Theoretical Foundations

Audiovisual translation is by nature a good example of multimodal translation. Audiovisual texts are semiotic constructs where meaning is produced by combining different signs, encoded in various codes and transmitted through at least two channels of communication: acoustic and visual. In some experimental movies a third, tactile channel has been used in an attempt to reproduce the sensations experienced by the on-screen actors in the spectators' seats (e.g., the vibrations of an earthquake). Likewise, some videogames utilise a tactile channel as a vehicle for a normative code that, through vibrations (signs encoded in the haptic code), regulates all the gamer's movements and actions (Mejías Climent 2019). This channel is added to both the visual and the acoustic channels characteristic of audiovisual translation.

The visual and the acoustic channels in traditional audiovisual texts host various codes of meaning, which at the same time are composed of a distinct set of signs that interact with each other to produce meaning. Audiovisual translation problems, and therefore dubbing issues, can be explained by, and related to, the interaction between these codes and the dialogues (the linguistic code). The codes of meaning that can interact with the dialogues, or that can themselves pose translation problems, are presented in Table 6.1.

A semiotic approach, that is, a multimodal approach to dubbing, thus takes into account all filmic codes, the interaction between the signs of each code in the production of meaning and the constraints posed by the signs belonging to all these codes, which must be transferred to the target culture without

**Table 6.1** Semiotic codes of audiovisual texts that may constrain translation solutions

Acoustic Channel	Visual Channel
Linguistic Code	Iconographic Code
Paralinguistic Code	Photographic Code
Musical Code	Mobility Code
Special Effects Code	Planning Code
Sound Position Code	Graphic Code
Editing Code	

taking the viewer out of the film. For example, when a character is speaking in a close-up shot, the translator and the dialogue writer must take into account three codes of meaning: the linguistic code—words containing a bilabial phoneme or an open or rounded vowel; the mobility code—actors mouthing these words on screen; and the shot code—close-ups and extreme close-ups.

## 4.1 Constraints

A concept that would shape future research in audiovisual translation, and hence dubbing, appeared in the 1980s, namely translation constraints or constrained translation (Titford 1982). Primarily applied to subtitling, Mayoral et al. (1988) successfully applied this concept to all audiovisual translation types and made the first attempt to classify audiovisual translation modes according to the number of constraints each one presents. The concept is based on the notion that audiovisual translation is subject to and inextricably tied to images. In Mayoral et al.'s classification, dubbing ranks as the most constrained mode of translation. These authors' concept of subordinate translation has been widely used in dubbing research ever since and was later extended by Zabalbeascoa (1993) to include the complementary concept of priorities (established by text type, genre, the translation commission, etc.). In his discussion of this tradition and review of the approaches taken thus far, Martí Ferriol (2010) establishes six types of constraints operating both in the process of audiovisual translation and in the preliminary stage of any commission of this type:

- Professional constraints, or constraints imposed by working conditions and the commission itself (time, money, directions, censorship, etc.)

- Formal constraints, or constraints inherent to quality standards, in the case of dubbing, mainly isochrony, lip-syncing and kinesic synchrony (see below)
- Linguistic constraints, or constraints imposed by registers, dialects and language variation
- Semiotic or iconic constraints, or constraints inherent to film language; primarily the need for coherence between the linguistic code and the information encoded in the other audiovisual codes, that is, coherence between words and images and so forth.
- Sociocultural constraints, or constraints inherent to the two cultural systems at play in any audiovisual transfer, such as the constraints posed by cultural references
- Void constraint, or lack or absence of constraints.

Constraints are obstacles that impede natural or direct translation. In essence, they prevent the translator from using the first natural option that they may find in their target languages because something else must take priority over and above the meaning of the words. In dubbing into Spanish, an omelette can be turned into a pie (Chaume 2012), when the omelette does not (and will not) appear on screen and when lip-sync is mandatory (close-ups and extreme close-ups), because both the terms *omelette* and *pie* contain a bilabial consonant, which must be kept in the right place in the translation. That would be an example of a formal constraint. Also, the Japanese dish Om-rice (omelette with rice) can become pancakes, and chopsticks can be changed to forks according to transcreation norms (Chaume 2016)—that is, according to professional and sociocultural constraints—when dubbing from Japanese to English for the US market. Nevertheless, authors like Martínez Sierra (2008) also understand constraints positively, as a tool that triggers and enhances creativity and as an aid to help translators choose the best option among many.

## 4.2 Quality Standards

Dubbing is a well-known example of the invisibility of translation, a truly domesticating practice that, through an artistic and technical exercise, consciously erases the original dialogue track and replaces it with another track of recorded target language dialogue exchanges. In this creative and technical process, the industry strives to ensure that certain quality standards are always met, among them:

- Observance of the three kinds of synchronisation mentioned above and explained below, especially isochrony, when they clash with each other
- Creation of credible and natural dialogue, spontaneous-sounding and convincing sentences, gestures, delivery and intonation that create the illusion of watching a “real” story
- Fidelity to the source film, through the preservation of its relevant features, so that target culture viewers can watch the same film (or TV series, cartoon, commercial, etc.) as source culture spectators; this would not apply to free-commentaries, such as fundubs or gag and parodic dubbing
- Semiotic coherence between words and images
- Avoidance of overacted or underacted performances
- Technical accuracy—good sound, appropriate volume and voice quality, absence of noise and interferences, clear voices and so forth.

Of these, synchronisation is considered by many to be the most important feature of dubbing, although emulating spontaneous discourse in the translation is also critical. Both skills are required in professional practice, especially when translators are responsible for the adaptation or dialogue writing process.

### 4.3 Synchronies

Synchronisation is one of the essentials of translation for dubbing. It consists of matching the target language translation with the articulatory and body movements of the on-screen actors, as well as fitting the utterances and pauses in the translation to those of the source dialogues. Synchronisation undeniably has a direct impact on the translation process and product and, as such, it should be given due consideration in professional, teaching and research circles.

*Kinesic synchrony* is the synchronisation between the translation and the screen actors' body movements and body language. In the universe of body language, there are several instances in which the meaning of kinesic signs must be made explicit, either because they are essential to understand the story or because if they were missed, the viewer would be jolted out of the so-called suspension of disbelief, or the conscious “cinematographic dream” pact between the film and the viewer. Kinesic signs are sometimes accompanied by words that make their meaning explicit. On other occasions they appear alone, with no spoken word, caption, sound or other explanatory icon. In the first instance, translators avoid any contradictions in their translation of the words accompanying the kinesic sign. In the second case, however,

translators must decide whether or not an explicitation of the sign is necessary. Kinesic signs can constitute a translation constraint, especially when natural translation is not valid; in that case the original words may have to be substituted to maintain coherence with the actor's body movements.

*Isochrony* is the synchronisation between the translated text utterances and pauses and the source text utterances and pauses. In dubbing, isochrony means equal duration of utterances; in other words, the translated dialogue must fit exactly in the time between the instant the screen actor opens their mouth to utter the source dialogue exchanges and the instant they close their mouth. Criticism of a badly dubbed film is mostly grounded in deficient isochrony, since it is here that the viewer is most likely to perceive the fault: "The disregard of isochrony would lead to mouths moving on screen when no words can be heard (empty mouths flaps), or otherwise speech heard after the mouths on screen have stopped moving. The suspension of disbelief in dubbing is highly dependent on isochrony" (Spiteri Miggiani 2019: 80). Isochrony then compels translators to fit the length of their translation with the length of the screen characters' utterance, with the utmost respect for the pauses and, if possible, the rhythm of the original utterances. Translators can use various stylistic resources or translation techniques to overcome issues posed by isochrony, such as repetition, gloss, periphrasis, anacoluthon, paraphrase, synonyms, antonyms, hypernyms, hyponyms, reduction and omission. Mouth articulation and the duration of utterances are the key factors that determine the number of syllables in the translation, although in daily professional practice dialogue writers do not usually count the number of syllables of both the source and the target texts. Respect for isochrony in dubbing follows the agenda of keeping the impression of reality and making the programme more realistic, credible and true-to-life.

*Lip-sync*, also known as 'phonetic synchrony' or 'lip synchrony', is the synchronisation between the translation and the screen actors' articulatory movements. The term lip-sync is used in professional circles as a general term encompassing isochrony and phonetic synchrony. For research and teaching purposes, however, the distinction must be made between equal duration of utterances or isochrony, and imitating certain phonemes in close-ups, phonetic synchrony or lip-sync proper. Translators and dialogue writers adapt the translation to the articulatory movements of the on-screen characters to ensure that the translation respects, above all, the rounded vowels and bilabial and labio-dental consonants pronounced on screen: "What matters are the frequency and the type of mouth flaps, which do not necessarily coincide with the number of syllables in a word or with the way the word is expected to be rendered visually. Mouth flaps could also include speechless lip movements."

(Spiteri Miggiani 2019: 83). Traditionally, lip-sync is carefully considered in close-ups and extreme close-ups—shots showing only the character’s face. Fodor’s (1976) pioneering work offers much more detailed remarks about phonetic synchrony. Spiteri Miggiani (2019) proposes a method and some specific strategies to overcome this hurdle: the translation should contain a back rounded vowel (/o/, /u/), a rounded semivowel (/w/) or a labial consonant when the screen actor articulates a back rounded vowel or a labial phoneme in the original; identical vowels or consonants, however, are not required but rotations are possible. A /b/ can be happily substituted by an /m/, /p/ or even by the labiodentals /f/, or /v/. The audience cannot hear the original phoneme but only see the original viseme (Fisher 1968). Phonetic articulations of close phonemes help the translator find excellent solutions that lend credibility to target dialogues in close-ups with closed lips. In these cases, phonetic equivalence overrides semantic or even pragmatic equivalence, since finding a word with a bilabial consonant is much more important than finding a synonym or a similar word in the target language.

Dubbing consists primarily of domesticating a foreign product so that it appears to be realistic and credible, and related to the audience’s expectations. The implementation of these three types of synchronisation—lip-sync, kinesic synchrony and isochrony—together with the production of a spontaneous-sounding register, which on the other hand must comply with grammar rules and have exquisite diction (see the concept of *dubbese* below), is the result of a conscious agenda to domesticate the translated text, so that viewers do not realise that what they are witnessing on screen is a translation.

## 5 Research on Dubbing

### 5.1 The Four Turns

The first monograph in audiovisual translation, a practical handbook of subtitling, was written and edited by Simon Laks in 1957. The first specialised issue of a journal, dedicated to audiovisual translation, was published in 1960 by *Babel*. In 1976 István Fodor pioneered research in the field of dubbing with his seminal volume—still a mandatory text for researchers—which is especially notable for his first classification of the synchronies at play in dubbing: character synchrony, content synchrony and phonetic synchrony (the only real ‘synchrony’). The first two synchronies are no longer considered as such, since they are not related to time (Chaume 2004), but to the similarities

between the original voice and talent's voice, timbre, tempo and gestures, and to the coherence between the visual narration, the plot, and the target dialogue lines, respectively. Following this seminal work, other scholars began to identify the specificities of dubbing, and the differences between dubbing and subtitling (Vöge 1977; Gautier 1981; Hendrickx 1984; Hochel 1986; Mayoral et al. 1986; Herbst 1987, 1994; Pommier 1988; Luyken et al. 1991; Izard 1992; Whitman-Linsen 1992; Zabalbeascoa 1993; Chaume 1994; Dries 1995; Ávila 1997; Agost 1999; Chaves 2000; Bartrina and Espasa 2005; Paolinelli and di Fortunato 2005; Le Nouvel 2007; and more recently Martínez Sierra 2008; Jüngst 2010; Cerezo Merchán et al. 2016, among many others). These works covered the technological, sociological, legal and financial aspects of dubbing. Other factors taken into consideration were the dubbing market, fees, working conditions and the roles involved in the dubbing process, especially the translator's task. Scholarly research was initially driven by the need to identify the distinctive traits of dubbing and of audiovisual translation in general. It also distinguished which features of the source text could potentially constitute issues for translation, essentially audiovisual translation constraints and dubbing constraints, highlighting the differences between audiovisual translation and dubbing, and other types of written translation.

This first stage concluded towards the end of the last century when descriptive translation studies (DTS) entered the academic research landscape. Scholars gradually began to focus on the translated text, combining efforts in the search for norms (Goris 1993; Ballester Casado 2001; Pavesi 2005; Valentini 2006; Martínez Sierra 2008; Baños-Piñero 2009; Freddi and Pavesi 2009; Martí Ferriol 2012, among many others specialising in the field of dubbing). The descriptive orientation became established as the first turn of this discipline, and consequently, of dubbing research. Various frameworks have been proposed to take into account the concept of constraints, the current dubbing brief, the way dubbed texts are commercialised and presented to the public, how dubbed texts are received, the strategies, norms, constraints and methods used and so forth. Any translation issue (songs, film titles, humour, cultural references, intertextuality, language variation, multilingualism) can be studied under a systematic framework, usually combining quantitative and qualitative data, compiling a catalogue, outlining tentative norms and so forth.

Cultural approaches were easily drawn from DTS: academic interest in the concepts of ideology, otherness, post-colonialism, power, resistance, patronage and censorship began to grow, bringing to the fore issues of identity, gender stereotypes, race and so forth. Cultural studies have questioned the repeated use of some translation strategies and techniques and have tried to

uncover their intentional and hidden agenda. Much of this cultural research is founded on prior descriptive studies, but the change of focus constitutes another major turn in this field (Di Giovanni 2007; Ferrari 2010; De Marco 2012; Richart Marset 2012). Typically by conducting case studies based on one film or TV series, scholars focus their attention on the footprints of ideology that provide the clues to the ideological reasons underlying translation solutions; therefore, censorship (Ballester Casado 2001; Ranzato 2009, 2016; the special issue of *Meta* 57, 2, edited by Díaz Cintas 2012, among many others), patronage (Di Giovanni 2016, 2017; Marzà and Prats 2018), genetic analysis to uncover the documentary archive of the final dubbed product and the ideological moves behind each version (Richart Marset 2012; Zanotti 2014; Spiteri Miggiani 2019), identity (Santamaría 2016), gender (Villanueva Jordán 2015; Garnemark 2015) and particularly gender stereotypes (González-Vera 2012; Pérez López de Heredia 2016; Saejang 2019, among others), continue to provide rich seams for valuable theses and monographs.

Scholarly interest subsequently shifted from the translated text to the agents involved in the process of translation, but now through a social lens, a change in direction that marked a step beyond the more limited focus on the industrial process of the nineties. This social turn (Wolf and Fukari 2007) has been grounded mainly in Bourdieu's sociological paradigm. Initially focused on reception studies (Fuentes Luque 2003; Antonini and Chiaro 2009, through to Di Giovanni and Gambier 2018, among others), dubbing research has now started to investigate the role of the translator and the powers mediating in the selection, translation and adaptation of an audiovisual product, as well as the new active role of audiences emerging in the convergence era (Jenkins 2006). These audiences are now producing new types of translations, from heterofunctional parodies to activist translations. This new paradigm can be defined as the third turn in audiovisual translation and dubbing research (Pérez-González 2014; Wang and Zhang 2015; Khoshsaligheh and Ameri 2016; Ameri and Khoshsaligheh 2018; Baños-Piñero 2019; Saejang 2019, among others).

Finally, an empirical and cognitive turn is also making headway against subjective and case studies in audiovisual translation and dubbing. Since the first pioneering reception studies in audiovisual translation, mainly carried out in Italy, Iran, Poland and Spain during the first decade of this century, the breakthrough of technology has constituted an important step forward in experimental research methods. In the nineties, interest lay mainly in the translator's mental processes (Think Aloud Protocols); now, however, the audience's response to audiovisual translation is stimulating academic curiosity. This response is studied with the aid of eye-trackers and biometric sensors.

In the field of dubbing, initial approaches to this turn have so far come from Perego et al. (2016), and Di Giovanni and Romero-Fresco (2019), who have pioneered a promising new avenue of research in their experiments. Their results call into question the sanctity of lip-syncing, suggesting that the audience is not constantly focusing on the on-screen characters' lips. Further analysis is needed in this area, but it will be interesting to discover whether too much attention has been paid to lip-syncing in the past. Process research includes the promising field of accessible filmmaking (Romero Fresco 2019), which can easily be applied to dubbing (see Sect. 3.2).

## 5.2 Topics Researched

Several translation scholars have a background in linguistics and, logically, their interest initially lay in linguistic issues. Preliminary research, somewhat prescriptive and at times apocalyptic, was based on the invasion of English in dubbings. However, scientific research on the language of dubbed productions has revolved around two major topics: the register of dubbing, or *dubbese*, and multilingualism. Dubbese is more than a jargon; it is the register of dubbing, and as such, it can be described using the four traditional language levels: particular features of dubbese can be distinguished at the phonetic, morphological, syntactical and lexical levels. The term still has derogatory connotations: if the language used in dubbing sounds artificial and contrived, it is due to the influence of the source language, thus limiting its definition to the analysis of calques. However, two more important factors must be taken into account when describing and understanding dubbese: first, the burden of the historical tradition in the way dubbings have been made throughout a country's history, which has attracted much less scholarly attention, and second, the artificial nature of the language of audiovisual media in the original products, which sounds contrived *per se*. These three pillars constitute dubbese. This term has now been reassessed and is understood in a wider descriptive sense, and its study takes into account the three sides of the prism. The term dubbese was first used by Myers (1973), and later by others such as Herbst (1994, 1997). This latter author claimed that dubbed speech is easily recognisable when heard, and was the first scholar to highlight the function of intonation in the delivery of the dubbed lines, as one more characteristic of dubbed prefabricated orality, although a more contemporary approach of German dubbese is offered by Bräutigam (2009) and Jüngst (2010).

Chiaro (2006) applied the concept in Italian dubbing language, where the term *doppiaggese* had become accepted in scholarly research. In fact, research

into Italian dubbese may go back further than any other country, since it started in the seventies when Nencioni (1976) first referred to “parlato-recitato” (recited spoken language). This line of study then moved on to the structured, detailed and conceptual work of Pavesi (1996), who coined the expression “a third norm” to describe the language of dubbing, focused on linguistic elements characteristic of this kind of language, and introduced the concept of *translation routines* as recurrent patterns in the language of dubbing (Pavesi, 2008). Bruti and Perego (2005) have also explored this issue extensively, focusing on certain peculiar elements of dubbed and subtitling discourse. Bucaria and Chiaro (2007) carried out a reception study on Italian dubbese that revealed extremely low levels of comprehension of cultural references and an asymmetric tolerance of dubbese. Freddi and Pavesi (2009) published what is to date the most comprehensive volume on the peculiarities of dubbing language and, in a study that goes against the grain, Forchini’s (2012) experiment challenged and refuted the claim that movie language is different from real oral language. Italian dubbese has also been the subject of robust studies grounded on large audiovisual and multimodal corpora, such as the ones based on the Pavia Corpus (Freddi and Pavesi 2009; Pavesi et al. 2014) and the Forlì Corpus (Valentini 2006). Minutella’s (2015, 2018) work on the subject focuses on the influence of English and language varieties and how they affect *doppiaggio*, and finally, Spiteri Miggiani (2019) argues that technology, especially the introduction of the *bande ritmo* in Europe and America, can help prevent the fake intonations typical of dubbing.

Marzà et al. (2006) and Romero-Fresco (2006) used the notion of prefabricated orality (Chaume 2001) in reference to Spanish-dubbed language, extensively mapped by Baños-Piñero (2009, 2013, among others) and now being studied by Scandura (2019) in the so-called *español neutro* of Latin American dubs, combining a tentative description of this artificial register with notions of censorship and patronage. Marzà and Prats (2018) recently coined the term *doblatges* in their latest contribution to the topic in Catalan, which complements pioneering studies by Bassols et al. (1997), Santamaría (1998, among others), Chaume (2003), and especially Matamala (2005, 2008, among many others). Barambones (2012) exhaustively describes the linguistic model of Basque dubbing, as Montero Domínguez (2006) does for the Galician dubbing model. A promising new stream of research related to the dubbing mode is now opening up to audiovisual translation scholars, namely dramatisation and performance, particularly in relation to naturalness. After the pioneering work by Bosseaux (2015, 2018), Sánchez Mompeán (2017) conducted an empirical analysis of tonal patterns in a Spanish-dubbed

corpus, with the aim of exploring and studying the intonation used on the basis of its naturalness, or lack of it.

For the French case, in contrast, Von Flotow (2009) uses the term *synchronien* (p. 91) ironically to refer to language that treats synchrony with strict deference, which results in vocabulary and stylistic limitations and turns the register into a repetitive jargon with awkward sounding grammatical and syntactic structures.

Another fertile ground for research is the translation of multilingual films. This field usually combines comparative studies of dubbed and subtitled polyglot movies and TV series. Corrius (2005) proposed the concept of a third language to refer to any other language(s) found in either one or both texts. Authors deal with the strategies used to render an L3 in another language (Heiss 2004; Baldo 2009; De Higes Andino 2014; Voellmer and Zabalbeascoa 2014; De Bonis 2014; Zabalbeascoa 2018). Two further interesting lines of research are multilingualism, power and discourse (Dwyer 2005; Cronin 2009; Monti 2016), and the representations of languages and cultures in contact from an ideational approach (Valdeón 2005).

Discursive approaches show how language choice reflects ideology. Such pragmatic approaches have been extensively applied to studies on dubbing by Bruti (2009) and Martínez Sierra (2008), especially in the field of humour. A discursive approach and a semiotic analysis of images allow for a comprehensive understanding of how humour travels between languages and cultures.

Multimodality has been a key concept in the understanding of audiovisual translation in general. Regarding dubbing, significant contributions are those by Chaves (2000), Chaume (2004, 2012), Spadafora (2007), Taylor (2013), Pettit (2013), Martínez Sierra (2008), Martí Ferriol (2010) and Santamaria (2017), among many others. These authors explore the different codes of meaning that weave audiovisual texts and relate audiovisual translation issues to the interaction between these codes and the dialogues.

Many other topics have been dealt with in dubbed—and also subtitled—texts. Some examples include fascinating studies on topics such as humour, linguistic variation (registers, dialects and taboo language), film titles, puns and idioms, proper names, cultural references, audiovisual genres; a simple web search yields dozens of references too numerous to mention here. Other less explored topics are songs and intertextuality.

Finally, there is growing interest in one of the most neglected fields in this area: the history of audiovisual translation and dubbing, audiovisual translation and dubbing maps, and archival research; Cornu (2014), Fuentes Luque (2019), O'Sullivan and Cornu (2019) and Zanotti (2018), respectively, are recent examples of these research streams.

## 6 Implications

### 6.1 Didactic Implications

Teaching and training in audiovisual translation and dubbing have also grown exponentially. The first approaches to the didactics of dubbing came from Agost and Chaume (1996), Agost et al. (1999) and Zabalbeascoa (1997, among others); these were later complemented by the extensive and complete work by Bartrina (2001) and Bartrina and Espasa (2003, 2005). The reference book on the didactics of audiovisual translation, edited by Díaz Cintas (2008), contains articles by Chaume on dubbing and Matamala on voice-over. New handbooks for training students in the five main audiovisual translation modes include the basics of dubbing, some of which provide exercises to train new professionals in this area (Paolinelli and di Fortunato 2005; Minutella 2009; Jüngst 2010; Chaume 2012; Martínez Sierra 2012; Talaván et al. 2016). Cerezo Merchán (2012) offers a comprehensive map covering the needs of teachers, professionals and companies.

### 6.2 Language Acquisition Through Dubbing

Another expanding area of (mostly experimental) research is related to foreign language acquisition and learning via audiovisual translation and dubbing. After some initial sceptical reactions, new interest has recently arisen in the ways audiovisual translation can benefit foreign language learning. Though most efforts have focused on subtitling, for obvious reasons, scholars are gradually discovering the benefits of dubbing, especially reverse dubbing, in foreign language acquisition. An interesting contribution to the use of dubbing in the foreign language classroom is provided by Burston (2005). Rather than approaching dubbing as a form of translation, this author presents students with muted films from which they must produce a natural text in a foreign language, based on the images they see. Danan (2010) explored the potential of dubbing in foreign language teaching. Chiu (2012) focused on the acquisition of English pronunciation through dubbing projects (also touched on by Kumai in 1996, using karaoke). Martínez Sierra (2014) showed how to use dubbing software in the translation classroom. Navarrete (2013), Talaván and Ávila-Cabrera (2015) and Torralba (2016) have also made substantial contributions in the field of dubbing and language acquisition, the latter using translation for dubbing and subtitling as a means for learning languages in bilingual contexts. Following this line of research, the PLURITAV project, led

by Martínez Sierra, has recently explored language acquisition via audiovisual translation and dubbing from a multilingual perspective. Two major projects have also been financed by the European Union—Levis and, especially, ClipFlair—the latter with essential research on dubbing as a tool for language acquisition (Baños-Piñero and Sokoli 2015).

### 6.3 The Active Role of New Audiences

A further critical area is that of activism (Pérez-González 2014), that is, civic empowerment, engagement and dissent through translated audiovisual content, mainly in the form of amateur subtitling and dubbing by ordinary citizens on web-based digital media platforms. Rooted in the social turn in audiovisual translation, and with the aid of technology (new apps are now available for fandubbers to dub almost any audiovisual product) and new social media, dubbing is here understood as a means to democratise the media in several ways. Fandubs are domestic dubbings of all audiovisual genres produced by fans and subsequently uploaded to the web (Baños-Piñero 2019); new audiences can now decide what to dub by simply accessing the web and finding newly released products, or products they consider worthy or may have a certain status in their community. Fundubs are humorous dubbings made for fun, intentionally unfaithful to the source text. They encompass gag dubbings, fake dubbings and also newer experiments, such as the so-called literal dub versions, that is, a literal music video that replaces the original lyrics of a song with newly invented lyrics that ironically describe the visuals in the video. Dialect-dubbed videos, called *synchros* by German users, empower dialect performance on the Web 2.0. Fandubbers appropriate excerpts of television broadcasts, popular movies or pop music and substitute their audio track with a dialect voice, which may or may not be semantically equivalent to the original (Androutsopoulos 2010). Assigning a dialectal voice to media genres that have been traditionally produced in standard German is an explicit criticism of the predominance of standard language in the media, and thus champions the suitability of dialects for broadcasting.

### 6.4 Theoretical Implications

Currently, audiovisual translation does not require a new theory of translation, but there is no doubt that it is seriously challenging some of Translation Studies theoretical concepts (Chaume 2018). However, either the theory of translation must be sufficiently flexible to embrace the new profiles and new

challenges posed by audiovisual translation, or it will soon become too straightjacketed to encapsulate all forms of media localisation. Like other artistic domains, translation must now be considered as a transformation of one semiotic system into another. Many experimental artists have used intersemiotic translation to transform music into paintings, paintings into literature, literature into cinema, cinema into comics and so forth. Any kind of adaptation, ekphrasis or intersemiotic transfer can be considered a kind of translation. Gentzler (2016) recently coined the term post-translation to denote this phenomenon, making reference to literary texts that circulate internationally and intersemiotically into new media and forms. This can obviously be applied to any text. Audiovisual translation, and especially dubbing, have pushed translation beyond the concept of equivalence. Nobody has so far convincingly demonstrated where the borders of translation (and dubbing) lie. Translation Studies will fail to depict reality if it is not able to include all possible ways of rewriting, such as dubbing, among many others.

## 7 The Future

The future of dubbing is inextricably linked to technology. Digitalisation is now helping to enhance distribution and understanding of otherwise unknown cinemas, TV series, cartoons, pop music clips, video blogs and any possible variation of media content from all cultures. Traditional dubbing cultures are now also becoming familiar with subtitling, and in turn, cultures with a subtitling tradition are getting acquainted with dubbing. Some technological advances have also brought about radical changes in the way dubbing is actually carried out, as compared to ten years ago. Cloud computing technologies and new ways of interacting in the cloud, together with social networks, are starting to change the possibilities, scope and even conventions of dubbing. In the dubbing sphere (dubbing understood as a post-production process that first requires a draft translation, then an adaptation or dialogue writing, then the performance or voicing of the newly adapted dialogues in the target language, and finally re-editing) two technological shifts can be seen: technologies favouring the adaptation of words to visuals (Word to Image) and those favouring the adaptation of visuals to (translated) words (Image to Word). In the former, research is exploring how to automatically produce words in a language that matches the on-screen actors' lip movements (initially envisaged to help scriptwriters, but with an obvious application to dubbing settings): new software is being developed to automatically detect the on-screen characters' mouth movements and generate a list of

words, phrases and sentences that match those movements. One example is Taylor et al. (2015), who introduced the concept of *dynamic visemes* or phoneme groups that present the same articulatory configuration from a visual perspective. In the latter, technologies favouring the adaptation of images to words are trying to put an end to the dialogue writers' nightmare of finding target language words and phrases that match the actors' lip articulatory movements in the original version. This adaptation of images to words involves a software programme manipulating the on-screen actors' mouth movements to match the actual (draft, non-adapted) translation. The process of adaptation can then be skipped, since no matter what translation is used, in terms of length (isochrony) or phonetic synchrony, it will always match the on-screen mouth movements because the images will be manipulated in such a way that the characters will seem to be uttering the translated words.

Other new sound digital technologies are heading in the same direction: Assael et al. (2017) have developed a software tool at Oxford University, called LipNet, capable of reading the lips of a human face; Adobe has already launched Project Vocal and so forth (Chaume 2019).

Technology now also enables faster and cheaper dubbings. *Collaborative dubbings* refer to a single dubbed work recorded in various companies and countries and eventually edited in one company. This process is a good option when the dubbing director, or distributor, wants to engage voice talents living in different countries, or when a particular actor is based in another city or country a long way from the studios where the recording is taking place. Scandura (2015) claims that this process is increasingly common in Latin America, where companies based in more than one country (Etcétera Group, The Kitchen Inc.) record the lines of various actors living or temporarily working in another country.

Finally, cloud dubbing is starting to change the traditional dubbing process. A comprehensive platform is made available to all agents involved in the process. The original script is edited and uploaded to the platform in a particular layout, and serves as a template for all target languages. Once the clip and the script have been uploaded to the cloud, translators can start working on the translation and the adaptation (usually done by the same person); the actors, wherever they live, can voice their lines and record their dialogues on the platform; the dubbing director can control this process and give the talents the necessary guidelines to ensure a professional performance; the engineer also controls the process and can start mixing all the tracks containing each voice as soon as they are ready; glossaries are available online to all agents; TV series and longer clips (like films) can be split up between several translators who can work simultaneously online and consult each other and so forth.

## 8 Final Remarks

Research in audiovisual translation and dubbing has come of age. An incipient discipline finding its way in the 1990s is now one of the most popular and attractive fields for both new and established researchers. A new shift in digital production, digital distribution, digital consumption and digital manipulation, entailing a new distribution of manipulated products, has a considerable impact on emerging audiovisual translation practices all over the world. The fact that traditionally dubbing-oriented countries are increasingly consuming subtitled products, and vice versa, is a result of digitalisation and, even more so, of digital transformation. However, the most surprising outcome is the growing use of dubbing. The audience share for dubbed products is on the rise. Ranzato and Zanotti (2019) speak of the dubbing revolution: TV shows are increasingly dubbed into primarily subtitled countries, as well as Latin American and Turkish soap operas; commercials continue to be dubbed and voiced-over in both dubbing and subtitled countries; the trend of reverse dubbing, that is, dubbing domestic products into English, is popular in countries such as Iran; dubbing into English has boosted since Netflix decided to dub European TV series into English; videogames are dubbed even in cultures where dubbing was previously limited to cartoons for younger children. Dubbing is experiencing its golden age, thanks to technology, social media, new audiences and new needs, and is finally casting off its ominous image of a fascist, anti-democratic and uncultivated practice that has dissuaded many scholars from exploring its potential as an accessible mode for many communities in the world.

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# 7

## Translating Non-fictional Genres: Voice-over and Off-screen Dubbing

Anna Matamala

### 1 Introduction

Voice-over is one of the three main audiovisual transfer modes used to translate audiovisual content, next to dubbing and subtitling. It is used to revoice fictional content in certain Eastern European countries, but it is also used to revoice non-fictional content in some of the so-called dubbing or subtitling countries. As it will be explained later in this chapter, voice-over is often used in combination with off-screen dubbing.

This chapter focuses on the translation of non-fictional genres by means of voice-over and off-screen dubbing. The chapter begins with a definition and categorization of both transfer modes, which is also applicable to fictional genres. Section 3 summarizes the main research outputs available in this area, and Sect. 4 approaches didactic implications. A last section on future prospects and final remarks closes the chapter. For further information on voice-over in fictional genres, you can refer to Matamala (2018).

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## 2 Voice-over and Off-screen Dubbing: Definition and Typologies

Voice-over can be defined as an audiovisual transfer mode in which the translation is voiced on top of the original content, which is still audible to a certain extent. This voice overlapping is similar in voice-over and simultaneous interpreting, but the key difference is that the former is generally planned and pre-recorded and the latter is produced live. The meaning of voice-over in translation studies is different from the meaning of the same term in film studies, where it refers to an off-screen voice such as the voice of a narrator. This difference has caused some terminological confusion in early works on voice-over (Franco 2001a).

Voice-over in non-fictional genres is often combined with the so-called off-screen dubbing (Franco et al. 2010), also referred to by some authors as narration and even commentary (Pönniö 1995). In this regard, Luyken et al. (1991: 80) define narration as a “kind of voice-over used in monologues”, and Laine (1996) consider free commentary a mode in which the original content is transformed and adapted to a new audience. In this chapter I follow Franco et al. (2010) approach and prioritize the term off-screen dubbing, because narration or commentary are terms better suited to refer to constituents of audiovisual products rather than to audiovisual transfer modes. Therefore, I define off-screen dubbing as a transfer mode in which the original soundtrack is replaced by the target soundtrack, making the original words inaudible but not requiring lip synchronization because the speaker is off-screen.

### 2.1 Synchronization

Voice-over and off-screen dubbing are expected to comply with certain synchronization features (Franco et al. 2010; Orero 2006a, b). For voice-over, the four main types of synchronies are the following.

**Voice-over Isochrony** The translation starts some words after the original and finishes some words before the original ends.

To fit in the space available, the text is often edited or rephrased, and some orality features such as hesitations, syntactic anomalies or repetitions are deleted, at least in traditional voice-over for non-fictional genres such as documentaries. Franco et al. (2010: 74) consider that content comprehension is often prioritized over formal linguistic aspects and an edited discourse is

created. However, voice-over isochrony is not implemented in all voiced-over content. This is why Sepielak (2016a) distinguishes between full isochrony (when at least one word is heard at the beginning and at the end), initial isochrony (when this is only achieved at the beginning) and final isochrony (when this is only achieved at the end).

**Action Synchrony** The translation must be synchronized with the images on screen.

Although it may seem an obvious statement, diverging language structures may force translators to alter the order of the sentences, rephrase the original content or delete some elements. When this happens, translators are advised to pay special attention to the interaction between the visuals and the translation so that action synchrony is reached and there are no inconsistencies between what is shown on screen and what is said in the translation.

**Kinetic Synchrony** The translation must be synchronized with the body movements of the characters on screen.

This type of synchrony is very similar to the previous one but focuses specifically on gestures and body movements by the speakers on screen, to avoid any mismatches between their movements and words.

**Literal Synchrony** This controversial type of synchrony refers to the fact that the words of the original content that are heard at the beginning and at the end of each voice-over unit, in which there is no overlapping, are ideally translated literally.

The reason behind this type of synchrony is that translations are more vulnerable in these specific excerpts because some audiences may be able to understand them. Audiences are supposed to feel reassured when they can relate the source text with the translation (Kaufmann 2004). This type of synchrony, proposed by Luyken et al. 1991: 141), is controversial because not all professionals agree with it and because it is not always possible to provide a literal translation which works well in all contexts.

As far as off-screen dubbing is concerned, both action and kinetic synchrony also apply. Voice-over isochrony is termed simply *isochrony* and adopts the same meaning as in standard dubbing (Chaume 2004, 2012): the translation must fit in the space available for the original words. However, in this case, there can be some more flexibility because the speaker is off-screen and lip movement is not visible.

## 2.2 Typology

Depending on the perspective adopted, different types of voice-over can be found: first-person voice-over and third-person voice-over (Grigaraviciute and Gottlieb 1999: 44). In the former the translation adopts the same perspective as the source content, in other words, it is a direct translation. In the latter the translation uses reported speech to convey the words of the speaker.

When the number of voices used in the translation is considered, Matamala (2018: 67) distinguishes between single-voice and multiple-voice voice-over. In the former, one voice is used to revoice all speakers in the content, whereas in the latter more than one voice is used. It should be acknowledged that prosody in both types is considerably flat and distinct from standard lip-synch dubbing. However, in certain productions at the border of fiction and non-fiction, such as reality shows, voice acting is increasing and traditional prosodic features of voice-over are being challenged. Therefore, one could also propose a further categorization and distinguish between acted voice-over and non-acted voice-over. The former would show the features generally attributed to dubbing, with a higher degree of interpretation by the voice talents. The latter would present a style closer to reading a text aloud, in other words, a prosodic style closer to narrators in documentaries, to draw an analogy.

Finally, depending on the production process, voice-over for production and voice-over for postproduction (Orero 2004) can be differentiated: in the first type the content is translated during the production process, when the product is not finished. In the second type of voice-over, the translator is given a finished product. This has implications in the creation processes because, for instance, it is very often the case that a script is not available for content under production.

Regarding off-screen dubbing, no taxonomies have been produced to the best of our knowledge, although production processes can also differ (off-screen dubbing for production and for postproduction) and one or multiple voices can be found (single-voice and multiple-voice off-screen dubbing).

## 2.3 From Fiction to Non-fiction: Three Examples

The content audiovisual translators deal with generally falls under two big categories: fiction and non-fiction. However, the spectrum of content linked to non-fiction—the object of this chapter—is very broad, and the tasks

translators perform can also be diverse. We will exemplify it by presenting three prototypical situations.

In the first situation, the translator is given a science documentary (Nichols 1991) which includes an off-screen narrator, interviewees, some incidental speech and excerpts of archival footage. A postproduction script is also provided to the translator. The documentary addresses a wide audience and aims at science popularization, but nonetheless includes a considerable number of terms. The off-screen narrator, who uses a formal and planned language, is revoiced by means of off-screen dubbing, meaning the original is not heard and is totally replaced by a target language narrator. Interviewees, who use a less planned language, are voiced over, so the original is heard underneath the translation. Incidental speech is spontaneous and is revoiced either using voice-over or subtitling, the same modes used for archival footage. The revoiced content uses different voices for each speaker with a rather flat prosody. All synchronization features are kept, and the translation follows the original as much as possible although a certain degree of rephrasing is needed. This could be seen as a prototypical example of a non-fictional content translated during postproduction, according to Matamala's analysis of a corpus of documentaries (2009a, b).

In the second illustrative situation, the translator is given a reality show (Hill 2005) together with its transcript, which contains some excerpts marked as "unintelligible". The show is made up of spontaneous and semi-spontaneous interactions between different speakers and is translated by means of a voice-over. The voice of the actor is more acted than in documentaries, and full isochrony cannot be kept due to the fast-paced dialogues. Language is rather informal and terms are almost absent. This could be seen as an example of a recently widespread type of content, at the frontier of fiction and non-fiction, which in some countries such as Spain is being translated by means of voice-over (Díaz-Vegas 2012).

In the third situation, the translator works for a broadcaster which sends unedited interviews that will later become part of a TV programme (Orero 2004). The job of the translator is to provide a voice-over translation that will be read out by a journalist and will become part of a TV show. The translator is being involved in the production process, when the show is not finished, hence a script is generally not available.

These three examples present different scenarios in which voice-over may be used for non-fictional content. As summarized before, the availability of working materials, the combination of transfer modes, the application of synchronization features, the prosodic approach and the production processes differ and have an impact on the final result.

### 3 Research on Voice-over and Off-screen Dubbing of Non-fiction

Research on the voice-over and off-screen dubbing of non-fictional content is generally approached from two different perspectives: some investigations focus on the features associated with the transfer modes (voice-over or off-screen dubbing) and other studies deal with the specificities of non-fictional genres (Espasa 2004; Martínez Sierra 2010). In this section we will discuss both types of publications organized in six key topics. The structure mirrors that already presented in Matamala (2018), where the focus is both on fiction and non-fiction.

#### 3.1 Translating Culture

The translation of cultural references in non-fiction has been approached by Franco (2001b) using a corpus of documentaries about Brazil translated into French and German. Her analysis identifies what she calls an “inevitable” degree of exoticism or foreignization (p. 177). However, Franco also acknowledges the need to find a balance in this foreignization so as not to impair the audience’s understanding of the content. In another publication, Franco (2000) uses the same corpus to identify the main features of documentary film translation in terms of the nature of the material, the transfer modes used, the degree of objectivity, and the transfer of orality features. Her study points at diverging practices depending on the tradition: in this regard, French versions are considered more mimetic than the German versions in terms of voice, gender, stress and intonation. Other studies, such as García Luque’s (2011) analysis of a French documentary translated into Spanish, indicate a preference for domestication. All in all, it seems that translation norms in relation to cultural elements are modelled by different traditions, tightly related to languages, country traditions and even specific providers guidelines.

A different approach is taken by Hoorickx-Raucq (2005), who analyses scientific publications and TV documentaries in English and French and considers that cultural markers are not only linked to linguistic or structural features but also to cognitive processes. The author considers the translator to be a mediator who may have to deal with diverging approaches in scientific discourse. She illustrates her statements by presenting examples which demonstrate, in her view, how the English scientific discourse is more

collective-minded and empirical, while the French discourse is more personal, deductive and rationalist.

### 3.2 Translating Language: The Role of Terminology

The translation of linguistic features in non-fiction has also been investigated by Kaufmann (2004), who analyses the French translation of a documentary about the integration of six immigrants in Israel. The immigrant's origin is mirrored in their accent, lexical borrowings and grammatical mistakes, but the translated interviews use a standardized French. Kaufmann argues that this strategy alters the meaning of a documentary in which the content is as important as the form. On a similar note, Remael (1995, 2007) also analyses documentaries translated into Dutch at VRT by means of what she calls narration (off-screen dubbing in this chapter), and observes that the language is similar to the typical subtitling language. This is attributed to the educational function of the TV channel, which aims at linguistic uniformity across its contents through the application of consistent language guidelines.

As an example of linguistic variation, Matamala (2010) puts the emphasis on specialized language, and more specifically terminology, by describing a corpus of science documentaries translated from English into Catalan. The following terminological difficulties are put forward in her analysis:

1. Identifying a term: although very often the complexity of the terms makes them easy to identify by lay users, some terms may coincide with general language words and identifying them as such becomes then more challenging.
2. Understanding a term: some scientific content may be difficult to understand by translators, who need to undertake a thorough documentation process. This may be especially difficult when the term is phrased in the context of a spontaneous speech by an expert.
3. Finding the right equivalent when readily available sources do not provide it: in this regard, consultation with experts or terminological bodies proves very useful.
4. Not having an adequate equivalent in the target language: different strategies are proposed by the author, for instance, creating a new term, using language mechanisms such as pre-fixation, analogy or blending, paraphrasing the original or using a loanword.
5. Dealing with denominative variation: one or more terms in the original language may translate into a single form in the target language, and one

single term in the original language may have multiple equivalents in the target language. Choosing the most adequate one in a certain context is a challenge for the audiovisual translator.

6. Dealing with terminology “in vivo” and “in vitro”, meaning that the translators will have to decide whether they want to use the official term proposed by language academies or the term really used by experts in the field, when these two approaches do not coincide.
7. Dealing with bad transcriptions: when a script is available, certain terms may be transcribed incorrectly, inducing to error.

Many of these terminological challenges are shared with other types of scientific content, but the specificity of the audiovisual content is that images can contribute to a better understanding of the terminology and can make up for certain lack of precision in the translation, if needed. At the same time, the presence of visual elements implies a higher degree of referentiality to the visuals and an obvious need for synchronization between the images and the translation (action synchrony).

### **3.3 Translation and Synchronization Techniques**

The analysis of translation and synchronization techniques in voice-over has also been the object of research, but it has proven more frequent in fictional content: see, for instance, Aleksonyte (1999) and Grigaraviciute and Gottlieb (1999) in Lithuanian, or Wozniak (2012), Sepielak (2014, 2016a) and Sepielak and Matamala (2014) in Polish. In the realm of non-fiction, Khoshsaligheh and Ameri (2016) investigate synchrony in two documentaries using Sepielak and Matamala's (2014) methodological proposal. Their findings show that whereas action synchrony is generally kept, kinetic synchrony is not usually observed. Isochrony is maintained in most segments but only at the beginning (initial voice-over isochrony), and literal synchrony is found in most than half of the initial audible segments. In a later article, Ameri and Khoshsaligheh (2018) analyse a corpus of news voiced-over into Persian and find the following results: initial isochrony is more frequent than full isochrony, and action and kinetic synchronies are almost not represented in their corpus. The only instance where this happens does not keep the expected kinetic synchrony. In relation to literal synchrony, a clear pattern is not found and it highly depends on the segment. More research is needed to identify how current practices adhere to established norms across languages and countries.

### 3.4 Challenging Established Practices: Voice-over in Factual Television

The challenges of science documentaries are different from the ones presented by reality shows. In the same way fiction and non-fiction genres become hybridized in factual television, Permanyer (2012) wonders whether dubbing and voice-over are also hybridized when applied to this genre and, if so, she asks herself about the main features of voice-over applied to factual television. To this end, Permanyer analyses a bilingual corpus of English factual TV translated into Spanish with a total duration of 216 minutes.

Her findings show that, contrary to what happens in standard documentaries, most of the content in a reality show corresponds to real speech, followed by talking heads. Her analysis also demonstrates that terminological density is very low in this type of content. In terms of synchronization techniques, voice-over isochrony and literal synchrony are not kept, and “the need to retain action and kinetic synchrony [...] entail a nearly total coverage of the original voicetrack in instances of fast-pace dialogue” (p. 33). This results in what the author terms a “lip-sync-less” dubbing. Another aspect in which voiced-over reality shows seem to differ from standard voice-over is in their rendition of orality aspects, which is closer to dubbing norms. Finally, in terms of dramatization, reality shows also seem to point towards a shift in traditional practices because voice-over is more interpreted than read, moving again closer towards dubbing practices. All in all, voice-over in factual television seems to present specific characteristics beyond traditional voice-over practices in non-fiction.

### 3.5 Ideology and Manipulation

The manipulation of non-fictional content in voice-over has been the object of research by Darwish and Orero (2014), who provide an analysis of TV news translated from Arabic into English. Their analysis shows how the content is distorted and how voice-over, a transfer mode traditionally associated with authenticity, actually conveys many infidelities. They also demonstrate how the traditionally hidden presence of a translator is visualized through a specific on-line caption reading “voice of translation” in politically sensitive contexts, which also contributes to breaking the theoretical authenticity illusion attributed to voice-over. In this regard, it is interesting to notice how Orero (2006b) discusses the concepts of simulacrum and hyper-reality in relation to voice-over.

On a similar note, Ameri and Khoshsaligheh (2018: 32) consider that it is “impossible to speak of faithful and complete translation in the context of media and press translation which is the site of many ideologies and manipulation can easily happen”. Focusing on the Iranian context, the authors consider that “deviation from the original is inevitable in translations produced by news agencies” (*ibid.*). Their study provides interesting examples in which text is added or omitted for ideological reasons. They even include an example in which, probably due to technical problems, the translation does not correspond to the original footage on screen.

### 3.6 Technology

The application of language and translation technologies was the aim of the ALST (Matamala 2015) project, which investigated the implementation of speech recognition, machine translation (with post-editing) and speech synthesis to the voice-over and off-screen dubbing of documentaries. The idea behind this project was to research whether an alternative workflow with a higher technological component would be feasible for scientific documentaries: first, a speech recognition system could be used to transcribe the original content; second, a translation could be produced by a machine translation system and a human expert could post-edit it, and finally, a speech synthesis system could voice it automatically. Results are discussed in different publications, as summarized next.

In relation to speech recognition, Matamala et al. (2017) report on an experiment in which participants were presented with a non-fictional excerpt and faced three situations: manually transcribing it, respeaking it and post-editing a transcript generated automatically. Results show that respeaking has a lot of potential in this field, in terms of both efficiency and user preferences.

In relation to machine translation, Ortiz-Boix and Matamala (2015, 2016) present the results of a test in which translators translated a non-fictional excerpt using two different workflows: human translation, as it is usually done, and post-editing of a machine translation. Three different types of efforts were assessed using keylogging tools: the time spent on the task (temporal effort), the number of keystroke, mouse movements and clicks (as indicators of technical effort), and the pause to word ratio and average pause ratio (as indicators of cognitive effort). These objective measures were complemented with self-reported subjective measures obtained through questionnaires. Results, although not statistically significant, seem to indicate that post-editing requires less effort than human translation. The experiment

went a step further and an evaluation of both human-translated and post-edited content was performed with three user groups: lecturers who also work as professional translators; experts from the recording studio and end users. The first group did not find statistically significant differences between the two scenarios under analysis, whilst the second and third group shows a slight preference for human translations.

Finally, as far as text-to-speech is concerned, Matamala and Ortiz-Boix (2018) performed an experiment in which participants assessed two different types of voicing—human voices and synthetic voices—in terms of comprehension, enjoyment and interest. Results indicate that human voices are generally better assessed, especially regarding understanding and self-reported enjoyment. Although intelligibility is no longer a problem in text-to-speech production, naturalness seems to be the main setback. However, it is interesting to observe that some participants think some artificial voices are actually human voices when requested to identify which of the testing voices are artificial and which ones are human. Also, when specifically asked if text-to-speech voice-over could be used in documentaries, 42% are in favour, 42% are against it and 16% do not know.

Another technology under analysis in relation to non-fiction is terminology-extraction systems. Hanoulle et al. (2015a, b) carried out an experiment in which they investigated whether a domain-specific bilingual glossary can help to translate faster and reduce terminological errors in off-screen dubbed documentaries. Their findings seem to show that both manual and automatic glossaries reduce considerably both the process and pause time when translating, but terminological errors do not seem to diminish.

## 4 Teaching Revoicing for Non-fictional Genres: Didactic Implications

Translating non-fictional genres for voice-over and off-screen dubbing presents two different types of challenges: on the one hand, those associated with the transfer modes and, on the other hand, those associated with the specific features of the non-fictional content, ranging from terminology in science documentaries to informal language in reality shows. Didactic contributions are scarce and sometimes focus on voice-over for fiction (Chmiel 2015), which is beyond the scope of this chapter.

The main contribution to date is Matamala (2008) and Franco et al. (2010: Chap. 5), who present the design of a course on voice-over at the Master's

Degree in Audiovisual Translation offered by Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. Taking into account that the students in this specific MA translate into Catalan and Spanish, the focus is put on voice-over for non-fiction. Matamala identifies some of the main challenges when translating non-fictional content beyond the specificities of the transfer mode: understanding the original speakers, dealing with proper nouns, dealing with terminology, addressing content errors and dealing with working conditions such as the absence of a good transcript or fast production processes. Based on these critical aspects, the lecturer considers how the course could be taught, and a selection of examples in which students carry out hands-on activities is provided. Ten years later after this didactic proposal, the situation has changed considerable and other types of content such as voiced-over reality shows are more present: this is why in recent editions of the same MA a higher number of exercises of this relatively new typology are included.

## 5 Future Prospects and Final Remarks

Recent years have seen an increase in audiovisual translation and media accessibility research: although new contributions are helping to better understand voice-over and off-screen dubbing, both in fictional and non-fictional content, more investigations are needed. In this regard, descriptive research could be complemented with empirical studies on the reception of diverging strategies. A good example of relevant research along these lines, although focused on fictional content, is Sepielak's (2016b) reception study on voiced-over multilingual content in comparison to subtitled content. To this end, tools already used in other transfer modes such as eye-tracking, keyboard recording and psychophysiological measures (for instance, heart rate and electrodermal activity) could be used (Matamala 2018).

As already indicated by Matamala (2018), the relationship between transfer modes, genres and new technological developments will open the door to future research in the field. Language and translation technologies may need to be tested in order to keep up with fast production processes, and new delivery technologies may also be the object of research, in a context in which personalization is becoming the key concept.

Finally, it remains to be seen how the implementation of voice-over will evolve along the emergence of online platforms and new models of audiovisual consumption on multiple devices and in multiple settings. Fifteen years ago voice-over for non-fiction was almost exclusively linked to documentaries and news programmes. Nowadays reality shows, at the border of fiction and

non-fiction, are also voiced-over. It remains to be seen what the trend will be in the coming years. An interesting case study is corporate contents that are increasingly present online as audiovisual format, but also tutorials or instructions. It is often the case that subtitles are provided for this content, but audio subtitles or voice-over (which are very similar in form) can be a good alternative for those who cannot read the subtitles and do not understand the content, catering both for linguistic and sensorial accessibility. In this regard, the interaction with accessibility may also produce relevant research outputs.

The possibilities are multiple and both voice-over and off-screen dubbing are transfer modes with many future research avenues and even more professional applications.

## 6 Suggested Reading

Franco, E., Matamala, A., & Orero, P. (2010). *Voice-over Translation: An Overview*. Bern: Peter Lang.

It is the first academic monograph on the topic of voice-over, with the following chapters: Voice-over from film studies to translation studies, Voice-over for postproduction: typology and working conditions, Voice-over for post-production: the translation process, Voice-over for production, Training in voice-over, Giving voice to practitioners and academics, and A commented bibliography on voice-over.

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# 8

## The Name and Nature of Subtitling

Jorge Díaz-Cintas

### 1 Introduction

For many years ignored in academic circles, audiovisual translation (AVT), under its many disguises, has existed as a professional practice virtually since the invention of cinema at the end of the nineteenth century, though it was not until the mid-1990s, with the advent of digitisation, that it began to gain in scholarly prominence and in number of acolytes. The flurry of activity observed in the entertainment and the technology industries has had a positive knock-on effect on the raising of the visibility and status of AVT at academic level too, as attested by the exponential growth in the number of publications, conferences, research projects as well as undergraduate and post-graduate courses that have been developed around the world in a relatively short period of time. Given the abundance of evidence, it is no exaggeration to assert that in recent decades AVT has been one the most prolific areas of research in the field of translation and interpreting studies, if not the most prolific.

The texts involved in this type of specialised translation combine two complementary channels (audio and visual) and a series of meaning-making codes (language, gestures, paralinguistics, cinematic syntax, etc.), whose signs interact and build a semantic composite of a complex multimodal nature. Used as

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an umbrella term, AVT subsumes a raft of translation practices that differ from each other in the nature of their linguistic output and the translation strategies on which they rely. Their inner differences notwithstanding, the common axis that underlies all these modes is the semiotic nature of the source and target texts involved in the AVT process. In addition to having to deal with the communicative complexities derived from the concurrent delivery of aural and visual input, audiovisual translators have to be conversant with the spatial and temporal constraints that characterise this translation activity as well as with the specialised software that is used in this profession to perform the technical tasks.

The various ways in which audiovisual productions can be translated into other languages have been discussed by many authors over the years, of which the typology presented by Chaume (2013) is perhaps one of the most recent and complete. Two fundamental approaches can be distinguished. First, the original dialogue can be transferred aurally into the target language, which is known as revoicing and encompasses practices like interpreting, voiceover, narration, dubbing, fandubbing and audio description. The second main approach to AVT consists in adding a written text to the original production to account for the original exchanges, for which some players in the industry have started to use the general term timed text. These flitting chunks of text correspond to condensed, synchronised translations or transcriptions of the original verbal input in the source language. As a superordinate concept, timed text or titling can be either interlingual or intralingual, and it subsumes practices such as subtitling, surtitling, subtitling for the deaf and the hard of hearing, fansubbing and live subtitling (see also other contributions in the volume for discussion). What follows is a detailed account of the practice of subtitling.

## 2 Definition

Subtitling may be described as a translation practice that consists of rendering in writing, usually at the bottom of the screen, the translation into a target language of the original dialogue exchanges uttered by different speakers, as well as all other verbal information that appears written on-screen (letters, banners, inserts) or is transmitted aurally in the soundtrack (song lyrics, voices off). As opposed to dubbing, which completely erases the original utterances, subtitling preserves the original text, both aurally and visually, while adding an extra layer of information. All subtitled programmes are therefore made up

of three main components: the original spoken/written word, the original image and the added subtitles.

Given the multimedia nature of the material with which they work, subtitlers are expected to opt for solutions that strike the right balance and interaction between all these audio and visual dimensions. To achieve this, they must take into consideration the fact that viewers have to read the written subtitles at a given speed while watching the images at the same time. The constraining technical nature of the subtitling environment has always been brought to the fore when discussing this type of translation, leading scholars in the past to label it as a primary example of constrained translation (Titford 1982) or even a necessary evil (Marleau 1982).

### 3 Code of Good Subtitling Practice

The experience of watching subtitled programmes brings home the realisation that there is a general lack of consensus and standardisation as to the format and layout of subtitles on screen. Conventions are not always systematically applied, and variations can be observed at a technical level as well as in the make-up of the subtitles, both within and across languages. A considerable range of styles has developed over time affecting the length and duration of lines, their display rates, the maximum number of lines, the use of typographical signs and the disposition of line breaks among others.

Heterogeneity in practice has typically been perceived as a symptomatic lack of quality, and many attempts have been made over the years at recommending standards that would enhance quality. In the late 1990s, Ivarsson and Carroll (1998: 157–159) put forward a code of good subtitling practice in an attempt to offer general guidelines aimed at preserving and fostering quality in subtitling. The result of a common effort by a working group of professionals and academics under the aegis of the European Association for Studies in Screen Translation (ESIST, [www.esist.org](http://www.esist.org)), these guidelines have been widely regarded as a standard in the profession for many years. They are not binding, and companies and professionals alike can adhere to them if so they wish. The document is not only addressed to translators but also to all the stakeholders involved in the process of subtitling. Karamitroglou (1998) and Díaz-Cintas (2003) have also worked in this direction, proposing guidelines at pan-European and Spanish levels, respectively. More recently, concerted efforts have been made by professional associations collaborating with other stakeholders and interest parties to produce consensual guidelines in languages like Norwegian ([www](http://www).

[sprakradet.no/globalassets/aktuelt/retningslinjer-for-god-teksting.pdf](https://sprakradet.no/globalassets/aktuelt/retningslinjer-for-god-teksting.pdf)) and Danish (<https://undertekstning.dk/english>). On the other hand, companies like Netflix (n.d.) have also contributed to this debate with the free distribution on their website of their timed text style guides in over 30 languages.

The main objective in the next pages of this chapter is to explore the key parameters that characterise the production and configuration of contemporary subtitles.

## 4 Spatial Considerations

Even though there is no absolute uniformity in the way in which subtitles are timed and positioned on screen, certain trends do enjoy a fair amount of currency and validity in the profession. The development of subtitling for digital media has been a determining factor in the emergence of formal guidelines, like the ones proposed by Netflix, and the fact that streaming and DVDs/Bu-rays usually contain several subtitling (and dubbing) tracks in different languages has led to more rather than less uniformity, whereas television subtitling can be said to remain more fragmented and less uniform.

The traditional criticism levelled against subtitles for their intrusive nature, popping on and off the screen at regular intervals, and for being an unwelcome blemish on the film copy is partly responsible for the old, and to a certain extent illogical, adage iterated in the profession that the best subtitles are those that viewers do not notice. The ideal subtitles, so it goes, should thus be uncluttered and avoid attracting attention to themselves, whether formally or linguistically. In practice, this mantra means that they are limited to a maximum of two lines that must fit within a screen safe area and occupy no more than two-twelfths of the screen image. Yet, this rule is being broken daily by the emergence of three-, four- and even five-liners, notably in the cybersubtitles that populate the Internet (Díaz-Cintas 2018).

When it comes to positioning, subtitles are displayed horizontally and centre justified and, to limit the obstruction of the image, they are typically pushed off to the bottom of the screen for this part is usually of lesser importance to the action. Some countries, like Japan, have a long history of placing subtitles vertically on the right-hand side of the screen, especially for theatrical releases. Subtitles can be displaced to other parts of the screen if the need arises, for example, when important action takes place in the lower part of the screen, when the background is so light that subtitles risk being illegible, or when the bottom part of the original programme is taken up by written hard

titles providing dates or information about a speaker, or the broadcaster's logo. Since viewers expect subtitles to appear at the bottom of the screen, it is common practice not to move them around unnecessarily, though research is being conducted on the dynamic placement of subtitles that are directly integrated into the picture and follow the source of sound as an alternative to traditional practice (Fox 2016). The results of this type of research, in conjunction with experimentation being carried out on the layout of subtitles in immersive environments, have the potential of bringing about substantive change in the positioning of subtitles in the medium term.

By their very nature, subtitles interfere with the image and the extent of this interference depends largely on their aesthetic credentials, especially the chosen font type, size and colour. To foster the invisibility of subtitling, distributors habitually opt for neutral fonts, without serifs, that do not call undue attention to themselves, like Arial, Verdana or Helvetica in most Western languages, MS Gothic in Japanese, Shusha in Hindi and SimHei or SimSun in Chinese. Irrespective of the media, most subtitles are white, although occasionally yellow is used when subtitling classical black-and-white films, so that the contrast between image and text is sharper.

The maximum number of characters per line, including blank spaces and typographical signs, has traditionally hovered between 35 and 39 for languages based on the Latin alphabet, while languages like Chinese and Japanese allow around 16. However, since the move from monospaced to proportional lettering, restricting the maximum number of characters per line to a given total is not an overruling factor anymore. As long as the end text is contained within the confines of the safe area, subtitlers can write as much text as possible, depending on the font size being used and, crucially, on the actual letters that make up the message as, for instance, an "i" or a "t" take less space on screen than an "m" or a "w".

Despite these technological advancements, many subtitling vendors continue to indicate a maximum number of characters per line to their subtitlers. For TV, cinema and DVD a maximum of 37 to 39 characters has been the norm for many years, while these days video-on-demand (VOD) platforms are elongating the lines to accommodate up to 42 characters, as in the case of Netflix. These values are true for single-byte languages based on the Roman and Cyrillic alphabets, as well as Semitic languages, Hindi and Thai, for instance. In the case of double-byte languages, like Chinese, Korean and Japanese, the limit tends to be set at 16 characters per line. There is no fixed rule as for the minimum number of characters a subtitle must have, but subtitles with fewer than four or five characters are rare.

As for the use of subtitles of one or two lines, the most widespread approach in the industry is to keep the text on one line, rather than two, whenever possible, particularly in the case of television, DVD/Blu-ray and VOD. The assumption behind this approach is that this way the image is less polluted with text. In theatrical exhibition, however, some companies would prefer, for aesthetic considerations, to go for a subtitle made up of two shorter lines of roughly similar length rather than having a long one-liner, grammar and syntax permitting. Another reason for this choice is the fact that long subtitles force the eye to travel a long distance from the end of the top line to the onset of the bottom line (or next subtitle), especially on large cinema screens.

## 5 Temporal Considerations

The other dimension that plays a crucial role in the technical make-up of subtitles is the temporal one. An easy convention for the viewer to be able to identify who is saying what consists in timing the subtitle events in such a way that they keep temporal synchrony with the utterances heard in the soundtrack. Accurate timing is crucial for optimal subtitling since it reinforces the internal semiotic cohesion of the translated programme. Ultimately, the spotting of the dialogue has to mirror the rhythm of the film and the performance of the actors, and be mindful of pauses, interruptions and other prosodic features that characterise the original speech. Long sentences might have to be split over several subtitles and short sentences might be combined to avoid telegraphic style. Arguably, synchronisation can be the main factor affecting the viewer's appreciation of the quality of a subtitled programme for sloppy timing, with subtitles coming in too early or too late, or leaving the screen without closely following the soundtrack are confusing and can ruin the enjoyment of the programme.

Also known in the industry as timing and cueing, the task of spotting consists of determining the in and out times of each and every one of the subtitles in a production, that is, deciding the exact moment when a subtitle should pop up on screen and when it should leave, according to a series of temporal and visual considerations. This synchronisation process may be carried out by the translators themselves or by technicians who are familiar with the subtitling programme and, of course, the faster the pace of the dialogue exchanges and the number of speakers, the more challenging the task becomes.

Whenever possible, a subtitle should appear on screen at the precise moment in which the person starts speaking and should leave the screen when the person stops speaking. Thanks to an eight-digit timecode, the exact in and

out cues are accurately defined in hours, minutes, seconds and frames, allowing quick and easy location of scenes and frames and perfect synchronisation between soundtrack and written subtitle. In the following example:

0013 00:19:03:11 00:19:07:05  
People genuinely love their animals  
more than they love each other.

the digit 0013 is the subtitle number, 00:19:03:11 represents the in-time when the subtitle will appear on screen, in hours (00), minutes (19), seconds (03) and frames (11); and 00:19:07:05 stands for the out-time when the subtitle will fade away. From these values, the duration of the utterance can be worked out to be 3 seconds and 19 frames.

As perfect synchronisation may not always be attainable, a degree of technical flexibility can be observed in professional practice. In instances when the original dialogue is semantically dense and it is very difficult to condense or delete information without compromising the message, a margin of asynchrony is allowed in the presentation of the subtitles, which can appear a few frames before the actual dialogue is uttered and/or leave the screen a fraction of a second after the speaker has actually finished talking.

As opposed to oral speech, written texts, including subtitles, are sequential and can only present dialogue exchanges in a linear manner, that is, one after the other. This makes the spotting of overlapping dialogue particularly tricky. When more than one person speak at the same time the spotter has to make the difficult decision of deciding which information will make it to the target language and which will have to be deleted. This is expressly challenging in those scenes in which several people are involved in rapid exchanges or are seen in different places, interspersed with fast, multiple shot changes. The timing will have to be done in as clear a way as possible so as not to confuse the viewer, who can hear several voices at the same time and may not know who is saying what. In these cases, a good layout of the subtitles is also essential.

To facilitate and speed the spotting task, many subtitling programs come with functions that offer speech presence indication, by detecting the point at which speech begins as well as its duration, and by offering a graphical representation of the actual speech in the shape of an audio level waveform display. Audio scrubbing is another device to enhance the accuracy of subtitle synchronisation, by enabling the user to drag a cursor across a segment of a waveform to hear it, both when forwarding and when rewinding the video.

Although the time a subtitle stays on screen depends basically on the speed at which the original exchange is uttered, there are two main parameters that help set limits to the maximum and minimum durations. On the one hand, a subtitle should not remain on screen longer than the time the viewer actually needs to read it as otherwise there is a risk that the viewer will start re-reading the text. Traditionally, best practice has been largely based on the so-called six-second rule (Díaz-Cintas and Remael 2007: 96–99), whereby two full lines of around 35 characters each—70 in total—can be comfortably read in six seconds by the vast majority of viewers. One notable exception to this rule is the subtitling of songs, in which case the subtitle can be left hanging on screen beyond the six seconds if the rhythm requires it. Therefore, when spotting an audiovisual programme, periods longer than six seconds should be split into smaller units. On the flip side, a subtitle should ideally remain on screen for at least one second to guarantee that the eye of the viewer can register its presence, although it is not uncommon for some companies to set it as low as 20 frames when working for PAL or SECAM systems (or 25 frames if operating within the NTSC system). Textual chunks kept on screen for a shorter period of time risk appearing and disappearing like a flash and therefore not being read by the viewer. On the other hand, if a short subtitle remains on screen too long, the viewers will have time to read it repeatedly, which can be exasperating and can also break the reading rhythm. Contemporary viewers' greater familiarity with reading fleeting text on screen, together with the fact that many audiovisual productions have become more verbose and dialogue dense, have led to a drop in the maximum display time of subs so that more text can find its way onto the screen. Hence, some vendors now use five seconds as the new upper limit rather than the traditional six.

The other factor impinging on the quantity of text that can be relayed on any given subtitle event relates to the viewers' assumed reading speed. This is a rather thorny area since the potential target audience is highly diverse and their reading abilities are likely to be different too. Also, when deciding the audiences' maximum reading speed, it has to be borne in mind that not only do the subtitles have to be read, viewers have to be given enough time to be able to scan the images and "read" the photography too. Furthermore, reading times or display rates cannot be assessed on an absolute basis as they typically only take into account the volume of text, thus ignoring other elements that have an impact on the viewer's pace of reading. These factors can relate to the form (poor legibility due to the lack of contrast between text and images, unexpected positioning of the subs, presence of action and enthralling visuals), as well as the content (use of complex vocabulary or syntax, abundance of numbers, poor line breaks, demanding dialogue containing plays on words,

cultural references and metaphors, etc.). The degree of familiarity that viewers can be assumed to have with the source language and with subtitling itself are also factors that may impact the pace of reading. The distribution channel is yet another variable to be considered, and some believe that the display rate of subtitles on the television screen should be slower than in the case of programmes to be distributed in cinema, VOD, airline releases or DVD/Blu-ray, and present fewer lexical units in the same time span. One of the reasons behind this conviction is that television addresses a wider section of society and thus should cater for individuals of all reading abilities. The technical empowerment of consumers, who have gained greater control over the programmes and can now easily manipulate digital media by pausing and rewinding it if necessary, justifies the greater speeds found on DVDs, Blu-rays and VOD platforms. Yet, with the development of catch-up television in the form of Internet streaming, allowing viewers the same control over the audiovisual productions, these discrepancies across media are bound to converge in the near future.

Traditionally, the term reading speed has been used in this context, though in reality the subtitler does not set the viewer's reading speed but rather decides on the maximum speed that should not be exceeded. From this viewpoint, a more accurate term to refer to this parameter would be subtitle display rate. According to the maximum figure factored in the subtitling program, the rate of presentation of each sub will be displayed on screen and will usually go red when the maximum value has been exceeded, or blue when the display rate is too slow and can lead to conflict with the soundtrack, as some viewers may have finished reading the subtitle while the character is still speaking. Viewers then need to match their reading pace with the subtitle display rates, which will vary according to the haste with which the onscreen characters speak.

The subtitle display rate is understood as the relationship that exists between the quantity of text contained in a subtitle and the time that it remains on screen. To measure it, two parameters are used: characters per second (cps) and words per minute (wpm). The former is a more transparent unit of measurement whereas the second one becomes a bit more opaque for the length of words varies substantially within and across languages. In the industry, calculations done in wpm are usually based on the English language and assume that the average length for a word is five letters followed by a blank space.

The main premise behind the above-mentioned six-second rule, resulting from cinema exhibition, is that two frames of audiovisual programme allow for a subtitle space. Given that the cinema illusion requires the projection of 24 frames per second—25 or 29.97 in PAL and NTSC television systems

respectively—, this means that subtitlers can enjoy 12 cps or, which is similar, around 130 wpm. Although this formula is still widely followed by some professionals, the proposed reading pace is rather slow and some companies have decided to depart from it arguing that present-day viewers are much more familiar with reading text on screen than their forebears and, hence, are faster at it. In addition, as previously discussed, lines these days allow more than 35 characters, opening the possibility of presenting more text in the same amount of time. As a consequence, and when dealing with general programming for adults, a display rate of 15 cps (160 wpm) is fairly standard in the industry, with faster reading speeds of 17 cps (180 wpm) being applied by DVD/Blu-ray publishers and over-the-top (OTT) streaming distributors. When dealing with children's programmes, the recommended display rate is of 13 cps (or 140 wpm). In the case of double-byte languages, the display rate has typically been 5 cps in languages like Chinese, Japanese and Korean, though Netflix is yet again disrupting the status quo and proposing 9 cps for Chinese, 4 cps for Japanese and 12 cps for Korean, to subtitle productions aimed at an adult viewership, and 7 cps, 4 cps and 9 cps, respectively, in the case of children's programmes.

Mirroring the grammatical rule of leaving blank spaces between words, a small, clear pause of usually two or four clean frames (i.e. frames with no text) has to be left between two consecutively chained subtitles so that the viewer can better register that a change of written material has taken place on screen. If a sub is immediately followed by another one without leaving any frames between the two, the eye finds it difficult to realise that new information has been presented. To help in this task, specialist subtitling programs have an automatic delay function that creates a small pause immediately after the out-time of every subtitle, before the next one can be cued in. This delay function can be set by the user and various values can be selected, but in order to be effective a minimum of two frames is needed.

Another golden rule in spotting practice recommends that, whenever possible, a subtitle should not cross a shot change, as this has been typically interpreted as a trigger for the re-reading of the subtitle. Recent research, however, seems to dispel such an assumption (Szarkowska et al. 2015), although subtitles straddling shot changes are still considered to be disruptive to the viewing experience and should be avoided. Professional practice recommends that a subtitle should leave the screen just before the change takes place and a new subtitle should be spotted after the cut, which functions as a dividing frontier between the subtitles. This may entail splitting a sentence at an appropriate point, or delaying the start of a new sentence to appear after the shot change. To help in this task and avoid crossing shot changes, most subtitling programs offer a shot change function that automatically detects all the editing cuts in a video.

Zealous respect of shot changes has become more of an issue as some of today's fast-moving audiovisual productions rely on editing techniques where cuts are frequent as a means of adding dynamism to the action. Additionally, it is not uncommon for actors to continue speaking over the shot change, making it difficult, not to say impossible, not to break this rule. The distribution format also has an impact and films to be screened in the cinema tend to adhere to this rule in a much stricter way than productions for television or home entertainment. Priorities have to be set and, whilst soft cuts pose less of a problem, hard cuts should be respected as much as possible. As general guidance, (1) subtitles should not hang over shot changes if the speaker has finished speaking, (2) if a subtitle has to be left hanging over a shot change, it should not be removed too soon after the cut and (3) a subtitle should never be carried over into the next shot if this means crossing into a clearly different scene, except when the voice provides a sound bridge.

## 6 Types of Subtitles

As already discussed, subtitles seem to be ubiquitous in our current digital society, fulfilling countless roles and taking different shapes. Although trying to classify them into neat boxes may seem a futile activity, it can be a good exercise in order to better appreciate their nature and social importance. In this sense, different categorisations can be established depending on the criteria that are used at the onset.

From a linguistic perspective, subtitles can be intralingual or interlingual. The former are done in the same language as the dialogue of the audiovisual programme and they involve a shift from oral to written. Though these subtitles can also target hearers, the main practice that is usually associated with intralingual subtitles is that of subtitling for the deaf and the hard-of-hearing (SDH) audiences. Developed in order to promote social integration and to ensure greater democratic access to audiovisual programming for people with hearing impairments, this variety is also known as (closed) captioning in American English, and although it shares many features with standard interlingual subtitling, it also displays some unique characteristics (de Linde and Kay 1999; Neves 2005; Zdenek 2015). In a nutshell, SDH provides text for any audible information contained in a film or video, thus transcribing (and sometimes editing down) the dialogue exchanges heard in the soundtrack, identifying who is saying what and incorporating the paralinguistic

information that accompanies the actors' utterances and is relevant for the appreciation of the message: emphasis, ironic statements, speech impediments and use of foreign languages, among others. They also reflect any other pertinent sound features that can be heard and are important for the development of the plot, the understanding of the storyline or the creation of an atmosphere and that a hearing-impaired viewer cannot access directly from the soundtrack, for example, instrumental music, songs, a telephone ringing, laughter, applause, a knock on the door, the revving of an engine and similar sounds effects and environmental noises.

On certain television stations, the text changes colour depending on the person who is talking or the emphasis given to certain words or expressions within the same subtitle. Other broadcasters, publishers of DVDs and Blu-rays, and OTT operators prefer to use labels to identify the speakers. Although the subtitles are usually presented at the bottom of the screen, they lend themselves to changeable positioning, as it is possible to move them to the left or right of the screen when it is necessary to identify speakers or to indicate where an off-screen sound is coming from. Some subtitles are made of three or even four lines and can accommodate more than one speaker in the same line.

SDH, including live subtitling, has spread widely in the last decades and continues to develop, both for pre-recorded programmes and live events, thanks to its greater visibility in society and the success achieved by pressure groups campaigning for the interests of this sector of the audience. The fruit of their work is evident from the announcement and passing of new legislation in many countries, obliging television channels to broadcast a certain percentage of their programmes with this access service. By way of example, the British Broadcasting Corporation is, without a doubt, one of leading broadcasters in the world when it comes to SDH, and has been subtitling 100% of their programmes for over a decade now (BBC 2008). In recent years, SDH has also crossed linguistic barriers and interlingual subtitling for hearing-impaired audiences is nowadays a reality on some DVDs and streaming services.

The second group of intralingual subtitles are those specifically devised as a didactic tool for the teaching and learning of foreign languages, by students and also by an ever-increasing number of migrants round the world who have the opportunity of learning the language of their host countries, by watching subtitled programmes broadcast on television, published on DVD/Blu-ray or streamed via the Internet. Intralingual subtitles are also known to promote literacy, as in the case of India, where children use them to relate the phonetic

sounds with the visual subtitles in an attempt to hone their reading skills in their mother tongue (Kothari et al. 2004).

A third type of intralingual subtitling that has gained remarkable popularity in recent years is known as karaoke, sing along and sing-a-long-a. It is used to transcribe the lyrics of songs or movie musicals so that the public can join in the singing at the same time as the characters on screen and the rest of the audience. These interactive shows first began at the Prince Charles Cinema in central London with the classic film musical *The Sound of Music* (Robert Wise, 1965) and are now famous worldwide.

Another example of intralingual subtitling is the use of subtitles to account for the utterances of speakers whose prosodic diction is considered difficult to be understood by the audience, despite being the same language. English, Spanish, Arabic and French, which are spoken far and wide throughout the world, tend to be the ones more commonly affected. Although rare, such an approach can be activated throughout an entire programme as, for instance, in the case of the British films *My Name Is Joe* (Ken Loach, 1998) and *Trainspotting* (Danny Boyle, 1996), which were distributed in the United States with intralingual English subtitles amid fears that the North American audiences would have difficulty understanding the accents. The Mexican film *Roma* also aroused controversy in early 2019, when Netflix decided to subtitle it into Iberian Spanish, prompting the director, Alejandro Cuarón, to decry the decision as “parochial, ignorant and offensive to Spaniards themselves” (in Jones 2019: online).

Telop, an acronym of television opaque projector, is used in Japan and other Asian countries to indicate text superimposed on a screen, such as captions, subtitles or scrolling tickers. It makes use of special effects that are added during the postproduction phase, typically onto variety shows, and may appear at any time, on any part of the screen, in myriad colours, fonts and sizes that can be disproportionately large and occupy a sizable portion of the screen (O’Hagan and Sasamoto 2016). Additionally, they can also make use of special displaying effects like scrolling, and sometimes they can resort to the inclusion of ideograms, emoticons and even pictures. According to Sasamoto et al. (2017), far from being mere aesthetic additions, these intralingual subtitles are deployed in conjunction with other communicative resources in a deliberate attempt to influence viewers’ interpretations of events, by enhancing certain messages and making affective values in TV programmes more explicit. Invented in Japan in the late 1980s, the use of telop quickly spread to other Asian countries like South Korea, mainland China, Taiwan and Thailand. Although most people refer to them as subtitles, whether they can be considered as such is debatable as they hardly ever imply the translation of

the dialogue and they do not need to be synchronised with the original speech. They are often explanations, sardonic remarks and sometimes literal transcriptions of terms and expressions of the spoken dialogue. As for their length, they can be as short as one word and as long as five to six lines, occupying large portions of the screen.

In recent years, novel subtitle types have appeared in the Chinese mediascape, which do no longer simply translate or transcribe what is being said by people on screen, but they also incorporate extra information. Especially in cybersubtitling (Díaz-Cintas 2018), translators do on occasion intentionally joke with the audience rather than accurately translating the source text, in a kind of subtitler's performance. Borrowing from telop, the Chinese practice of 吐槽, *tù cáo*, is exemplary of this approach. Unlike the generally faithful translation contained in the standard subtitles, the *tù cáo* version “is inclined to depart from the original text, and the translator's notes and glosses have been utilized to express the translator's comments or feelings other than explaining difficult cultural references points” (Zhang 2013: 33). One way of doing this is when subtitlers embed in their subtitles aleatory comments, usually of a humorous and sarcastic nature, about certain phenomena or current events in China. In a sort of stream of consciousness, the other tactic consists in inserting comments that express their feelings while translating or that describe their translating experience, as if to remind the viewers that the subtitler is accompanying them while watching the television series or film.

In countries like Japan, and particularly in China, a new form of subtitles called 弹幕, *dàn mù*, which literally translates as bullet curtain or bullet fire, has become very popular among young audiences. It consists of real-time, user-generated comments, which are dynamic, contextualised and appear overlaid on top of a video (He et al. 2018; Zhang and Cassany 2019). They are essentially snippets of text containing viewers' comments on and reactions to a particular scene. Written in different font sizes and colours, they often contain smileys and emoticons and are presented scrolling on the screen, from right to left, like a bullet. In China, these subtitles first appeared on fandom platforms around 2007, and since then have become increasingly popular, especially now that the technology to produce them has been enabled on most media streaming platforms, including iQiyi, Youku and Tencent. Unlike traditional subtitles, they are not subject to time or space constraints, as they do not need to be synchronised with the original dialogue, though, like traditional subtitles, they are limited in the number of characters that a *dàn mù* projection may contain, which is technically restricted to up to 50 characters but normally stands at around 15 to 20 characters since longer texts will roll

away too quickly to be properly read. In a clear attempt to boost audiences' interactivity and participation, the practice is meant to facilitate communication between different viewers and to strengthen affective links between the audience and the audiovisual programme.

The second major type of subtitles falls under the category of interlingual and, in their most common incarnation, they are monolingual, implying the translation of the spoken/written message of the original programme into a different language. Gottlieb (1994) calls this diagonal subtitling since it involves a shift from one language to another along with a change of mode, from oral to written. Bilingual subtitles are a variant within the interlingual category and they are produced in geographical areas where two, or more, languages are spoken. In Belgium, in an attempt to satisfy the Walloon and Flemish communities, subtitles in some cinemas are in French and Flemish Dutch. Outside of Europe, in countries such as Jordan and Israel, Hebrew and Arabic often co-exist at the bottom of the screen. Another setting where bilingual subtitles are resorted to is in international film festivals. In order to attract a wider cosmopolitan audience, some of these festivals screen their foreign films—say Iranian, Spanish or Japanese—with two sets of subtitles. One set is in English, to satisfy the needs of an international audience made up of film directors, producers, distributors, actors and viewers who come from all corners of the globe, and the other set of subtitles is in the language of the country where the film festival takes place, for example, French in Cannes, German in Berlin and Italian in Venice. In some countries, like China and Qatar, viewers show an interest to consume bilingual subtitles, usually placed at the top and the bottom of the screen, thus creating a learning environment in which the original dialogue (English) appears transcribed (English) and translated (Chinese / Arabic) at the same time, while it can also be heard.

When considering the time available to perform the translation, a distinction can be made between offline and online subtitles. The former, also known as pre-prepared subtitles, are done after the programme has been shot and ahead of its broadcasting or release, giving translators sufficient time to carry out their work. They are the standard mode in subtitling, allowing for the text to be carefully synchronised with images and soundtrack, with precise in and out timecodes, edited to a reasonable reading speed, and checked for errors. On the other hand, the online type is performed live, that is, at the same time as the original programme is taking place or being broadcast. Within this latter category, two groups can be distinguished. Semi-live subtitling is a method “typically used for live programmes which are heavily scripted and have pre-recorded inserts” (EBU 2004: 10), like news bulletins, theatre plays or opera

productions. In these cases, the subtitler normally creates a list of subtitles, without fixed timecodes, and during the transmission of the programme or staging of the performance cues these subtitles manually, following the dialogue as closely as possible. Live subtitling, sometimes also called realtime, is produced for sports programmes, some TV newscasts, live interviews and talk shows as well as for parliamentary proceedings and in educational settings, to provide linguistic support with lectures. In cases like these, the programme or speech to be subtitled is not at the disposal of the subtitler beforehand.

One reason for the advent of intralingual live subtitling for television has been the imposition of SDH quotas of up to 100% in some countries, which made it impossible to provide the required amount of subtitling in pre-prepared mode. Historically, live subtitling has been done by using devices like stenotype machines or velotype keyboards and by employing a group of subtitlers working on the same programme in collaboration, though these are all being abandoned in favour of methods based on automatic speech recognition (ASR), which are not as labour intensive, require less training and reduce costs.

Respeaking is a process whereby a subtitler/respeaker listens to the original utterances of a live programme and dictates the speech, that is, respeaks it, including punctuation marks and some specific features for the deaf and the hard-of-hearing audience, to a microphone connected to a computer, to an ASR app and to a subtitling programme, which then displays subtitles on screen with the shortest possible delay (Romero-Fresco 2011). As a relative newcomer, respeaking is a subject of growing interest in the academic and professional worlds, with considerable research potential, and slowly being used in interlingual settings too (Robert and Remael 2017).

Any of the subtitles discussed above under the various categories can be further subdivided according to their lexical density. Due to the spatial and temporal limits imposed by the medium, edited subtitles are the most commonly used and consumed when watching a subtitled programme, especially in the case of pre-prepared interlingual subtitles, whereas verbatim subtitles are meant to be a full and literal transcription or translation of the spoken words, which can push viewers' reading speed up to uncomfortable levels, and is getting increasingly more common in SDH.

When it comes to their display, subtitles can appear on screen intermittently, in full and in one go, in which case they are known as block, pop-up or pop-on subtitles. They are the standard display mode in pre-prepared subtitling, whether intralingual or interlingual, as a clear consensus exists that block subtitles are the least disruptive of them all, are easier for viewers to read and thus allow them to spend more time looking at the images. Normally

used for dramatic effect and to avoid advancing information, cumulative subtitles are sometimes used to permit two—exceptionally three—chunks of speech appearing in the same subtitle event but not at the very same time. Each part of the text pops up on screen at a different time, in sync with its speaker, but all text chunks leave the screen at the very same time. The second section of the subtitle appears in sync with the second utterance and is added to the first part, which remains on screen. Scrolling subtitles are different to pop-up subs in that they keep rolling up the screen, rather than moving horizontally, appear as a constant flow of text and are usually displayed word by word or in blocks containing short phrases. They are typically used in the production of live subtitling.

From a technical standpoint, subtitles are open when they are not encoded into the video signals and are instead an integral part of the audiovisual programme, usually irreversibly burned onto the image, which means that they cannot be removed or turned off, as in the cinema. Within this category, forced narrative subtitles are those present in the original audiovisual production to provide information necessary to make it comprehensible for the source audience. The opposite are closed subtitles, which are not an integral part of the audiovisual production and can be turned on and off at the viewer's will. In the age of streaming and video-on-demand, where companies seem to be more conscious of viewers' likes and dislikes, these subtitles have become the norm, also making it possible to have multiple language subtitles and to easily switch between them.

The process of merging the subtitles with the images has evolved considerably over the years (Ivarsson and Carroll 1998: 12–19) and today's main methods are laser and electronic. The former consists of burning the subtitles onto the celluloid, whereas the latter projects the subtitles onto the screen without damaging the original copy and is widely used at film festivals.

The surge in interest for 3D stereographic movies has brought about fresh challenges and novel ways of thinking about subtitles and their positioning on screen. In essence, 3D subtitles combine the standard subtitle position, along the X and Y axes of the picture, with a third position along the Z-axis. The latter positioning allows the subtitle to “float” in front of the 3D image and create the feeling of depth. This option is available in digital cinema as well as in 3D Blu-ray releases.

Finally, the technological possibilities unleashed by the new forms of immersive content and viewing experience, like 360° video, virtual reality and augmented reality, are also having an impact on the way in which subtitles are being conceptualised and displayed so that they can add value to the immersive environment rather than detract from it. While in conventional cinema

and television people look at the screen in front of them and the subtitles are mostly displayed within the image, usually at the bottom of the screen, immersive environments allow viewers to look in any direction, thus raising the question of where best to position the subtitles, be them interlingual or intralingual. Experiments with members of the audience are already being conducted on this front (Brown and Patterson 2017), and it is not hard to fathom that changes affecting the nature of subtitling will be occurring in the not-too-distant future.

## 7 The Intricacies of Subtitling

As with any other type of translation, subtitles are expected to provide a semantically adequate account of the original dialogue but with the added complication that they must at the same time comply with the spatial and temporal specifications discussed above. One of the immediate and most visible results of these constraints is that the written subtitles tend to be a reduced form of the utterances. Naturally, when the original text is delivered at a slow pace, subtitlers will not encounter major hurdles to transfer the information to the target language in its entirety. The problem arises when people on screen speak too quickly for the target viewer to be able to read it comfortably in translation. This is why reduction is arguably the core strategy in subtitling. It can be classified into two main types: partial and total. Partial reduction, or condensation, relies on a more concise rendering of the original, whereas total reduction, or deletion, is achieved with the omission of part of the source message. Fool proof condensation or deletion rules do not exist but, in general terms, subtitlers act on the principle of relevance (Kovačić 1994; Bogucki 2004), striving to capture the essence of what is said while making sure that no information of crucial diegetic value is erased. Given the linear nature of written text, instances of overlapping speech, where several characters speak at the same time, are particularly thorny to tackle, and difficult decisions have to be made as to who is going to make it to the subtitles. To economise text and avoid unnecessary redundancy, subtitlers should consider the communicative value of the information transmitted iconically and avoid translating what is explicitly conveyed through the image. In any case, reductions should take into account the rhythm and delivery of the original as over-reducing can lead to a negative perception by the viewers, who have direct access to the original soundtrack and can easily compare. Wordy exchanges translated by short subtitles are bound to raise suspicion, as would laconic dialogue channelled into expansive subtitles.

The concurrent presence of the original soundtrack and the subtitles adds complexity to the process, especially when translating from a well-known language like English or from one linguistically close to the target language, as any “obvious” discrepancies between oral and written texts could be detected by the viewers. To minimise this gossip effect, subtitlers tend to keep in their translations some of the words that are very similar in both languages and to follow, as far as possible, the syntactic structure of the source text so as to reinforce the synchronisation and to preserve the same chronology of events as in the original utterances.

Two other main considerations that inform the way subtitles are produced derive from their fragmented nature, as subtitles always appear in isolation one after the other, and from the fact that viewers do not normally have the possibility of backtracking to retrieve information, and even when this is possible, as with DVDs/Blu-rays and streaming, it is not a natural way to enjoy entertainment programmes. To enhance readability and boost subtitling coherence and cohesion, one of the golden rules is to structure the subtitles in such a way that they are semantically and syntactically self-contained. Both spotting across subtitle events and line-breaking within subtitles should be carried out in such a way that words intimately connected by logic, semantics or grammar are clustered together on the same line or the same subtitle whenever possible. However, this is not always feasible, and it is then when spotting becomes crucial and long, complex sentences that are difficult to keep track of should be split into smaller units in order not to tax unduly the memory span of viewers.

Subtitling is not only an unusual form of translation because of its cohabitation with the original utterances, but it also stands out as a unique translational type because of its asymmetric endeavour of rendering speech into written text. Broadly speaking, speech can be scripted or spontaneous. When dealing with fictional works like films and TV sitcoms, dialogue exchanges try to sound natural by mimicking everyday conversation but, in essence, they have been craftily scripted and thought of by dialogue writers. It is what Chaume (2004: 168) calls “prefabricated orality”. Most studies conducted in our field have centred on fictional works, while real spontaneous speech has been largely ignored. The surge and popularity of new audiovisual genres in which impromptu speech is of the essence, notably reality shows, sports events and interviews, make a case for more research. In addition to their linguistic intricacies, these programmes raise a whole new battery of questions as regards spotting and the translation of written information on screen (e.g. tables, graphs and the like), as traditional subtitling standards do not seem to cater for these idiosyncrasies.

The transition from oral to written mode also means that some of the typical features of spoken language do not make it to the subtitles and raises the question of whether non-standard speech, like accents and very colloquial traits, can be effectively rendered in writing. More often than not, this type of linguistic variation is cleaned up in the subtitles. Emotionally charged language, such as swearwords and other taboo expressions, are also particularly sensitive to this media migration as the belief exists that their impact is more offensive when in written form than when uttered, which in turn tends to lead to the systematic deletion and downtoning in the subtitles of the effing and blinding that can be heard in the soundtrack.

A particularly interesting area in subtitling is the transfer of culture-bound terms. Known also as extralinguistic cultural references (Pedersen 2011), these items refer to people, gastronomy, customs, places and organisations that are embedded in the other's cultural capital and may be completely unknown to the target viewer, and even some members of the source community. To deal with them, the strategies on offer range from very literal renditions to complete recreations, though the former seem to be the most common in subtitling—particularly when working from English—so as to avoid any clashes between soundtrack/images and written text. Leaving aside the translational wisdom of such an approach, it certainly raises questions about the power of subtitling in the dissemination and entrenchment of certain concepts and realities in other cultural communities. Commercial forces and colonising practices cannot be excluded from this debate, and what is alien to the receiving culture at a particular moment in time can easily become commonplace after its reiterative importation through translation.

The widespread practice of using English as a pivot language to translate from so-called minoritised languages into other idioms also raises ethical issues. For instance, to translate a Swedish film, Italian subtitlers might be provided with an English translation of the dialogue, or a set of master subtitles in English, from which to carry out their translation, rather than working directly from the Swedish of the original soundtrack. Errors and misunderstandings that have made it into the English translation will most likely be replicated in the other languages, and (erroneous) nuances and interpretations will also be filtered through English. Thus far, little research has been conducted on the effects of this practice, which seriously curtails linguistic richness in AVT.

## 8 Conclusions

The fast pace of change taking place in the AVT ecosystem is perhaps one of the major challenges for researchers and practitioners. The extensive technological advances of recent decades have had a considerable impact in our field (Díaz-Cintas and Massidda 2019), visible in the way in which professional practice has changed, the profile of translators has evolved, and existing forms of AVT have adapted and developed into new hybrid forms, which in turn calls for new research methods. Of all the modes, subtitling is arguably the one to have experienced greater disruption for it is so dependent on technology that any developments have the potential to encroach both on the subtitling process from the practitioner's perspective and on the perception that viewers have of subtitling as a product. In this sense, old historical certainties and dominant technical parameters are being increasingly challenged as new ideas and possibilities sweep in, hand in hand with advances that interrogate in very different ways the meaning of subtitling and the shape of subtitles.

In the 1990s, it was the advent of the DVD that brought about transformational changes in the production, distribution and consumption of audiovisual productions and their translations. In today's mediascape, the cloud has taken centre stage (see Bolaños-García-Escribano and Díaz-Cintas, this volume) and the changes are being instigated by the omnipresent and omnipotent VOD platforms, the likes of Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, Disney+, Youku, iflix, iQiyi, HBO or Hulu. Never before has subtitling been so prominent on screen or its future looked so promising.

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# 9

## The Drama of Surtitling: Ever-Changing Translation on Stage

Juan Marcos Carrillo Darancet

### 1 Introduction

Surtitling has become a fast-changing modality within audiovisual translation (AVT), as a result of evolving attitudes from theatre and opera goers and companies, new technologies and technical improvements, as well as the increasing specialisation of translators and the blooming of studies on the subject. It is a constantly evolving, technology-based and deeply vulnerable modality, as it is prone to judgment by the author and the audience and rarely adopts a definite form, as it is modified from one performance to the next, either by company demands, technical requirements or translator adjustments.

Studies on surtitling have historically focused on opera rather than theatre, although this situation is changing. More and more authors focus on the specificities of theatre surtitling, linking it to other AVT modalities or considering it as an independent modality.

Theatre surtitling differs from several modalities it is related to: drama translation, opera surtitling and film subtitling. In addition to the technical and artistic features, which are different in each one of these modalities, the

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main distinctive factor is the figure of the surtitler, the person in charge of translating the play and projecting the surtitles. Surtitling becomes then a live operation, and the translator turns into a performer.

This chapter intends to provide a general overview of the various aspects involved in theatre surtitling from a translator point of view, advocating the role of the surtitler as a cohesive factor in the whole surtitling process.

To that end, we will consider surtitling as the interlinguistic written transfer of the linguistic contents of a theatre play presented to the audience concomitantly to the performance. This written translation is generally presented in the form of projected text, usually a maximum of two rows and around 40 characters per line, projected above or on the sides of the scene or inside the scenery. It is, therefore, an audiovisual translation modality closely related to cinema subtitling and opera surtitling because of the way the translation is presented.

The links between subtitling and surtitling are evident, from a technical point of view (a constrained and vulnerable translation, subject to space and time limitations), and from a translation perspective (a necessarily condensed and fragmented written text to translate a verbal message in a different language). From now on, and for the sake of clarity and concision, when talking about “subtitling” we will be referring solely to cinema subtitling, and to theatre when using the term “surtitling”, unless otherwise specified.

It is important to consider every factor at stake when surtitling a play for a live performance and identify the best ways to convey the original meaning of the play with the least disruption of the original text.

## 2    **Surtitles on Stage, the Dawn of a New Modality**

Subtitles appeared on movies back in the 1930s (Díaz Cintas and Remael 2007), whereas surtitles appeared on stage in the 1980s. It is only natural that theatre surtitling would build on these two AVT modalities: cinema subtitling provides the theoretical framework and translation techniques, and opera the live performance and stage constraints, as well as audience expectations.

### 2.1    **Opera and the First Surtitles**

Opera paved the way for the appearance of surtitles in theatre houses. Back in the 1980s, several opera houses in Canada and New York City led the

innovative way. The New York City Opera was the first to introduce opera surtitling as a systematic practice (Sario and Oksanen 1996: 185). Despite a slow beginning, opera surtitling started to spread (including in Finland, Canada, Hong Kong, France) and finally jumped to theatre performances. With the dawn of the twenty-first century, many international theatre festivals started surtitling plays—such as Avignon, Edinburgh, Vienna (Griesel 2005) as well as Madrid—and, shortly after, theatre houses began programming productions in foreign languages of plays surtitled for wider audiences (Barcelona, Paris and London, to name a few<sup>1</sup>).

Theatre and opera surtitling share close ties: both are simultaneous to a live performance and appear above the stage or inside the scenery and both allow the audience to understand the linguistic elements of the action through a linguistic transfer. Virkkunen (2014: 92) considers that “opera is a theatrical event, a performance or one particular *mise en scène* of the dramatic text”. Similarly, several authors write about the specificities of surtitling for opera (Sario and Oksanen 1996; Desblache 2007; Orero and Matamala 2007; De Frutos 2011; Mateo 1996, 2002, 2007).

However, as Griesel (2007) notes, the main differentiating elements are the music accompanying the opera, as it provides a relatively stable framework, and the role of the linguistic message, less relevant in opera than in theatre:

Ein wichtiger Aspekt ist, dass die Musik in der Oper ein autonomes Zeichensystem darstellt, das die Oper mitkonstituiert. Daher gibt es hier mehr Redundanzen, was für die Komprimierung eine Vereinfachung darstellt. Eine Oper ist für gewöhnlich weniger textorientiert als ein Theaterstück. (p. 59)<sup>2</sup>

Music gives the performance a time framework essential for the projection of surtitles. They are synchronised with music, not with the verbal utterances of singers. If a singer skips or forgets a line, the person in charge of the surtitles can decide to follow the music to project the text (as long as the singer produces a sound, even by repeating a line or mumbling). This is impossible in theatre: actors cannot substitute a line they have forgotten with an unintelligible murmur. Understanding of the original language is greater in

<sup>1</sup> Some theatres in Paris offer English surtitles for visitors attending their plays (<https://www.parisinfo.com/ou-sortir-a-paris/infos/guides/theatre-en-anglais-a-paris>); the Globe Theatre, in London, offers surtitled performances of Shakespeare's plays performed by foreign companies in their own languages (<https://globeplayer.tv/globe-to-globe>); the Teatre Lliure de Barcelona provides Castilian and English subtitles for plays in Catalan (<https://www.teatrelluire.com/webantiga/1213/cat/info/accessible.htm>).

<sup>2</sup> An important aspect is that music in opera is an autonomous sign system that co-constructs the opera. Therefore, there are more redundancies, a compression that constitutes a simplification. An opera is generally less text-oriented than a play (my translation).

theatre than in opera (as Mateo (2007: 138) notes, it is harder to understand the text in an opera because of the register used and of the fact that singers, over the years, “have gained in good voice but have lost quality of diction”).

In addition to music, two important aspects differ when surtitling for the opera or for the theatre: the actual text of the play and actors’ performance. The script of the play (or any verbal content that might “happen” on stage (actors’ lines or written text), which is to be ultimately translated and subtitled, is of the utmost importance, and depends of the actors’ performance. The timing and content (order of the lines, text actually pronounced) can be different from one performance to the next and there is no accompanying music to synchronise the projection of the subtitles, only the text on stage. The second element is precisely the performance, and its possible interactions with the subtitled text. Before focusing on these two decisive aspects of theatre surtitling, it is important to analyse the technical and formal features borrowed from subtitling.

## 2.2 The Subtitling Heritage

One of the defining features of any AVT modality is that it relies highly on technique. That dependence affects the translation process. In the case of subtitling, a written message appears over images in motion simultaneously to the original soundtrack to convey, in a different language, the original message. It is therefore subject to various limitations related to time (viewers’ reading speed, narrative rhythm of the film) and space aspects (the physical space available on a cinema or television screen).

Theatre surtitling has inherited from subtitling not only the formal aspect of the subtitles, but also the time- and space-related constraints. It provides theatre goers with a translation of the original verbal message which is generally projected on a confined space and is, therefore, subject to space and time limitations. As such, subtitling, a much more widespread and studied modality, can offer a theoretical background necessary for the translation phase of surtitling.

Considering technical limitations and the semiotics of audiovisual texts, several authors (Karamitroglou 1998; Chaume 2001; Díaz Cintas 2001; Rica Peromingo 2016) have developed a series of guidelines for subtitling, following Ivarsson and Carroll’s code of Good Subtitling Practice (1998): the translator has to use translation mechanisms that will bear the most relevant information and get rid of superfluous items. This is achieved by analysing the original text and adjusting translation strategies to the technical parameters

(such as reading speed, film rhythm, editing, film dialogue, etc.). Ideally, this selection and condensation of information should not result in a decrease in the quality of the translation or in a depleted version of the original text. On the contrary, due to the nature of the audiovisual text and subtitling, the latter should serve as a link between the cinematographic text and the viewer.

Condensation and reformulation of the original text is done at two levels: word selection and sentence organisation. Technical limitations impose the use of shorter words—when similar or synonymous expressions exist—of simple tenses instead of compound ones, as well as the simplification of generalisations or enumerations, among others. At the sentence level, condensation and reformulation can be achieved by altering the informative structure of a subtitle, simplifying modals and the syntax, using a question instead of an affirmative sentence, *et cetera* (Díaz Cintas and Remael 2007).

Coherence and cohesion are paramount, since the translated text appears and disappears in an eyeblink, and a sentence may be presented in a discontinuous manner over several subtitles (every subtitle transmits a piece of information that is completed by the following subtitles and by the paralinguistic elements). De Linde and Kay (1999: 30) note that “omission of cohesive devices can lead to a text becoming more difficult to process and result in a loss of meaning”. When the translation is presented as a fragmented text, cohesive elements need to be reinforced so the viewer is aware of the fact the subtitles form a homogeneous entity related to and dependent of the audiovisual text. Deixis, lexical and informative selection and the pragmatic dimension of both the original text and the subtitles (Mason 2001) are key to maintaining cohesion and coherence.

Considering that a movie is a *polysemiotic* system (Gottlieb 1998: 245), subtitles get their full meaning from the sum of all semiotic codes within the audiovisual text. Reading a file with only the text of the subtitles of a movie would not make much sense (unlike reading the translation of a book), as the above-mentioned coherence and cohesive devices are linked not only to the linguistic message of the subtitles, but also to the original text and the pragmatics of it. When condensing the original text in a subtitle, the translator should be aware and cautious of the different semiotic linkages of the whole movie (visual, sound, editing, stage direction elements, among others).

## 2.3 A Highly Vulnerable AVT Modality

Subtitling and surtitling share technical constraints that deeply influence the translation process. Viewers receive a fragmented and necessarily abridged

version of the original text and are, inevitably, reluctant in advance, since some parts of the original text will be missing in the translation. If we add some common errors that can happen during the subtiting or surtitling process (such as typographical errors, bad timing or lack of synchronicity between the dialogues and the sub/surtitles) and some linguistic knowledge of the original language of the movie or play, we are left with an audience that can judge (generally, harshly) the translation when an error is “spotted” (Díaz Cintas 2001).

The fact that both the original and the translated text appear simultaneously (unlike in most of the other translation modalities) adds vulnerability to the translation process, making translators well aware of the scrutiny their work will be put under. However, this vulnerability is even bigger in the case of surtitling.

When projecting the surtitles, the surtitler is generally in the same physical space in which the performance takes place and has to adapt constantly the translation to the action (either by adjusting the duration of surtitles, skipping some of them if actors alter their lines, or making changes after the performance to adjust the text to the new rhythm, improvisations or sound or light queues the surtitler might or might not have been informed of previously).

When it comes to subtitles, they are either engraved in a movie or projected simultaneously, but a movie undergoes no changes or only a few (in the case of projected subtitles in festivals, different editing when mounting the rolls can lead to some minor adjustments in the timing, but the overall subtitle file remains unchanged). However, except when companies are familiarised with surtitling and demand it specifically, from the moment the surtitler enters a theatre until the end of the first performance, the surtitle file will likely be modified several times. Many things are subject to discussion with the company: location of the projection, size and aspect of the surtitles, scenes or lines that might or might not be surtitled, even orthotypographical aspects of the surtitles. Actors, technicians, directors—many people can have a say about the final surtitle file, making this AVT modality extremely vulnerable.

### 3 Specific Features of Surtitling

To fully understand the specificities of surtitling, it is important to consider the process as a whole with a single person in charge of its different stages, namely, the translation, adaptation and projection (Carrillo Darancet 2014). This approach reduces the risk of losing coherence from one step to the next and expedites the final phase (a translator familiar with a production and who

has translated the original video recording will know almost by heart the lines uttered during the performance, thus reducing the reaction time necessary in case of modifications to the text).

### 3.1 Different Stages in Surtitling and the Surtitler

As in every translation modality, the surtitling process starts with a translation request. The translator receives the materials (generally, a video recording of a previous performance and the script of the play) and proceeds much like in movie subtitling, frequently using a subtitling software that allows him or her to create the surtitles and setting a maximum number of characters per line and a reading speed. Since the projection of surtitles is usually carried out by a human operator, it is important to keep in mind, when setting in and out time cues for the first version of the surtitles, that the person in charge of the projection will need some time to hear the dialogues on stage and react. This time adds up to the overall surtitle timing. On the contrary, the mechanical means used to add subtitles to a movie (inserted on celluloid or projected using a specific software) allow a great precision. It is therefore a good idea to give a greater time to every surtitle and to set a low reading speed in order to allow theatre goers to read them entirely.

Once the pre-translation phase is over, the surtitler has to adapt the translation. This is perhaps the most important phase, as it will determine the acceptability of the surtitles for the company and it will give the surtitler an insight about the company and the human factor. Adaptation is carried out at different stages: during rehearsals, meetings with the company (director and/or actors) and after each performance (since the final text is never definite, because of the evolution of the play from one performance to the next, sometimes some adjustments can be necessary: adding or deleting, splitting or merging surtitles, changes in the text or condensing or eliciting the contents of a surtitle). The surtitler can ask questions arising from the translation phase or from rehearsals, related to the text or to the production, such as differences between the script and the recorded working material, text omissions and inserts, rhythm of speech, duration of silences on stage, and check if the differences observed are just punctual or have become recurrent and incorporated to the performance (in that case, the surtitler will have to make the appropriate changes in the surtitles files and adapt the projection pace).

The surtitler can also seize the opportunity to inform the actors about the nature of surtitling and remind them that surtitles are not typed live and hence improvisation should be limited. Some performers work with

ever-changing texts and dialogues, without a fixed script, or refuse to give up improvisation as it can be an essential part of the production. In this case, the surtitler can adapt the translation and create long surtitles with generic ideas instead of a set of short surtitles whose linguistic content would hardly match the words finally said by the actors.

Also during this phase, the surtitler should confirm with the director or the person in charge of the text any request the company might have: some companies prefer longer surtitles (that stay longer on screen or have more than two lines), some might want to adapt the timing of surtitles to a specific moment of the play (for instance, a surtitle should not stay on screen after a blackout: it should disappear at the same time or just before the lights go off), and some companies might decide the location of the projection screen and even integrate the surtitles in the performance, as we will see later.

Once the text has been adjusted to fit the performance in its latest version and meet the technical specificities of the theatre, the surtitler projects the surtitle file. As the timing of the dialogues depends on the performance of the actors, it's impossible to automate the projection of surtitles. The surtitler has to attend the performance, usually in the control booth or among the public, in order to be able to hear and see what is going on stage and synchronise the projection with the action. During this phase, the technical and artistic aspects are essential.

### 3.2 Technical Aspects Involved

In addition to time and space limitations, surtitling depends highly on technical aspects. They can impact not only the translation, but also the readability of the final text. Some of these elements are the surtitling software and equipment, as well as the surtitler's working space and questions related to light and sound.

Just before the play starts, the surtitler loads a title file into a projection software (it can be either a generic program, such as PowerPoint, or a more specific one, developed for that purpose, that allows hiding surtitles or projects only a text box instead of the whole computer screen, among others). As the play goes on, surtitles are projected manually, synchronised with the dialogues.

With more advanced software, the surtitler can navigate the surtitle file during the performance. This is especially useful when actors alter the order of dialogues during a scene or a monologue. Since the surtitles must match what is said on stage, the possibility of moving back and forth within a surtitle

file is essential to project the surtitles corresponding exactly to the actors' speech: spectators will probably not realise that the actor has altered the order of a monologue, but they will notice if there is a lack of synchrony between the oral text and the written translation (as is the case with software that allow only a linear projection of the text, such as PowerPoint).

Surtitles are generally projected on a projection screen, made of a piece of cloth or special fabric, located just above or below the top of the proscenium. However, as technique improves, instead of fabric screens, surtitling firms tend to use more LED panels, some of them modular, allowing a more flexible configuration depending on the size of the theatre, the scene or the company requirements. As theatre configurations vary and performances are not limited to the stage (sometimes actors walk among the audience or the action takes place outside the stage), the location of the projection varies with each play, as well as the configuration of the projection: big theatre houses will require a bigger font for the surtitles, so that every person in the theatre will be able to read the text.

Surtite projection has a double disadvantage: viewers sitting on the first rows will have to move their heads up to read the surtitles, missing part of the action on stage, and sometimes this projection is considered by performers (and the audience) as a contamination of the original play. To avoid this, new solutions are constantly being sought: back in 1995, the Metropolitan Opera, in New York City, implemented a system that allowed viewers to access the surtitles on display screens on the back of the seats (Tommasini 1995). In 2017, the Festival d'Avignon undertook a pilot project,<sup>3</sup> following previous experimentations in Paris, providing surtitling glasses to the audience. In addition to classical screen surtitling, some viewers wore connected glasses which projected the surtitles in front of the user's eyes. Some issues remain, such as questions of comfort for people already wearing viewing devices, technical issues—related to poor Wi-Fi reception of the surtitling glasses—or problems with latecomers, who could not correctly set up the device. Other innovations include mobile devices applications (Oncins et al. 2013) that allow reading the titles on a phone or portable device screen. Again, issues related to comfort and reception remain, as the screen must be held during the whole performance in such a way as to allow the viewer to follow the action on stage.

<sup>3</sup> See the full report of the project: "Lunettes de surtitrage—Festival d'Avignon 2017, Évaluation de l'expérimentation" (n.d.). Available at: <http://www.culture.gouv.fr/content/download/181655/1989071/version/3/file/Lunettes+de+surtitrage+Avignon+ 2017+-+E%CC%81valuation.pdf>. Accessed on 9 November 2018.

Another promising field is the use of voice recognition software to generate automated captioning (Snow 2014). This technology intends to expand captioning for the deaf and hard-of-hearing, making opera and theatre more accessible. According to the firm responsible for the project CaptionCue (Graham 2014), the technology “will use an audio feed and other triggers available during an event to automatically trigger captions and translation subtitles to display devices”. These triggers include voice recognition, lighting and sound cues. This process would reduce the delay between the utterance of a line and the projection of the corresponding surtitle, reducing costs and generalising this practice to an increasing number of plays. The Théâtre de Liège will use this technology on a play to be presented in February 2019, *IDIOMATIC*; however, it acknowledges the challenges it faces, such as the theatre house environment and the different voices and sounds during a play, as well as the accuracy of voice recognition software (Alie 2018).

As long as voice recognition is not widespread and the projection is carried by a human operator, the surtitler has to adapt not only the projection, but also the text of the titles to other factors, such as the lightning and sound effects of the play, synchronise the timing of surtitles and determine the amount of text in the titles before or after a sound or light effect, in order to avoid projecting a surtitle that can anticipate information, as well as, perhaps, most importantly, the actors’ performance.

### 3.3 Artistic Elements in Surtitling

The live component of theatre makes every performance unique. Surtitles can become part of the dramatic action in some cases when they are integrated in the scenery. Some companies use them as a new semiotic code. Carlson (2007: 200) gives the example of an adaptation of *King Lear* by Needcompany, where actors reacted to the surtitles projected on the stage: they became lines the actors should have said, inducing a “resemiotization and alignment of relationships within the codes of each theatrical production”. Similarly, in some shows the line between dramatic action and surtitling is blurred when actors turn to the titles projected on stage looking for a name or to remember the end of their line.

Griesel (2009) provides yet another example of how surtitling can become a meaningful element in a theatrical production. In a performance of *Le dernier Caravansérail* in Germany in 2002, surtitles appeared in different places on the stage, with different typography and size. The author stresses that “to realize such a translation, the surtitler has to work together with the

director. The director must realize that it is necessary to work together with the surtitler to get the best translation of his performance" (2009: 125).

Besides being integrated in the performance, surtitles can have a disruptive effect on the attention of the audience. When projected on the proscenium, they are not integrated in the scenery and viewers have to switch between the stage and the translation; when they are integrated in the scenery, they add a visual contamination to a scene that was designed without it (lighting, movements of the actors, props, etc.). In some cases, companies change their minds about the location of the projection during the rehearsal or after several performances, realising that the surtitle screen is too far away from the action or takes too much space in the scenery. In other cases, they change their mind about surtitling altogether. As Mateo (2007) illustrates,

after taking great pains to have some speeches in the Afghan language of one particular scene translated into Spanish in order to be surtitled, the director and theatre management finally decided to withdraw the surtitles from this scene for the following reasons: first, the visuals were sufficiently clear; second, the English characters present in the scene did not understand the dialogue either; and finally, an important issue in matters of reception, the written communication of the surtitles would in fact detract the attention from the effect intended, for the scene was one characterized by screaming, shouting insults, and the production of all sorts of verbal aggression. (p. 150)

This example is a good reminder of the role of the surtitler, who has to go through the whole text of the play with the company in order to reach an agreement about which parts have to be surtitled and how to avoid constant changes and be able to focus on the linguistic content of the translation.

### 3.4 Linguistic Parameters

The technical limitations and the artistic use of surtitling are relevant insofar they can determine some aspects of the translation. Despite its formal similarity to subtitling, surtitling calls for a review of translation strategies, as it is a different modality with its own specificities. The changing nature of theatre performances imposes its own linguistic norms. In a previous work (Carrillo Darancet 2014) we compared the translation techniques used in both the subtitles and surtitles of two different adaptations of *Macbeth* and *The Trial* (Orson Welles' movies, and stage adaptations by Cheek by Jowl and Synaesthetic Theatre, performed in Madrid and Salamanca in 2007 and 2010, respectively) using a corpus linguistics approach.

Although translation techniques were similar in subtitling and surtitling, it appeared that the latter used a higher rate of condensation strategies globally, focused on conveying informative meaning over dialogue structures, and key concepts were put forward. Information was omitted when it was redundant or deductible from the context or the action on stage; it was also condensed, especially by using simple verbal tenses and hypernyms, reducing anaphors to a single item, and through syntactic reformulation, and linked to the action on stage, through repetition of same lexical items and the use of deixis.

As surtitles are projected manually and their duration depends on the actors' performance, it is hard to determine in advance the amount of characters per surtitle that will allow a comfortable reading speed. Thus, information tends to be even more condensed than in subtitling. On the other hand, straightforward informative surtitles that contain a whole informative unit (instead of surtitles that divide information in several titles) allow the audience to read the surtitle and pay attention to the rest of semiotic codes of the live performance.

Still, as Ladouceur (2015: 245) points out, as the audience hears the original text and reads the translation simultaneously, the translation has to stick to the original text to avoid confusion or distraction in viewers with some knowledge of the original language. The surtitler has to take good care of using recognisable and informative words to tie the surtitles to the performance.

In some cases, when the rhythm of the play decreases, the surtitler can use longer titles, with more information. If the play structure allows it, it is possible to use these surtitles to include some of the information condensed or omitted immediately before or after, as long as no plot element is revealed untimely.

Because of all the constraints that limit theatre surtitling, the translation should be as unnoticed as possible. Therefore, it is essential to proofread the surtitles in order to correct any typographical or spelling errors, and it is a good idea to avoid punctuation signs that could distract the viewers' attention or require interpretation effort: parentheses, brackets, colons, semicolons, among others, should be avoided, as well as ellipses to mark that a sentence continues in the next surtitle (capital letters should be enough to mark the beginning of a sentence); dashes should be used only when two (or more people, in certain cases) speak simultaneously, using a dash before each intervention; and special symbols should be avoided, unless specifically agreed with the company. Similarly, italics can be used for voiceover, songs, foreign words and expressions, titles and, in some cases, to outline a word or fragment.

All these translation techniques are generic guidelines. The role of the surtitler is to adapt, once more, the translation and the typographic aspect of the surtitles to the demands of the company (a company once asked to keep the same typographic features of the text of *Rockaby*, by Samuel Beckett: all the text was lowercased and had no punctuation characters). It is also the surtitler's responsibility, as a language professional, to inform the company of the nature of surtitling and of its limitations (surtitling a whole play of around 90 minutes with no punctuation at all could be detrimental to the overall comprehension of the audience. In the previous example, the non-punctuated performance lasted about ten minutes).

## 4 The Future of Surtitling

From a fabric screen to augmented reality glasses, theatre surtitling has come a long way in the past few years. Technological advances have boosted the diversity of surtitle projection modes, as the boom in cultural exchanges has increased the number of theatre plays performed in foreign languages. Theatre goers are more familiar with it and accept more willingly the (annoying) popping titles in a theatre house. However, two main fields related to translation remain ahead of theatre surtitling: the definition of a set of norms that will give consistency and predictability to this AVT modality, and the widening of its own nature, from an interlinguistic operation that enables and facilitates understanding of a foreign play, to a tool that gives access to theatre productions to a wider audience (such as the deaf and hard-of-hearing or viewers with no or little knowledge of the language(s) of the play).

The definition of a set of norms can only be achieved by establishing first a typology of surtitling modalities, in accordance to different factors: whether this operation is performed by the company, the theatre itself or an external firm; the professionals involved (whether it is the same person that performs every operation throughout the whole process or there are different persons for each stage—translator, technician and projectionist); the location and aspect of the surtitles projected (outside or inside the scenery, on a screen, a wall, an LED panel or through any other means, “standard” font or adapted font, two or more rows, etc.); the degree of adaptation (whether it is an external translation of the play or it is a text created or modified by the company); the language used (surtitling for the deaf and hard-of-hearing, surtitling for an audience that might not speak the language(s) used during the performance, surtitling in vehicular languages for foreign theatre goers).

Once this typology is agreed upon, researchers can focus on the definition of norms for each modality and on specific issues. Many authors have explored the question of reception (Carlson 2000; Eugeni 2006; De Frutos 2011; Ladouceur 2015; Mele 2018), others have focused on technical aspects and accessibility (Mateo 2007; Oncins et al. 2013; Orero 2017; Secară 2018), but there is a need for a systematic approach that considers only the translation aspects of surtitling, based on the whole process (Griesel 2009, provides a useful synthetic view of the various stages involved).

Theatre surtitling offers a vast array of possibilities: back in 1983, the artistic director of the Washington Opera said that “titling needs a dramaturgy of its own” (Laine 1986). The expressive potential of inter- and intralinguistic surtitles, mentioned by Carlson (2007), is constantly explored by dramaturgs and challenges normative fixation. Setting aside the artistic use of surtitles, surtitling is a practice that can open theatre performances to new audiences, such as deaf or hard-of-hearing persons and people with no knowledge of foreign languages. Unlike cinema and television, where there has been a huge increase in audiovisual products in the past few years as a result of technical progress and democratisation of technology, live theatre cannot become mass entertainment (theatre performances can be streamed and made accessible through technological means, but once they are recorded and are no longer live performances, they are closed products and, as such, translation becomes static, closer to subtitling than to surtitling). Still, surtitling theory is in dire need of reflecting the diversity of its practice, but more and more authors are taking steps to bridge the gaps between the theory and advances in the always innovating theatre world.

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# 10

## Fansubbing: Latest Trends and Future Prospects

Serenella Massidda

### 1 Introduction

As we advance into the digital age, the pervasive omnipresence and democratisation of technology is progressively enhancing the co-creation and circulation of user-generated (UG), digital artefacts on the interactive version of the web, commonly known as the Web 2.0. Since the turn of the new millennium, prousers, prosumers (Toffler 1980) and produsers (Bruns 2008) united have intervened prolifically in a plethora of virtual spaces by producing an overabundant volume of DIY content relying on non-professional translation approaches to audiovisual (AV) products legally and illegally distributed on the Internet, with fandubbing and fansubbing leading the way.

‘Fansubbing’, a term coined back in the 1980s to define the activity of fans subtitling for fellow fans, was initiated in association with anime subculture (O’Hagan 2009), whereas in the new millennium, ‘the second wave of fansubbing’ (Massidda 2019) flourished in conjunction with the so-called golden age of TV shows characterised by US TV productions ‘investing large amounts of cash in ambitious projects created by famous producers and directors’ (Massidda 2015: 114), relying on excellent scripts and featuring an endless

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list of actors belonging to the cinema industry. Although technological advances have transformed the mediascape and ‘aggrandized its potential with the introduction of new distribution channels aiming to reach wider and ever more global audiences’ (Díaz Cintas and Massidda 2020), the quantitative shift in audiovisual content produced for linear TV and video streaming on demand (VoD), which went from small to immense in a few years, proved highly disruptive for producers, language service providers (LSPs) and consumers. In addition, the explosion of over-the-top (OTT) services such as Amazon Prime, HBO Now, Hulu and Netflix, along with the never-ending production of a wide variety of serialised formats, have swiftly raised the demand for AV content localisation across the globe. At the turn of the century, in the gigantic void produced by the fast pace of technological and cinematic changes, while LSPs were exploring viable options offered by new technology, amateur subtitlers around the globe were already forging alternative, Internet-based localisation workflows, clockwork, perfect mechanisms able to deliver hundreds of fansubs within unprecedented tight turnaround times.

By taking translation into their own hands, fans revalue this vital mediating tool [and], instead of approaching translation as unwanted interference, [they] respond proactively towards perceived failings, transforming limitations into possibilities and proposing a course of creative reinvention. (Dwyer 2017: 135)

The second wave of amateur subtitling—as opposed to the first wave of the phenomenon in the 1980s—triggered the proliferation of numerous sets of ‘fansubbing machines’ in each specific territory, as described by fan, media and translation studies scholars around the world. What these studies have revealed on the nature of this phenomenon is that it is mainly conceived as a social practice performed in community-based groups located all around the world, including Argentina, Belgium, Brazil, China, Croatia, Czech Republic, France, Greece, Iran, Italy Japan, Jordan, Korea, Lebanon, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Sweden, Thailand and Turkey. Yet, this phenomenon can also take the form of an individual practice, such as in the case of Poland, described by Luczaj and Holy-Luczaj (2014), or it can also manifest in the form of web aggregators or conglomerates—which distribute the soft subs produced by different communities and in different languages to be associated with the various video versions illegally circulating online—such as [Addic7ed.com](http://Addic7ed.com), [OpenSubtitles.org](http://OpenSubtitles.org), [Podnapisi.net](http://Podnapisi.net) and [Undertexter.se](http://Undertexter.se) just to name a few.

## 2 Fansubbing: Definition, Key Features and Historical Overview

The fansubbing phenomenon, conceived as an alternative AVT (audiovisual translation) mode of transfer, has been described by a variety of scholars within the fields of fan, media, legal and translation studies and from the most diverse angles. Conceptualised as ‘a form of self-mediation that steers us away from the translator as an individual’ (Pérez González 2017: 16), and considered as ‘an errant, improper form of AVT [as well as] one of the most significant developments to occur within screen translation to date’ (Dwyer 2017: 135), fansubbing has ultimately represented a form of liberation from normative restrictions of mainstream subtitling. Due to the rebellious nature of the phenomenon, fansubbing has also been defined as ‘abusive subtitling’ (Nornes 1999/2004, 2007) with ‘norm-defying translation strategies [which] seem to stem from fans’ search for authentic text’ (O’Hagan 2009: 11). Fansubbing approaches ‘seem to swing between reverence for the source text and the desire to remain faithful to it’ (Mangiron and O’Hagan 2013: 302), a tendency driven by fans’ adverse reaction against domesticated, manipulated and over-edited official subtitled and dubbed versions (Casarini and Massidda 2017). Fan subtitling represents a grassroots activity (Massidda 2015), driven from the bottom up and based on the illegal adaptation of an artistic work performed by a ‘network of undefined people’ (Howe 2009) without formal training and with no financial remuneration. Amateur subtitlers, conceived as the offspring of the Web 2.0, have challenged the status quo, creatively innovating AVT practices (Díaz Cintas and Muñoz Sánchez 2011) while exerting a strong influence on standard norms—more attuned to the needs of digital audiences (Massidda 2019)—and forcing LSPs to accelerate localisation processes by pushing AVT turnaround times to the limits: the networks of this ‘informal economy have [ultimately] concurred in the changing geographies of global audiovisual flows’ (Mattelart 2016: 3503).

A large number of researchers have analysed the phenomenon in conjunction with networked subcultures from the most disparate angles of fandom as a sociological concept (cf. Banks and Deuze 2009; Barra and Guarnaccia 2009; Baym 2010; Bogucki 2009; Burwell 2010; Casarini 2014, 2015; Chambers 2012; Cronin 2010, 2013; Cubbison 2005; Deuze 2011; Dwyer 2012; Fernández Costales 2011; García 2010; Jenkins 1992, 2008; Jimenez-Crespo 2016; Lee 2009, 2011; Leonard 2004; O’Hagan 2008). While a few have focused on audience reception through the use of eyetracking systems (Caffrey 2009; Orrego-Carmona 2016), many scholars within the areas of

media, legal and translation studies have explored the consequences of fansubbing practices in terms of copyright infringement, ethics and piracy (cf. Condry 2010; Denison 2011; Godwin 2013; He 2015, 2017; Hsiao 2014; Hunter et al. 2012; Jimenez-Crespo 2016; Mattelart 2016; Noda 2010; Pedersen 2019; Rembert-Lang 2010).

Since its inception in the 1980s, fansubbing has materialised as a sudden, ad hoc emergence of fan-based communities devoted to the translation of unavailable, untranslated or inaccessible AV (and mostly US) TV products within a specific region of the world. The dichotomy between dubbing and subtitling countries (Koolstra et al. 2002) represents a crucial factor in explaining the motives at the roots of fansubbing: countries traditionally relying on dubbing seem more inclined to the development of the phenomenon (Pedersen 2019). As a result, a strong correlation is evident in dubbing countries such as France, Italy, Germany and Spain, or Argentina (Orrego-Carmona 2015) and Brazil (Bold 2012), where fansubbing communities flourished due to the excessive manipulation of dubbed versions and the long waiting periods between TV shows seasons, typical of such a time-consuming activity. According to Pedersen (2019), fansubbing seems to thrive also in those ‘countries where AVT is not very common, due to dominant domestic production, such as the US and China’ (Pedersen 2019: 3). Yet, either the unavailability or inaccessibility of certain AV titles in traditionally subtitling countries—mainly represented by Japanese anime or US TV shows—has been the main dynamic favoring and pushing the booming of fansubbing practices bloomed in the form of online repositories acting more as aggregators and conglomerates rather than fan communities *tout court*. This is the case of Sweden (Pedersen 2019), and the Netherlands where a set of court cases against fansubbing groups unveiled fansubbing tendencies in traditionally subtitling countries.

From an historical point of view, fan subtitling, one of the many faces of fandom, first emerged in the late 1980s when Japanese anime were banned in the US for their inappropriate content and subsequently removed from US screens ‘due to a perception that they were overly violent and sexual (cartoons being predominantly a children’s entertainment medium in Western television programming), and so the only way to get “adult” content was through a fan network’ (Wurm 2014: online). Once disappeared from the US market, fan groups of *otakus* (Japanese term for ‘nerds’) or ‘anime clubs’ started subtitling their favourite shows ‘in the dark’ distributing them for free via VHS by adopting the SASE (Self-Addressed Stamped Envelope) system. With the advent of high-speed Internet access, and the subsequent widespread use of Web 2.0, along with the proliferation of Open Source software, ‘overseas fans of Japanese animated films started to digitize, translate, add subtitles to, and

make available online unauthorized copies of TV series and films' (Condry 2010: 17). 'Digisubs' made their appearance in the late 1990s: they were mainly distributed via peer-to-peer file sharing—P2P software such as BitTorrent and Emule—and Internet Relay Chat, a set of nets of IRC servers allowing large groups of users to transfer data and communicate in real time.

The second wave of amateur subtitling, a sort of revival of the phenomenon in the new millennium, started in the first decade of the new century with a different genre in mind: serialised TV shows. In 2005 we started witnessing the flourishing of US TV productions that 'demonstrated a tremendous ability to encourage almost unprecedented viewer involvement and commitment both in form and degree' (Askwith 2007: 152). In the golden age of US TV shows (Massidda 2015), programs such as *Lost* (2004–2010), with an ensemble cast of multiple main protagonists, displaying a non-linear structure with an episodic format and made up of many seasons, were an absolute novelty that have now become the bread and butter of video streaming on demand (VoD) with 'binge-watching' on top.

As anticipated in the chapter's inception, fansubbing practices have mainly taken the form of community-based groups. While fansubbing communities in Argentina, China and Italy, for example, are characterised by active participation, specific guidelines, protocols and workflows, and well-defined roles somehow simulating professional practices (e.g., translators, proof-readers, project managers), conglomerates, on the other hand, are represented by an individual (the owner of a website) who gathers fansubbed versions of various programmes submitted by undefined online users to upload them on the website's repository. Following Jenkins (1992), fan networks are shaped within participatory culture where fan interactions lead to the co-creation of 'cultural products' (Banks and Deuze 2009) and are propelled by motivation, ultimately fabricating the collective identity of fansubbers in digital environments (Li 2015). When fansubbing is conceived as a social activity, the result is an autoregulated, complex and adaptive system characterised by a hierarchical self-organisation, ad hoc norms, and workflow experimentation, arising from the 'synergy of interacting agents' (Li 2015: 54) cooperating within a decentralised, virtual mechanism such as the Internet.

### 3 Geolocalising Fansubbing as a Social Activity

At a glance, fansubbing practices seem to have spread like a virus in various regions of the world (Fig. 10.1 in red), as confirmed by the numerous research studies carried out on the topic. In Europe, various forms of fansubbing practices have been analysed, either fan communities or conglomerates, which can be retrieved in Belgium (Verbruggen 2010), Croatia (Čemerin and Toth 2017), Czech Republic and Poland (Bogucki 2009; Luczaj and Holy-Luczaj 2014, 2017; Švelch 2013), France (Bréan 2014; Dagiral and Tessier 2008; Paquienséguy 2016), Greece (Karagiannidi 2014), Italy (Barra 2009; Beseghi 2016; Casarini and Massidda 2017; Lepre 2015; Magazzù 2018; Massidda 2012, 2013, 2015, 2019; Vellar 2011; Zanotti and Bruti 2016), Poland (Mika 2015; Sajna 2013), Portugal (De Souza 2015), the Netherlands (Chi-Yim 2017), Romania (Dwyer and Uricaru 2009), Spain (Fernández Costales 2012; García-Escribano 2017) and Sweden (Hemmungs Wirtén 2012; Pedersen 2019).

Outside Europe, amateur subtitling practices have been researched in Argentina (Orrego-Carmona 2015), Brazil (Bold 2012), China (Chang 2017; Chu 2013; He 2017; Hsiao 2014; Jiang and Leung 2012; Li 2015, 2017; Liang 2018; Meng and Fei 2013; Tian Zhang and Cassany 2017; Wang 2017; Zhang and Chengting 2013), Jordan and Lebanon (Eldalees et al. 2017), Iran

Fansubbing around the world



Fig. 10.1 Geolocalisation of fansubbing

(Khoshaligheh et al. 2018), Japan (O'Hagan 2008, 2009; Díaz Cintas and Muñoz Sánchez 2011; Josephy-Hernandez 2017), South Korea (Aisyah and Jin 2017), Thailand (Wongseree 2016, 2017) and Turkey (Yıldız 2017).

Only one out of all the research studies mentioned has acknowledged a case of individualistic approach to fansubbing. In Poland, Luczaj and Holy-Luczaj conducted a survey on fansubbing practices in order to compare Polish and Czech fan communities: 35% of the Polish respondents did not know other fansubbers either online or in real life: 'it might mean that Polish subtitlers work differently than their Czech counterparts. They seem to be much more individualistic' (Luczaj and Holy-Luczaj 2014: 4). In addition, the majority of Polish respondents did not belong to any fansubbing group. Yet, aside from Poland, fansubbing practices around the globe share a plethora of commonalities. According to Bold, 'these creations usually result from the interaction of like-minded, often tech-savvy fans, who join forces to collaborate for a common cause' (Bold 2012: 3). These organised, self-motivated 'audience-cum-translators' have managed to provide access to foreign films and TV shows in cyberspace (Chang 2017).

Fansubbing is the collective effort of passionate fans joining forces in order to caption and subtitle their favourite TV shows. The process starts once the raw material is retrieved online: the script and the video file to be shared with team members. Amateur translators work in teams of four to six people on average, supporting each other throughout the whole process: while the coordinator is responsible for the organisation, scheduling, recruiting, standardisation and revision of the fansubbing project, the other members are in charge of the technical and linguistic dimension of the subtitling process. On the whole, fansubbers follow accurate, ad hoc procedures in their workflow: 'non-professional environments do not necessarily contradict professional environments, since some groups set up professional-like mechanisms' (Orrego-Carmona 2016: 211). This requires an enormous effort on the part of fansubbers: 'some make producing fansubs their priority in life, developing a very strong sense of responsibility and contributing to great group coherence' (Chang 2017: 240). In terms of workflow, the fansubbing machine is governed by strict norms and/or specific guidelines focused on technical constraints (e.g., maximum number of characters per line, reading speed and characters per second), and linguistic standards (e.g., accents, punctuation, line breaks) that must be applied and put into practice when fansubbers co-translate a TV show. The subtitle file, available in an editable format—usually a .txt or .srt file compatible with open source subtitle editors, such as Subtitle Workshop, Aegisub or VisualSubSynch—is subdivided into multiple parts that each member is required to synchronise, subtitle and, once ready, submit

within a tight deadline to allow the coordinator to perform the quality check process and then share the final output with the whole community.

As a way to speed up and optimise the fansubbing process, as well as standardise style and terminology, these communities often produce glossaries (what LSPs nowadays call KNP, or Key Name Phrases) related to the specific TV genre translated (e.g., medical, period political dramas) in order to ensure accuracy and overall quality of the output throughout the many seasons, as well as to assist new fansubbers in case they get replaced throughout the years. Each ‘fansubbing job’ submitted is always proofread and checked to note down any relevant feedback for fan translators so that they can improve their future performance: this crucial step, normally overlooked if not neglected in professional practices, is the greatest forte of any efficient workflow in which people are heard, trained and nurtured. The feedback system is a trademark of Italian communities such as ItaSa and Subsfactory able to ensure the highest standards of ‘amateur service’ and develop a sense of community and belonging, a bond which in turn generates trust in the fan community: the magic ingredient of fansubbers recipe is the cognitive wisdom of crowds put to good use and mixed with monastic discipline, hard work, and a pinch of passion.

## 4 Digital Copyrights and Fan-Based Activities

Fan subculture [brings with it] a class of derivative works that confounds traditional copyright analysis. While ostensibly infringement, these activities expand the public’s stores of knowledge and enhance the copyright holder’s economic and creative interests. (Noda 2010: 131)

The emergence of consumer-driven sources of media, the advent of new digital technologies and the widespread use of the Internet, have inevitably concurred to heighten online piracy that has spiralled out of control for a long while. In the US, the International Intellectual Property Alliance has presented ‘the losses from worldwide piracy as being one of the most “significant challenges” to the U.S. economy as a whole, given the “substantial” contribution of copyright-holding industries to U.S. prosperity’ (Mattelart 2016: 3503). As a result, a series of initiatives have been taken against online piracy in the past few years aimed at monitoring and reducing criminal activity on a global scale (Mirghani 2011; Yar 2005).

As far as copyright law is concerned, in the US, Section 106 of the 1976 Copyright Act states that authors and creators have the exclusive right to

produce ‘derivative works based upon the copyrighted work’,<sup>1</sup> while UK copyright law, embodied by the 1988 Copyrights, Designs and Patents Act, grants the exclusive right to produce ‘an adaptation of the work [or copy, issue copies, perform or broadcast] in relation to an adaptation’.<sup>2</sup> Both countries are members of the World Trade Organization Agreement on Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS), an international agreement on intellectual property. TRIPS incorporates whole sections of the Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works (1886), which allows some exceptions for protected works that may be used without the copyright holder’s authorisation, and without compensation: among them some grey areas can be detected, such as ‘reproduction in certain special cases’ [art.9(2)], for example. While none of the above-mentioned copyright law specifically address digital copyrights and online piracy—being a relatively recent concern—a set of international agreements are in place to fight digital copyright infringement: the World Intellectual Property Organisation Copyright Treaty (1996), the Digital Millennium Copyright Act 1998, the European Copyright Directive (2001), and more recently, the European Directive on Copyright in the Digital Single Market (2019). Yet, the result of the European Copyright Directive has been perceived as a tangible sign of the increasing tendency ‘to control the web at the expense of the rights of users and the public interest’ (Vollmer 2019: online) rather than merely addressing online copyright infringement. As far as fansubbing practices are concerned, the first wave of the phenomenon—started in the late 1980s—did not trigger any legal action on the part of copyright-holding industries against the communities of *otakus*.

The anime industry exemplifies cultural industries that are facing pressure from their own consumers who, networked and coordinated on a global scale, can self-organize mediation and distribution of cultural commodities, based on the non-commercial principle. Under such pressure, the anime industry has begun framing fansubbing as piracy. Nevertheless, the industry does not regard taking legal action as a good solution because this could alienate the fansubbing community, which has constituted the core of anime fandom. (Lee 2011: 1141)

Hence, in a way, the media industry, tacitly let fans operate within a legal grey area and bypass official channels in order to promote the accessibility of anime productions for free. Following Boyd and Straubhaar (1985), these

<sup>1</sup> Copyright Act, US 1976 [www.copyright.gov/title17](http://www.copyright.gov/title17).

<sup>2</sup> Copyrights, Designs and Patents Act, UK 1988, [www.copyrightservice.co.uk/copyright/p01\\_uk\\_copyright\\_law](http://www.copyrightservice.co.uk/copyright/p01_uk_copyright_law).

illegal practices managed to increase the dissemination of cultural products, and, as such, to augment the dependency on, and addiction to media products.

In the new millennium, the second wave of fansubbing, flourished in a completely internetised digital mediascape, has seen a dramatical change of circumstances. While fan practices continued almost undisturbed and with no interference for a couple of years after its inception, in 2009 ALIS, representing several Israeli film companies (Smith 2007), sued the webmasters of [Qsub.net](#), a site providing fansubbed versions of movies and TV series: they were ‘ordered to pay \$264,000 each in damages and issue a public apology’ (Ermert 2013: online). In 2012, the owner of [Norsub.com](#) (Norway) was fined €2.000 for providing fan subtitles online: ‘the court acknowledged the non-commercial nature of the website and the difference between the act of subtitling and distribution of pirated content’ (Ermert 2013: online). In 2013, in Poland, prosecutors dealing with a similar case against the [Napisy.org](#) website—pending since 2007—could not prove any criminal intent in providing subtitle files for free, and the case was dismissed with no charges pressed (Ermert 2013). The same year, Undertexter.se in Sweden was sued for copyright infringement: a private copyright enforcement body, the Swedish Rights Alliance, conducted an investigation on the servers of the Swedish fan site, which as a result, was taken offline by the Police.

Undertexter.se offered the subtitles to the public free of cost—a violation of Swedish copyright, according to the National co-ordinator of the intellectual property crime division at the Swedish Police Service. The officer told BBC, “making transcripts” of protected works without the consent of the rightsholder was a copyright infringement, as was making such transcripts publicly available. (Ermert 2013: online)

Therefore, the infringer was indicted on two counts overall: the translation of copyrighted material without formal consent (punished as a crime for the first time) and its public distribution. Although they did not receive any financial remuneration for their fansubbing activities, the platform was of a commercial character due to the presence of advertisements, and allegedly, this is the reason why Undertexter.se was prosecuted in the first place. In 2017, a group of fans started an initiative called ‘Free Subtitles Foundation’ (Stichting Laat Ondertitels Vrij—SLOV) to raise money for a legal campaign to sue BREIN—the local anti-piracy group—that managed to shut down several fansubbing groups in the Netherlands. The case revolved around two disputes: the first concerned ‘whether the creation and publishing of film subtitles is an act only reserved to the maker of the film work’, while the second called for ‘a review

of the conduct of BREIN against people who create and reproduce subtitles'.<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately, the brave fan group lost their legal battle: although, they initially 'sought a legal ruling determining that fansubbers act within the law [in the end] the Amsterdam District Court sided with BREIN on all counts'.<sup>4</sup>

In the same year, a Swedish court stated that the unlicensed distribution of subtitles is a crime: the owner of Undertexter.se, previously under the police radar, was sentenced to probation and given a fine. This case has been discussed by Pedersen (2019) who was also involved in the court case as expert: once again, an anti-piracy outfit, Rättighetsalliansen (Rights Alliance) acting on behalf of a conglomerate of film distributors and companies such as Nordisk Film, Paramount, Universal, Sony and Warner, sued the fansubbing website for copyright infringement. The conglomerate 'claimed that the dissemination, if not the actual translation, of these subtitles constituted an infringement of their copyright under the Berne Convention' (*ibid.*: 7). The final verdict—appealed to no avail in 2018—clarified that it is illegal to distribute fan subtitles without the permission of the copyright holder.

For many years—since 2006—Italian fansubbing communities have provided an ad hoc service to people seeking to experience new culture and languages, and to the hard of hearing community as well. 2018 was a crucial year for Italian fansubbing: after over a decade of undisturbed fan activities, *Subs Heroes, TV Heroes Exist*,<sup>5</sup> a documentary celebrating the history of an underground fan-made subtitling community, triggered a tidal wave of negative reactions, causing the tragic epilogue of fan practices. The movie revolves around the practices of a large fansubbing site ([www.italiansubs.net](http://www.italiansubs.net)) counting 500,000 members and founded by a group of teenagers who keep their identities as 'regular citizens during the day but turn into 'superheroes of fansubbing' at night'.<sup>6</sup> However, once released, local anti-piracy outfit FAPAV (Federation for the Protection of Audiovisual and Multimedia Content) which represents the country's cinema industry in Italy, stated that the movie paints the illegal activity of amateur translators as the work of digital heroes, and accused the subtitling group of 'fuelling piracy and glamorizing criminal activity'.<sup>7</sup> The federation subsequently released a statement declaring that fan sites like ItalianSubs represent a threat to the growth of and causes damage to

<sup>3</sup> <https://torrentfreak.com/unauthorized-subtitles-for-movies-tv-shows-are-illegal-court-rules-170421/>.

<sup>4</sup> <https://torrentfreak.com/unauthorized-subtitles-for-movies-tv-shows-are-illegal-court-rules-170421/>.

<sup>5</sup> [www.imdb.com/title/tt6823032/](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt6823032/).

<sup>6</sup> [www.tvaddons.co/community/threads/subtitle-heroes-fansubbing-movie-criticized-for-piracy-promotion.61236/](http://www.tvaddons.co/community/threads/subtitle-heroes-fansubbing-movie-criticized-for-piracy-promotion.61236/).

<sup>7</sup> [www.tvaddons.co/community/threads/subtitle-heroes-fansubbing-movie-criticized-for-piracy-promotion.61236/](http://www.tvaddons.co/community/threads/subtitle-heroes-fansubbing-movie-criticized-for-piracy-promotion.61236/).

film companies and the audiovisual translation (dubbing and subtitling) market as well. General Secretary Federico Bagnoli Rossi affirmed: ‘when a protected work is subtitled and there is no right to do so, a crime is committed. The website translates and distributes subtitles of audiovisual works not yet distributed on the Italian market, hence, the ItalianSubs community is illegal’.<sup>8</sup> Consequently, Italy has witnessed progressive shutdowns of fansubbing websites: *ItalianSubs* was immediately followed by *Subsfactory* and *Subspedia*, the largest communities that decided to cease their fansubbing activity voluntarily under the threat of a potential lawsuit.

## 5 Final Remarks and Future Prospects

Translation practices in the first two decades of the new century have unquestionably witnessed a myriad of transformations at various levels: technological, digital, virtual, social, mediatic and cinematic. From the advent of ubiquitous and cloud computing, to the boom of video streaming on demand and the shift from cable to Internet TV, these epochal breakthroughs have all concurred to accommodate as well as modify the needs of multifaceted audiences and users worldwide. Once lost in their passive roles of spectators restricted and controlled by traditional linear TV, new audiences are currently offered more they could ever dream and ‘told’ what they like—literally anticipating their own tastes and needs—thanks to an infinite series of online catalogues listing any sort of specifically tailored and customised experience of movies, TV series and documentaries. As a result, the nature of participatory and fan culture has changed accordingly: once a necessary evil able to make foreign products accessible and available in the local language, fansubbing activities, as of now, have no *raison d'être* anymore.

The attacks and lawsuits launched by the broadcasting and AVT industry around the world against fansubbing communities, have successfully managed to slow down, and will eventually stop their illegal activity. This series of unfortunate circumstances, that has had a direct and substantial impact on fan communities, is the consequence of an oversimplified analysis of a system that seems rather unprepared to tackle the issue of digital copyright infringement at its roots. Yet, on the other hand, the halt imposed on fan practices somehow represents the swansong of the democratic, hopeful, and creative

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<sup>8</sup> [www.dday.it/redazione/25636/italiansubs-illegale](http://www.dday.it/redazione/25636/italiansubs-illegale).

pathway traced by the Web 2.0. Fansubbing practices worldwide represent the tip of the iceberg as far as illegal activities online are concerned, while the juggernaut of illicit streaming sites is on the rise ‘because there are so many television streaming services that people are unwilling to take out multiple subscriptions’ (Moore 2018: online).

Times are certainly changing, hence, participatory culture in the digital age will go with the flow of transformations so far described, drawing a future that does not look as bright as it seemed when the ‘hyperlinked dream machine’ (Kelly 2005) first appeared. Yet, the level of unpredictability of the mediascape taking shape before our eyes, and the ever-increasing, almost uncontrollable technological advances might suggest unexpected turns of events in the near future. What we envision, as well as call for, is that copyright law, which has not kept pace with the co-creative revolution of the Web 2.0, will find a balance between the conflicting interests of the various stakeholders in order to nurture, promote and support creative reuse in the digital age.

## 6 Suggested Readings

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These publications are a lucid account of the role played by the first wave of fansubbing on the growth of Japanese anime along with the issue of piracy and the development of copyright law. They also provide an overview of the evolution of digital rights management and copyright infringement, as well as the future of the freedom of the Internet and fan practices worldwide.

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# 11

## Fandubbing

Rocío Baños

### 1 Introduction

The prevalence and ‘virality’ of audiovisual creations labelled as fandubs in online video repositories and streaming services stand in stark contrast with the lack of attention this phenomenon has received among the academic community so far, especially if compared to similar practices such as fansubbing (see the contribution by Massidda in this volume). The aim of this chapter is to give an overview of this underexplored fandom-related phenomenon focusing on its origins, evolution and characteristics, as well as on the motivations of those involved in these practices. To this end, the chapter will draw on the few academic publications dealing with this topic, either in detail or partially (Baños 2019a; Chaume 2018; Mereu Keating 2018; Nord et al. 2015; Spina Ali 2015; Wang and Zhang 2016), but also on non-academic sources providing useful insight into these practices and revealing the point of view of the creators of fandubs. Although the focus is on fandubbing understood as a phenomenon encompassing a myriad of dubbing practices undertaken by amateur or non-expert users, it will inevitably document its use as an umbrella term to refer to various manifestations of participatory culture (Jenkins 1992) involving the use of dubbing.

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## 2 Definitions

Fandubbing has been defined by Wang and Zhang (2016: 173) as “the activity performed by Internet users who edit and dub video clips selected from some original contents [sic] (mostly TV programmes and films) and share these self-made productions on video-streaming websites”. The strong association between fandubs and the Internet, social media and new technologies is also emphasised by Chaume (2018: 87), who defines fandubs as:

home-made dubbings of television series, cartoons (particularly the anime genre) and trailers for films that have not yet been released in the target language country or region. Fandubs are usually translated and recorded by fans of the said genres; they download the film texts from the Internet and use a digital sound editing program in order to manipulate or eliminate the soundtrack of the original version, to then insert a newly dubbed track which they record at home using a microphone.

Although fandubbing is often perceived as an amateur and home-made practice, done by fans for fans, the limited research carried out in this field has already revealed that it can encompass a wide range of manifestations of dubbing undertaken not only by fans, but also by amateurs who do not deem themselves fans, and even by dubbing professionals (Baños 2019a). In an attempt to make a distinction between these different manifestations, in their exploratory review of fandubbing in Iran, Nord et al. (2015: 4) refer to “quasi-professional dubbing”. Being unpaid, ‘unofficial’ and not comparable in terms of quality to the dubbing carried out by official studios, the authors consider this as a type of fandubbing characterised by its high technical quality and distinguished from the other two categories they identify, namely proper fandubbing and fundubbing.

Understood as “the practice of replacing the original dialogue track of an audiovisual text with another track containing a mostly new script created with humoristic purposes” (Baños 2019b: 172), fundubbing is very often associated with fandubbing. Indeed, this is how many fans and Internet users experimented with audiovisual content and dubbing in the origins of these practices, and it is a prevalent trend in online environments nowadays. In this vein, Chaume (2018: 87) argues that fandubs are “sometimes referred to as *fundubs*, when the main function of the ‘creative translation’ is parody” and that they are also called “*gag dubbing*, because of the witty and humorous nature of this type of home-developed dubbing”. However, it is important to note that fundubs are not the exclusive domain of amateurs, with parodic

dubbing having been used “as a site of experimentation and innovation, and even as an ideological tool, by companies, media producers, film directors and political movements” (Baños 2019b: 188).

It is also significant that some fandubbing communities use other denominations, such as independent or non-official dubbing, to advertise and present their work, avoiding the term ‘fan’. This could be an attempt to emphasise that some of the members of these communities are training or have been trained to become dubbing professionals and are not ‘mere’ amateurs or fans. Although some fandubbing groups would clearly associate their work to the motto ‘by fans, for fans’, especially those working with videogames and anime material, this label may have lost its appeal or relevance with time. Indeed, some home-made dubbings available online nowadays are not targeted at fans, but at a wide-range of Internet users.

Understanding fandubbing as a complex sociocultural practice, difficult to be neatly labelled and slippery to be defined, and drawing on Díaz-Cintas (2018), in a previous publication I advocated using the term cyberdubbing to reflect the wide range of non-traditional online dubbing practices so prevalent nowadays (Baños 2019a). Distinguishing between promotional dubbing, political or activist dubbing and altruist dubbing, this denomination includes both parodic and serious dubbing undertaken by fans, Internet users and digital influencers, be them professionals or amateurs. Within this framework, current manifestations of fandubbing are considered a type of cyberdubbing performed by Internet users who regard themselves as media fans and thus exhibit a positive emotional engagement with popular audiovisual culture. However, this definition is not applicable to fandubbing in its origins, and to fully grasp this phenomenon it is necessary to understand the sociocultural context in which it originated, as well as the ways in which it was nurtured and developed. This will be the focus of the following section, which draws largely on my previous research (Baños 2019a).

### 3 A Historical Overview of Fandubbing

As was the case with fansubs (Leonard 2005), the first instances of fandubs date back to the 1980s and involve anime fans replacing the soundtrack of their favourite anime programmes with their own voices and recordings. Merrill (2008, online) conceives this as a natural development, given the familiarity of hardcore anime fans with home video technology and the fact that they only needed a microphone and “the audio dub button on VCRs”. During the 1980s and the 1990s, fans were involved in these practices mainly

with parodic purposes (fundubs), but also to overcome linguistic barriers, in an attempt to accurately reflect the content of the original programme being dubbed (i.e. serious or genuine dubs). According to Patten (2004), the first fan-made dubbing of an anime video took place in 1983, when two anime fans revoiced an episode from the legendary Japanese series *Star Blazers* with a parodic purpose, calling it ‘You say Yamato’. This suggests that the first documented example of a fandub was indeed a fundub. In addition, if we assume that the first fansub dates back to 1986 (Leonard 2005), this also indicates that fandubs (albeit rudimentary and in the form of parodic dubbing) precede fansubs.

Constrained by technological developments, during the 1980s fandubbing groups recorded their satiric interpretations at home, on the fly, using off the air recordings of their favourite anime programmes (Merrill 2008). Their creations were disseminated among small groups of fans or in anime conventions, as with other anime productions of that time that were often showed untranslated, in their original version (Jenkins 2006), and sometimes accompanied with impromptu interpretations or rough explanations (Nornes 2007). Some widely known fandubbing groups active in the 1980s include Pinesalad Productions, Sherbert Productions, Seishun Shitemasu Productions or Corn Pone Flicks. Merrill (2008) posits that the work of Pinesalad Productions, especially their fundub of *Dirty Pair* episodes known as ‘Dirty Pair *duz dishes*’, was seminal and influential among fandubbing communities. This episode is currently available on YouTube<sup>1</sup> and some of the creations of this community are listed on their website, where they describe themselves as “a group of Southern California anime fans [who] decided to turn their favorite Robotech characters into pimps, prostitutes, drug abusers and anything else they could think of” (Pinesalad Productions 2009, online).

The work of Sherbert Productions has been discussed by Nornes (2007: 196), who posits that despite not being “translations in the strictest sense”, their creations were “extremely attuned to the original text while embedding it in a complex network of current events and popular culture”. According to Nornes (2007), the first parodic fandub carried out by this community was also based on an episode of the anime series *Dirty Pair*, where Carl Macek, a controversial figure within anime fandom, co-founder of Streamline Pictures and firm proponent of dubbing and the alteration of original anime for a successful adaptation into the target market, was ridiculed. Some of these anime parody groups would also edit the original episodes heavily. This was the case with Corn Pone Flicks (Merrill 2008) or with Seishun Shitemasu

<sup>1</sup> See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9zCdCwHqAjE> (Consulted 25.04.2019).

Productions, who deemed themselves as “a bunch of guys with a VCR”, as well as “fan-dubbers who edit anime together and make new productions that are hopefully entertaining” (Sheishun Shitemasu 2005, online).

Stimulated by the development of the Internet and digital technologies, fandubbing bloomed in the 1990s, as did fansubbing (Díaz-Cintas and Muñoz Sánchez 2006). Yet, fandubbing groups in the 1990s were still largely engaged in ‘overdub parodies’ (Murray n.d., online), or redubs (Pinesalad Productions 2009), as some of them referred to their activity, and not in serious fandubs. This was presumably due to both technical and time constraints, given that dubbing technology at the time only offered rudimentary results and the dubbing process was very time-consuming, as well as to the preference of many anime fans towards subtitling.

Nevertheless, this does not mean there were no cases of serious fandubs during this period. The first documented case of a non-parodic fandub dates back to 1993, when Corn Pone Flicks dubbed four scenes from the film *Vampire Hunter D* (Toyoo Ashida 1985). This anime parody group referred to this project as a ‘test dub’ (Murray n.d., online), undertaken in 1990 in an attempt to persuade potential investors to acquire the rights to this film for its official distribution in the US. However, the project came to a stall after the official dubbed version of the film was released by Streamline Pictures, following the tacit agreement of pulling back “from circulating any title that had found a commercial distributor” (Jenkins 2006: 159). Interestingly, the project was resumed after the Corn Pone Flicks team watched the official dubbed version, arguing that its translation and dialogue writing presented severe deficiencies. Confident in the higher quality of their dubbing script, this fandubbing group decided to go ahead and revoice four scenes of *Vampire Hunter D* (Murray n.d., online). Screened only once at an anime fan convention soon after it was recorded, this fandub was complimented by the audience, impressed by the quality of the revoicing and the translation (Murray n.d., online). Although those involved in these fan-related activities at the time acknowledge that, albeit scarce, other serious fandubs took place during the 1990s, tracing back such products is extremely challenging, thus highlighting the marginal nature of this phenomenon.

The discussion earlier has shown that, in its origins, fandubs were noticeably done by fans for fans, primarily for humoristic purposes, to be enjoyed only by those sharing a collective background and familiarity with anime productions. However, this trend has gradually changed, due to shifts in how fans engage with different forms of media consumption, distribution and appropriation. Nowadays, anime fandubbing groups no longer need to resort to VHS technology or disseminate their creations throughout fan conventions.

Sharing their work with other like-minded users has been facilitated by the affordances of digital technologies, making it easy to upload, download, stream and share digital media content. Although a large amount of the examples of serious fandubs available online belong to *anime* (see, for instance, the work carried out by Kyotodubs<sup>2</sup> or Fighter4Luv Fandubs<sup>3</sup>), reflecting the origins of these practices, a wide range of genres and types of audiovisual texts are dubbed by fans nowadays. These include, among others, trailers, other types of animation, videogames (see the work of AliTake Studio<sup>4</sup>), and videos created by users or by independent studios, distributed solely online (see the work of Escardi Fandubs<sup>5</sup>).

The audiovisual genres transformed by those involved in parodic dubbing nowadays are even more varied, with users being particularly allured by cult products (Baños 2019b), but also by their favourite films and TV series, as well as by documentaries and footage related to news and current affairs (see examples from the YouTube channel Bad Lip Reading<sup>6</sup>). New genres have also been created, as is the case with *abridging* or *abridged series*, which are parodic dubbings of anime where original anime episodes are edited, shortened and revoiced by fans, frequently mocking parts of the own series and characters.

These shifts in forms of engagement with media and culture have also been influenced by the evolution of the concept of media fan and fandom. The elusiveness of these notions is highlighted by Duffett (2013), who postulates that the term ‘fan’ nowadays embodies a wide range of ordinary people who exhibit a positive emotional engagement with popular culture, thus involving different experiences, concerning different practices and meaning different things depending on the context. Many of the home-made dubbings available online nowadays are not targeted at fans, but at a wide range of Internet users. This is the case with many of the parodic dubbings that abound online, aimed at achieving as many views as possible. A case in point is the extremely popular fundubs published on the YouTube channel Bad Lip Reading, which attract viewers who are not particularly interested or familiar with the original videos subject to parody. In the case of serious dubs (e.g. amateur dubbing of anime or user-generated videos), although these probably have a narrower target audience, there is always an attempt to capture a higher number of views.

<sup>2</sup> See <https://www.facebook.com/Studios-Kyotodubs-491007407684206/> (Consulted 25.04.2019).

<sup>3</sup> See <http://starsfandub.com/about/> (Consulted 25.04.2019).

<sup>4</sup> See <https://www.youtube.com/user/AliTakeStudio/featured> (Consulted 25.04.2019).

<sup>5</sup> See the fandub of the Cyanide & Happiness animated shorts created by the independent studio Explosm, uploaded by Escardi Fandubs in their channel <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9o94kJxYD5s&t> (Consulted 25.04.2019).

<sup>6</sup> See <https://www.youtube.com/user/BadLipReading> (Consulted 25.04.2019).

Fansubbing has also been affected by this shift, metamorphosing from a process instigated “by fans for fans” to one “by fans for all” (Díaz-Cintas 2018: 133).

The consolidation of fandubbing practices that has taken place throughout the 2000s and 2010s has thus been nurtured by technological developments, the evolution of fan practices and the changes in media consumption sparked by the “convergent media ecology” (Ito et al. 2010: 10) we inhabit today. Whereas the influence of technology and the Internet in the proliferation of fandubbing is undeniable, this phenomenon cannot be reduced to a technological trend and needs to be framed considering the sociocultural context in which it originated and was further developed. To this end, it is necessary to reflect on the motivations of fandubbers, as well as the needs met by fandubs at specific times.

## 4 Motivations Behind Fandubbing

The discussion earlier suggests that, unlike fansubbing, fandubbing practices were not solely triggered by the lack of official dubbings of specific material (anime in this case), but rather by a sense of belonging to a fan community. Drawing on the three genres of participation introduced by Ito et al. (2010) to understand how young users engage with media, it could be argued that the first examples of fandubs, which were of a parodic nature, were the result of anime fans ‘hanging out’ in their community, and ‘messing around’ with original anime and technological developments.

Later on, serious fandubs (see Corn Pone Flicks example above) were clearly motivated by the lack of official dubbings of anime at first, and then by fans’ discontent with existing dubbing practices. Such motivations are also commonplace in current instances of fandubbing: official translations are still not available for many videogames, trailers and anime series, and users interested in these have to resort to unofficial translations, be it in the form of subtitles or dubs. Thanks to the fandubs released by fandubbing communities, anime fans can now enjoy watching some episodes of their favourite series dubbed into their target language, instead of watching the original untranslated or resorting to fansubs. Regarding the latter, fansubs are more widely available given that fandubbing practices are more time consuming and require the use of more advanced software to achieve higher quality, as well as the collaboration of different professionals (translators and voice talents, for example).

As a result, fansubs are promptly and more readily available than fandubs, and the latter tend to materialise only where specific audiences have a

preference towards dubbing as an audiovisual translation (AVT) mode. This is the case with videogames, as some gamers seem to prefer playing specific titles dubbed, especially those featuring fast-paced action scenes requiring a great deal of concentration. While some argue this is because subtitles can hinder gameplay, others simply prefer dubbing for a more immersive experience. Regardless of the actual reason, fandubbing practices illustrate such preferences, as shown in the Spanish fandub of the short videos created by Valve Corporation to promote the updates and patches within the videogame *Team Fortress 2* back in 2007. A few of the short videos belonging to the series ‘Meet the Team’, introducing the different characters of the game, were officially dubbed into Spanish. Those that were not dubbed officially were subtitled and dubbed by fans<sup>7</sup>, in an attempt to address this shortage.

As discussed earlier, the fandub of *Vampire Hunter D* carried out by Corn Pone Flicks was motivated by their discontent with existing dubbing practices in general, and with the official dubbing released by Streamline Pictures in particular. As explained in Baños (2019a), one of the founders of this fandubbing group, Matt Murray, reported that the official version contained mistranslations and often strayed off the original intentionally. These strategies were apparently not justified by the need to keep lip synchrony, being implemented in an attempt to bring the dialogue closer to the target audience. Manipulation was also exerted in the form of additions, with intertextual references belonging to the target culture (e.g. to the *Star Wars* series) that were absent from the original being introduced in the English translation. This fandub clearly manifests the objections from the anime fan community to the extreme manipulation instigated by official anime distributors in the US at the time, demonstrating that dubbing anime into English without departing from the original substantially was indeed possible (Baños 2019a).

Current fandubbing practices have very similar purposes and motivations. In mainland China, for instance, “[d]isappointed by the quality of official dubbing, enthusiasts gathered online to form groups in order to perform dubbing in accordance with their own standards, or to use dubbing as a means for other purposes” (Wang and Zhang 2016: 176). By such other purposes, the authors refer to the use of parodic dubbing to protest against censorship, an issue they discuss in depth through the analysis of two fandubbed videos of *The Big Bang Theory*, a very popular US TV series banned from online broadcasts in China. They consider fandubbing a platform for Internet

<sup>7</sup>At the time of writing, the Spanish fandub of the short clip ‘Meet the Medic’ undertaken by AliTake Studio was available from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PBJAffrq4J0> (Consulted 25.04.2019). The official dubbing of one of the clips within this series ‘Meet the Snipper’, can be consulted from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5wmyCSybhxM&c> (Consulted 25.04.2019).

activism, portraying fandubs as an opposing force to censorship. When discussing ‘quasi-professional dubbing’ in Iran, Nord et al. also highlight the role of fandubs in this regard:

One of the most important features of such quasi-professional dubbing is the lack of censorship. *Iranfilm* stated that they slightly censor certain scenes in compliance with the Iranian families’ expectancy norms, but they barely censor visuals, and they mainly do not dub the socially unacceptable scenes. For example, in the movie *Pompeii* (2014), a segment was not dubbed but subtitled into Persian, as a female character was fairly scantily dressed. (Nord et al. 2015: 11)

These examples of ‘self-censorship’ from fandubbers reported by Nord et al. (2015) reveal how fandubbing materialises differently depending on the specific sociocultural context in which these practices are implemented. They also help to understand the portrayal of fandubs as spaces of re-narration or rewriting of texts of an audiovisual nature (Baños 2019a), influenced by a wide range of factors. In this case, it is viewers, users or fans deciding how to approach the dubbing of a particular programme, in their role as prosumers or co-creators, that is, as active participants, socially networked and deeply engaged in digital media consumption.

As also reported in Baños (2019a), fans might decide to perpetuate manipulative and censorial practices. This was the case with the fandubbing group Fighter4Luv Fandubs, formed in 2007 to oppose new anime dubbing practices, which adopted a more source-oriented approach in the 2000s. In particular, their aim was to dub the episodes of the last season of the anime series *Sailor Moon* into English (as these had not been dubbed) as well as to revive old dubbing practices and “bring back the nostalgia of the old English adaptation” (Fighter4Luv Fandubs 2018, online). Dubbed originally in the 1990s by DiC Entertainment, the old US version was edited for age-appropriateness, culture-specific references were adapted to the target culture (with ‘pork buns’ becoming ‘doughnuts’) and images were heavily manipulated: “scenes that depicted people driving cars were reversed so that the steering wheels were on the opposite sides, and Japanese writing was rotoscoped, or airbrushed, out” (McNally 2014, online). While conforming to old-fashion conventions and somewhat supporting manipulation and censorship, the fandubs created by this community were still motivated by fans’ discontent with the dominant anime dubbing conventions at the time.

The motivations behind fandubbing practices are therefore varied and dependent on the sociocultural context in which they take place. While some fandubs are attempts to address the lack of official dubbing of specific material,

in other cases the aim is to express discontent, satirise, experiment and entertain audiences. In addition to being commonly triggered by discontent and dissatisfaction, these practices are often fuelled by the sense of belonging to a community.

## 5 Research on Fandubbing: Key Notions, Insights into Fandubbing Practices and Differences with 'Official Dubbing'

As Dwyer (2018) acknowledges, fan AVT discourse is often framed around the notion of 'participatory culture' (Jenkins 1992), and those involved in fan-related AVT practices (such as fandubbing or fansubbing) are often identified as 'prosumers', "who proactively contribute to the shaping and rewriting of cultural products" (Dwyer 2018: 442). The term 'prosumer', as well as other related denominations such as 'pro-am', 'modding' or 'user-generated content' are conceived by Lange and Ito (2010: 246) as buzz words which underscore "how creative production at the 'consumer' layer is increasingly seen as a generative site of culture and knowledge". These notions have been widely applied in scholarly works on fansubbing, especially within AVT studies. The limited studies on fandubbing have also taken a similar approach, especially when contextualising the motives of fandubbing communities and their discontent with existing dubbing practices, "demonstrating how media industries continue to be riven by language barriers and geographic borders despite the de-territorializing, transnational affordances of digital and networking technologies" (Dwyer 2018: 443).

In addition to being framed around notions developed within Media Studies, fandubbing has been probed as a form of rewriting, drawing on theoretical perspectives within Translation Studies (Bassnett and Lefevere 1990). This concept has been discussed especially in the case of parodic dubbing undertaken by fans (Baños 2019b; Wang and Zhang 2016), "in which the original images are preserved, while dialogue is manipulated to either challenge or fit in with the dominant poetics and ideology of a given place and time" (Baños 2019b: 179). This manipulation of dialogue makes us wonder whether some types of fandubbing should be considered translation proper. Within this line of thought, Nornes (2007: 196) acknowledges that anime fan parodies are not "translations in the strictest sense", and Dwyer (2018: 437) considers that "fanfic" (fan fiction), and fan parody, music and 'mashup' videos can but do not necessarily involve translation at all" and thus

fall outside the scope of her discussion of media fandom and AVT practices. Yet, authors also argue that some of these creations are “extremely attuned to the original text” (Nornes 2007: 196) and are ‘faithful’ or coherent to the visual information conveyed by the source text (Baños 2019b).

Scholars within Translation Studies such as Chaume (2018) or Baños (2019b) posit that some fandubbing practices, considered as a form of rewriting, challenge traditional notions of equivalence, fidelity and authorship. Likewise, the few authors who have so far provided insight into the characteristics of serious fandubs have highlighted how these and official dubbing practices differ from each other, and how they transgress existing dubbing conventions. Izwaini (2014), Nord et al. (2015) and Wang and Zhang (2016) concur that amateurs involved in dubbing practices (either parodic or serious) resort to features that are not always considered appropriate in professional dubbing, such as dialects. Whereas some of these features are more marked in parodic dubbing, fans involved in serious dubbing also seem to resort to these.

As with fansubbing practices, the lack of translation training from fans involved in fandubs can easily transpire in their creations. Nord et al. (2015: 8) posit that they are sometimes characterised by “a fairly poor translation”, with a marked lack of naturalness, source-orientedness and the presence of mistranslations, issues that have also been highlighted in the case of fansubs. However, as has been discussed earlier, the expertise and background of those involved in fandubbing can vary significantly. In addition, as the authors (Nord et al. 2015.) contend, some fandubs do not entail translation as such, but rather the adaptation of other texts in the target language, be it the official dubbing script, official subtitles or other fan translations (e.g. fansubs). Indeed, the source text used by ‘fandubbers’ might be formed by a variety of textual sources. For instance, to create the script to be used for Corn Pone Flicks fandub, Murray<sup>8</sup> explains how he had to consult the original Vampire Hunter D film comics in Japanese, “which used images from the film with accompanying text of the script”. He also clarifies that he did not receive any formal training in Japanese (being self-taught) or translation, as seems to be often the case with those in charge of translation tasks in fandubbing groups.

This variety of sources could be one of the reasons why fandubbing communities rarely use the term ‘translation’ when referring to the creation of the dialogue to be revoiced by voice talents, using others such as ‘scriptwriting’ or ‘adaptation’ instead. However, this could also be a result of the role of the translator being taken for granted, which is unfortunately also commonplace

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<sup>8</sup> Matt Murray (Corn Pone Flicks founder), email messages to author, 4–6 August, 2018.

in the dubbing industry, where translators are sometimes forgotten and more emphasis seems to be placed on acting and dialogue writing.

Similarities between official dubbing and fandubbing practices are also evident when we consider workflows and the different roles undertaken by fans throughout the process of producing a fandub. This is an aspect that needs to be further investigated as hardly any references to workflows are made in the existing literature. However, judging by the recruitment adverts fandubbing communities post on social media and their own websites, as well as by the credits inserted in some fandubs, official workflows are mirrored, with fans unofficially adopting the roles of translator/dialogue writer/adapter, voice talents, dubbing director, sound and audio editor, etc. This reveals the complexity of the task at hand, as well as the sophistication of their modus operandi. As a result, and unlike fansubbing where fast turn-around projects are the norm, fandubbing is a lengthy and painstaking process, with many projects being abandoned and fans often enquiring about new releases and ‘complaining’ about timeframes.

The fluid communication between the consumers of these fandubs and their creators, inherent to the prosumer model, highlights a key difference with commercial dubbing. These amateur practices establish a more interactive, dynamic and equal relationship between producers and consumers, and even if viewers have more opportunities nowadays to provide feedback about the translation of audiovisual programmes available through more traditional channels, differences are still significant. In a similar vein, the standards by which fandubs are assessed are determined by viewers’ preferences and feedback, and not necessarily by existing dubbing conventions. Chaume (2012: 15–20) contends that the following broad areas determine the set of dubbing standards to be complied with in commercial dubbing: credible and realistic dialogue lines, coherence between images and words, a loyal translation, acceptable lip-synch, clear sound quality, and appropriate acting. While some of these standards seem to be relevant to fandubbing communities (e.g. a loyal translation in the case of *Vampire Hunter D* fandubs, or coherence between images and words in the case of parodic dubbing), others are disregarded or exaggerated. In addition, quality standards in fandubbing are determined by the context and the motivation behind the fandub.

Nord et al. (2015) illustrate how technical quality can vary substantially amongst fandubs in Iran depending on the profile of the fandubbing community and the background of its members. While some amateurs use more basic video-editing programmes and achieve substandard results as regards technical aspects and voice acting, others use more advanced software and “manage to preserve the sound effects as much as possible, even though

the performance of the voice-actors is far from professional" (Nord et al. 2015: 8). As far as 'quasi-professional dubbing' is concerned, they consider their output as being "of acceptable quality", following similar operational norms as those complied with in professional dubbing (Nord et al. 2015: 11).

From a technical point of view, dissimilarities are obvious if we consider the 'home-grown' (Chaume 2013: 111) nature of these practices, as well as the fact that they can now be performed with very basic software. As Wang and Zhang (2016: 178) acknowledge in the case of China, current mobile phone apps enable "users who have received no training in dubbing to create and share their dubbing on popular Chinese social networks". Those fandubs of poor technical quality in terms of sound and acting also tend to disregard synchronisation, with the dialogue only roughly matching the lip movements of the characters on screen. Nevertheless, others might comply with synchronisation norms and provide a more polished product from a technical point of view. Following O'Hagan's (2012: 30) reflection regarding quality standards in fansubbing, we could argue that "conventional translation quality measures are neither relevant nor productive in assessing" fandubs as well. Especially if they serve "the intended purpose for the assumed viewers" (O'Hagan 2012: 30) caution must be exerted when labelling these creations as below par or as non-adequate, or when stating that "quality does not seem to be a priority for non-professional translators" (Izwaini 2014: 107).

The first dubbing standard mentioned by Chaume, the creation of credible and realistic dialogue, seems to be particularly relevant for some fandubbing communities, to the point of exaggeration at times. The limited studies available on fandubbing (Izwaini 2014; Nord et al. 2015; Wang and Zhang 2016) have highlighted how non-experts involved in fandubs resort to dialects, slang, swearwords and overly colloquial register, which are not considered appropriate in professional dubbing. For example, Nord et al. (2015: 11) argue that "quasi-professional dubbers do not censor cultural taboos like alcoholic drinks, premarital teen relationships, while official Iranian AVT professionals tend to tone down such words or content". The insertion of dialectal features or overly colloquial register in fandubs can have an impact on other dubbing standards, resulting in incongruences between images (portraying a foreign reality) and words (referring to local or regional dialects or authentic expressions in the target language).

The discussion earlier has underlined some of the similarities and divergences between amateur and commercial dubbing highlighted in existing research on this topic, which have been summarised in Table 11.1. As will be discussed in the following section, these traits need to be further investigated in a variety of contexts to ascertain their prevalence.

**Table 11.1** Overview of similarities and differences between amateur and commercial dubbing

Divergences	Similarities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Source text constituted by a variety of textual sources.</li> <li>- Governed by audience preferences.</li> <li>- Use of a wide range of tools, from basic to professional, to produce the final product.</li> <li>- Dubbing conventions and standards are often challenged/transgressed:           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Importance of synchrony.</li> <li>- Use of specific linguistic features (dialects, slang, swearwords and colloquial register).</li> <li>- Voice acting quality.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Complex dubbing workflow.</li> <li>- Time-consuming process.</li> <li>- The role of translators is often taken for granted.</li> </ul>

## 6 Implications and Future Prospects

The use of fan, amateur or non-professional practices in the translation industry in general, and within audiovisual translation in particular, leads to much debate, raising “concerns about quality standards and the risk of trivializing the translation-related professions” (Antonini and Bucaria 2016: 11). For instance, in a recent public notice, AVTE, the European federation of national associations and organisations of audiovisual translators, warned about the “possible misappropriation” (AVTE 2017, online) of voluntary subtitling work for commercial purposes. The prevalence of these practices and the controversy they spark foreground the need to address these issues from an academic perspective. Yet, fandubbing and other non-standard dubbing practices have been barely broached by the academic community and only briefly documented in the media, as illustrated by Mereu Keating (2018) when discussing the case of the film *Chuck Norris vs. Communism* (Călugăreanu 2015). However, as this film illustrates in the case of Romania during the Cold War, illegal and non-standard dubbing practices can have major implications.

Professionals and some scholars seem to concur that practices such as fandubbing can have a negative impact on the AVT industry. In the case of fandubbing, however, this opinion does not seem so widespread, and fandubbing communities are often not portrayed as a threat to the dubbing industry. Chaume (2012: 42) contends that fandubbing and the traditional dubbing industry can coexist quite happily and that the former can even “act as a catalyst for professional dubbing”. This was indeed the original intention of Corn

Pone Flicks when embarking in the fandub of *Vampire Hunter D*, and similar cases can also be found nowadays<sup>9</sup>.

When discussing the influence of fan translation on professional practices in the case of China, Wang and Zhang (2016: 184) posit that “[t]he strategy of domestication as practiced by a large number of amateur fan translators has influenced official translation”. They also state that fandubbing groups have collaborated with digital game companies on dubbing projects, given the lack of well-trained and dedicated professionals in the dubbing industry (Wang and Zhang 2016: 187). These interesting remarks reveal that the impact of fandubbing and other related practices depends greatly on the specific context being researched and highlight the need to carry on studying these collaborative and co-creational practices. Further investigation is also needed in order to ascertain the prevalence of these practices globally, as well as the traits discussed in the previous section, considering the specific factors motivating fandubs on a case-by-case basis. Such research could also shed light onto the characteristics of fandubs as regards specific linguistic and cultural traits, given that existing research has only addressed this superficially so far. Copyright and ethical implications of these practices also require our attention, as illustrated by the work of Spina Ali (2015: 756), who highlights the lack of a legislative regulation of parodies (and therefore of parodic dubbing) in Italy and the resulting “ambiguous position they occupy in the Italian copyright panorama”.

This chapter has provided an overview of fandubbing, understood as a term encompassing collaborative and co-creational dubbing practices performed by Internet users who exhibit a positive emotional engagement with popular audiovisual culture. It has also highlighted the complexity of these practices and their marginal status both in the industry and the scholarly community. Against this backdrop, this chapter aims to promote research in this field and to contribute to our understanding of these practices, which are more far-reaching and prevalent than we might think.

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<sup>9</sup>This could have also been the intention of the group All Destiny Dubbing (<http://www.dubbing.alldestinyproductions.es/>) when dubbing the videogame *Kingdom Hearts: Dream Drop Distance* (Square Enix 2012) into Spanish and Catalan, given that the developer of this game decided not to localise it.

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## Filmography

*Chuck Norris vs. Communism* (2015). Dir. Ilinca Călugăreanu.

*Vampire Hunter D* (1985). Dir. Toyoo Ashida.



# 12

## Audio Description: Concepts, Theories and Research Approaches

Iwona Mazur

### 1 Introduction

Blind and visually impaired persons have no or limited access to the visual dimension of the world around them. With the advent of audio description (AD) their situation has improved, as AD could be deemed a kind of a “prosthesis” that in a way replaces vision. If done properly, AD can really invoke images in the persons’ minds, who often report that they “can see again”.<sup>1</sup> This chapter offers an overview of this accessibility service. First, a definition and some typologies of AD will be provided, followed by a brief historical outline, theoretical foundations and research trends. It ends with the implications AD has for teaching and the society at large. As it is impossible to exhaust the broad topic within the limits of one chapter, the account below is just meant to point out the main AD aspects and whet the reader’s appetite for exploring this highly interesting and relevant topic further.

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<sup>1</sup> This statement is based on interviews with blind and visually impaired persons conducted by the author as part of her reception research (e.g. Chmiel and Mazur 2014).

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## 2 Definition and Typologies

Audio description is a service that makes (audio)visual content (such as a film, a TV programme, a museum exhibition, or a theatre performance) accessible to visually impaired persons. It is an audio commentary that describes the relevant visual elements of a work (as well as meaningful sounds that may not be clear to the target audience), so that the work constitutes a coherent whole for the audience.

The target audience of AD can be divided into primary and secondary. The former includes persons with various types and degrees of sight loss. These can be blind persons (either congenitally or non-congenitally) or persons with such impairments as blurred vision due to cataract, tunnel vision because of glaucoma or loss of central vision as a result of age-related macular degeneration. According to the World Health Organization (WHO 2018), there are 1.3 billion people with some form of visual impairment around the world, of whom 36 million are blind and 217 million have moderate or severe sight impairment.<sup>2</sup>

The secondary AD audience, on the other hand, encompasses persons with no vision impairment, for whom AD may facilitate reception of audiovisual content. These may include the elderly (who may experience deterioration of their cognitive capacities), persons with learning or cognitive difficulties who may find it challenging to follow a fast-paced show or even children on the autism spectrum, for whom AD may help decipher facial expressions of protagonists and thus interpret their emotions (Starr 2017). Surprisingly, a significant portion of the secondary audience is made up of regular viewers who may be doing some chores around the house and follow their favourite programme. In a study concerning the viewing habits of sighted persons 39% of the 1000 interviewed revealed that they watched television as background to other tasks (such as ironing or cooking), in which case AD helped them follow the show (ITC 2000: 7). To sum up, it is important to keep in mind that, contrary to common belief, the majority of the AD audience, whether primary or secondary, can see, have some residual vision in the case of partially sighted persons, or have visual memory in the case they lost sight later in life.

AD can be classified into dynamic versus static as well as recorded versus live. Dynamic AD is created for “moving” images (film, television programmes and live performances), whereas static AD is made for static objects, such as

<sup>2</sup>In this chapter, unless otherwise indicated, visual impairment is meant as severe impairment and blindness. Sometimes, for convenience, the two terms (visual impairment and blindness) are used interchangeably, but refer to both groups.

paintings, sculptures, architecture and so on. AD is usually recorded for the screen (films, television programmes, etc.), but it can also be recorded for museum purposes in the form of audio guides or mobile applications. Live AD, as the name suggests, happens at live events, such as theatre or opera performances, sport events or museum exhibitions (if AD is provided on the spot by a museum guide, rather than an audio guide). In some cases, AD can be provided live for films screened at the cinema, where a voice talent reads out the AD. Often what is meant is actually semi-live AD, as for most live events AD can be prepared in advance, but is delivered live, and some on the spot changes may be required. We will return to this topic in Sect. 2.2.

## 2.1 Screen AD

Film and television are the most popular media when it comes to provision of AD (ADLAB 2012). This may be due to the fact that films and television are the most popular entertainment in general, including among the sighted persons, but also the most accessible to the visually impaired, since they can enjoy them in the comfort of their own homes. Screen AD can be distributed via various channels, such as television, DVDs/Blu-ray, video on demand, the Internet, cinemas. Generally, the AD production process is quite similar irrespective of the distribution channel. What is of paramount importance are timecodes in a film or a programme, as AD has to fit in between dialogues and other meaningful sounds and timecodes help the voice talent reading the AD synchronise it with the image. Normally, AD is provided as a separate audio track that can be switched on by the user. In cinemas, it can be provided via wireless headsets or using a mobile application that synchronises a downloaded AD script with the timecodes in the film.

Screen AD should not overwhelm the audience with too many details and should be well balanced so as not to fill in all the spaces between dialogues and let the viewers take in and enjoy the original soundtrack as well. What is usually prioritised are the spatiotemporal relations as well as characters who move the story forward. It is important to always indicate when and where the action is taking place. For temporal settings, the principle of continuity is assumed, that is, that scenes follow one another in time. Should the continuity be broken by non-chronological order of events resulting in a flashback or a flashforward, this should be mentioned in the AD. Same applies to locations—the visually impaired viewer needs to know whenever the spatial setting changes. As for characters, it is important to describe their appearance as well as their actions and reactions, if relevant for plot development. In

describing the appearance, it is good to offer a top-down description (e.g. “She is wearing a hat, a white blouse, a black skirt and high heels” instead of “(...) a blouse, high heels, a black skirt and a hat”), as this reflects the order of perception in the blind person’s mind. If time is scarce, the most prominent feature of a character may be described (e.g. blonde hair, a moustache) and more details may be added later when time allows.

Most of screen AD is recorded (with the exception of some cinema AD where it can be delivered live) and can be read out either by the audio describer themselves or a professional voice talent. If AD is made for dubbed productions or ones created in the target audience’s local language, it is simply inserted between dialogues. In the case of foreign or multilingual productions, on the other hand, AD has to be properly timed and mixed with the translated dialogues, whether in the form of voice-over (VO) or audio subtitles (AST) (Braun and Orero 2010; Iturregui-Gallardo 2019).

## 2.2 (Semi-)live AD

(Semi-)live AD is delivered at live events, be them a theatre play, an opera or dance performance or a sports game. The word “semi” refers to the fact that theatre or opera AD is usually prepared in advance, based on recordings of a performance from a rehearsal, and then delivered live, usually via a headset. As each show is dynamic, the audio describer must be prepared to make on-the-spot changes to the pre-prepared script. At such events audio describers usually work in pairs from a sound proof booth. Theatre AD may consist of three parts: an audio introduction (AI), a touch tour and the AD proper. An AI is prepared ahead of time and either played as a recording or read out live before the performance. Sometimes it is made available online ahead of time. An AI contains information about scenography, props and the protagonists. It may also include some facts about the director as well as the play’s synopsis and the AD authors. Sometimes an AI is complemented by a “touch tour”, during which the blind audience is invited onto the stage where they can explore the scenography, props and costumes. Both the AI and the touch tour provide extra information for which there may not be enough time in the AD proper, and thus make it easier for the visually impaired patrons to visualise the stage and the actors. The AD proper starts when the performance starts. The audio describer must be prepared to make impromptu changes to the script, as there may be inadvertent changes in the play itself: pauses between dialogues may change, as can the location of the actors on the stage, or their gestures and facial expressions.

Opera AD is similar to theatre AD in that it often includes an AI and a touch tour. The main difference is that audio subtitles must be integrated with the AD, as many opera performances have librettos in the original language, which are translated for the sighted audience in the form of surtitles (which can also be displayed on small screens on the seats in front of the spectators). The opera is comprised of four main elements: (1) music, the human voice and the orchestra, (2) libretto, the plot (3) the singers' acting, (4) scenography (Pahlen 1963; Arregui and del Campo 2007 after Cabeza i Cáceres 2010: 228). So in the AD the second element must be read out as audio subtitles, the third and fourth element must be described, and all this must be done without dominating the first element. Opera AD may be approached in two ways: the AD is available only in the form of an AI, which is recorded and can be listened to before the performance or it is read out over music (and sometimes also the singing) (Matamala and Orero 2007: 206).

Another example of live AD is sports AD. It is delivered either live via headsets at sports venues, or via an additional audio channel on TV. Sports AD is often compared to a sports commentary, as they both mention shots, passes or fouls, however there are essential differences. While the latter is more focused on figures and statistics (often given as random facts about the teams, players, and game officials) and uses "more discursive and leisurely speech" (Holmes 2001: 247), the former places greater emphasis on the action, location of players, their facial expressions, and unusual things happening on the field (such as a torn T-shirt). Since the blind fans can hear sounds at a stadium, the reactions of the audience are usually explained as well. What is common to both sports AD and commentary is the emotional involvement: instead of a dry account, both describers and commentators should offer an emotionally loaded rendition of what is happening on the field. The job of the sports audio describer is sometimes compared to that of the simultaneous interpreter: both need good memory, proper voice projection, stress resistance, specialist knowledge, as well as division of attention and concentration (Michalewicz 2014).

## 2.3 Museum AD

Museum AD differs from both film and (semi-)live AD described above in that it is usually an autonomous text which is not bound by the existing dialogues and/or music/soundtrack. Sometimes it is compared to the audio guide, however there are key differences: while typical audio guides contain additional information about the works they refer to (such as the artist's life,

historical and cultural context of the work's creation, the critical acclaim, etc.), the AD additionally includes the description of the work itself. It may also include instructions on how to operate the device, information about the layout of the venue (e.g. where the toilets, shops, the cafeteria are located), directions on how to move around the building, as well as information on how to explore a work of art through touch if one is available for tactile exploration. Museum AD can also be looked at from the point of view of mode of presentation: it can be recorded (and available through an audio guide or a mobile application) or it can be delivered on the spot by a museum or tourist guide (in which case it can be scripted or unscripted). As for the intended receiver, it can be addressed specifically to visually impaired visitors or it may be integrated within an audio guide meant for all visitors, whether impaired or not (ADLAB 2012: 29).

### 3 A Historical View

It is said that AD has been around for as long as sighted people have described the world to their blind companions. Nonetheless, it is considered that the beginnings of AD as a formalised accessibility service date back to the early 1980s. In 1981 at Arena Stage in Washington D.C. for the very first time a play *Major Barbara* with description for the blind was staged, which was the effect of collaboration between the theatre and Chet Avery, Margaret Rockwell and her future husband Cody Pfansiehl of the Metropolitan Washington Ear blind organisation. The Pfansiehls and the Metropolitan Washington Ear have contributed greatly to the development of AD in the USA, continuing to support theatre AD, but also creating the first TV and museum audio descriptions. In 1990, as a result of cooperation between the Metropolitan Washington Ear and a Boston branch of Public Broadcasting Service, the Descriptive Video Services was set up, a company dedicated to AD provision. In 2010, President Barack Obama signed a law whereby top nine broadcasters were obliged to provide four hours of programming with AD a week on 25 biggest TV markets in the USA (Snyder 2014: 19–27).

In the mid-1980s AD travelled across the Atlantic to the UK to a theatre in Averham (Nottinghamshire), where in 1986 the first audio described performance took place. However, it was not until 1988 that the first regular AD service was offered by Windsor's Theatre Royal. Over the next years the number of theatres staging plays with AD had increased and in the year 2000 there were already 40 of them (ITC 2000: 4). Not that long after AD was introduced in theatres, it was also explored for television purposes. In

1992–1995 the Independent Television Commission (ITC) in cooperation with broadcasters and user associations carried out the Audio Described Television (Audetel) project aimed at determining the needs and preferences of AD users as well as the technical AD-enabling solutions (ITC 2000: 4) (for more details see Sect. 5.2). The first legal provisions concerning AD were included in the Broadcasting Act of 1996, later amended by the Communications Act of 2003. Today the UK is the world leader in AD provision, with the highest number of venues (for film screenings, live performances and DVDs) offering regular AD service (Snyder 2014: 21).

Gradually, AD has spread to other European countries (and beyond) where it has seen (mostly) an exponential growth. Interestingly, while in the USA and the UK AD was first offered in the theatre and then on TV/in cinemas, in other countries it was usually vice versa: for example, in Germany and Poland AD was first introduced in the cinema, whereas in Italy, Spain, and Portugal on TV, and only then was it transferred to other modes and venues (e.g. opera, theatre, museums, sports). An important milestone in AD development in Europe was the adoption of the European Parliament's Audiovisual Media Services Directive of 2010, which stipulated the right of persons with disabilities "to participate and be integrated in the social and cultural life of the Union" and that such right is linked to "the provision of accessible audiovisual media services" (EP 2010: 95/6). The Directive also mentions audio description as one of the means to achieve such accessibility. The Directive has prompted individual Member States to adopt national or regional regulations governing the provision of AD, thus making AD obligatory for selected broadcasters (for an overview of the legislation and the current AD situation in Europe, see Reviers 2016)

## 4 Theoretical Foundations

As it pertains to (audio)visual content, AD has been traditionally placed within the conceptual framework of audiovisual translation (AVT). Also, since AD concerns providing access to the (audio)visual content to persons with visual impairment, it has also been treated as part of media accessibility (usually along with subtitling for the deaf and hard of hearing) (see the contributions by Bogucki and Díaz Cintas as well as Greco and Jankowska in this volume). However, a newcomer to the field may wonder how describing images can be classified as translation. In order to explain it, we need to go back to Jakobson's (1966) tripartite division into interlingual, intralingual and intersemiotic translation. While the first two types concern transfer

between and within language(s), the third type involves operations between two semiotic systems. Jakobson's original definition of intersemiotic translation viewed it as a way of interpreting verbal signs by means of non-verbal signs (an example being translating natural language into the Morse code or road signs). In the case of AD, on the other hand, we have the opposite: translating non-verbal signs (images) into verbal signs (words) (e.g. Díaz Cintas 2005). Nonetheless, when we look closely at the nature of AD, it will become apparent that this conceptualisation of AD is not exact, as AD involves so much more than just transferring images into words (including, e.g., deciphering unclear but relevant sounds, signalling who is speaking in a group scene, etc.). For this reason, it could be argued that AD is in fact a multisemiotic rather than intersemiotic type of translation (e.g. Fryer 2016: 4).

AD can also be looked at from the point of multimodality, as what normally gets described are multimodal texts, be them a film, a theatre or dance performance or a sports event, which all include more than one semiotic mode (e.g. verbal, auditory, visual) (e.g. Braun 2011; Reviers 2018; see also the contribution by Taylor in this volume). The audio describer's task is then to create a new multimodal text by translating *intermodal* links between images, sound and dialogue into *intermodal* links between sound and AD and by making the right *intramodal* verbal links between dialogue and AD. What is more, the audio describer needs to transfer *intramodal* visual coherence to *intramodal* coherence in the AD by recreating the necessary visual cues in the description (Braun 2011: 650, 658). What makes AD particularly challenging is the fact that a multimodal text that is processed holistically by the viewer must be described in a linear manner for the blind user, usually in between dialogues or other meaningful sounds. This in turn means that the audio describer must carefully analyse the to-be-described work, select what is absolutely relevant to make the target text coherent for the blind viewer, and transfer it into concise and vivid language so that the blind can recreate the multimodal texts in their mind's eye.

## 5 Research on the Topic

Developments in AD provision soon ignited academic interest in this novel type of AVT. AD as a research area has attracted not just linguists and translation scholars, but also film and theatre experts, media and communication researchers, psychologists and sociologists. Each of those researchers brought their own methods to the study of AD, and thus the research has become truly interdisciplinary.

Initially, AD research focused on AD as text type (see below). Later, an important topic became the subjectivity versus objectivity debate. Although AD guidelines generally advise against using subjective judgment in description, in some cases an objective description may be difficult, because of time constraints or the potentially high cognitive effort that the blind would have to make to process such a description. For example, it is more efficient to say “He is surprised” rather than describe the complex facial expression that makes him appear so. This debate gave rise to reception studies that tested how such descriptions were received by AD users (e.g. Chmiel and Mazur 2014; ADLAB 2013). As the results of those studies were mostly inconclusive, AD saw a move away from hard-and-fast guidelines to more comprehensive AD strategies (e.g. Remael et al. 2014). This paradigm shift is also in line with the functional approach to translation, which allows for a range of strategies to be applied in the target text, depending on its function in the target culture, audience design or requirements of the client commissioning the translation (e.g. Mazur 2014a, b).

This section will offer an overview of selected AD research, which has been divided into three broad categories: text-based studies, reception studies and experimental studies. It is important to note that the limited space allows for neither an in-depth presentation of the mentioned studies nor for mentioning all (or even) most of the research that has been conducted to date. The section is just meant to indicate the variety of research topics undertaken and methods used to study AD.

## 5.1 Text-Based Studies

When it comes to text-based studies on AD, a range of approaches have been used, including discourse analysis, corpus-based studies and narratology. Selected studies representing these approaches are presented below.

Braun (2007) examines the English AD of *The Hours* (Daldry 2002) using three discourse analysis approaches: creation of mental models, inferences and local and global coherence. Mental models are built based on bottom-up (information included in the discourse) and top-down (contextual information) processes. This applies to both verbal and visual discourse. The audio describers' task, then, is to recreate the visual cues (that complement the auditory cues) in a film in such a way that the blind audience can build a similar mental model to the sighted audience. For example, in the AD of the opening scene of *The Hours* the right information had to be provided for the audience to be able to determine that the woman writing the letter and the

woman who goes into the river are the same person and that the presented events are in fact the final hours of the life of Virginia Wolf. This, on the other hand, may be aided by inference, whereby explicatures are verbalised in the AD, while implicatures are recreated in the AD and their meaning is to be inferred by the viewer. Finally, local coherence concerns an individual scene, whereas global coherence pertains to coherence between different scenes. The audio describer needs to recreate the necessary links that make scenes coherent both at the local and global levels. Also Taylor (2014) looks into the issue of coherence in both film as a multimodal text and AD. He uses multimodal transcription (Baldry and Thibault 2006) and phasal analysis (Malcolm 2010) to analyse a scene from *Inglourious Basterds* (Tarantino and Roth 2009) with a view to identifying cohesive links. Taylor posits that AD should be both internally coherent as well as coherent with the image and the dialogues, and such tools may help audio describers identify the cohesive links to be recreated in the AD to ensure that the audio described film is coherent for the target audience (for studies on coherence in AD also see Braun 2011 and Reviers 2018).

When it comes to corpus-based studies, Piety (2004) analyses AD language and style based on a small corpus of four films. He proposes a typology of structural components of AD including: insertions (a continuous stretch of description), utterances (a continuous stream of words), representations (a component of an utterance that conveys information about the visual field) and words (Piety 2004: 457), thus creating an analytical tool for existing ADs. Salway (2007) created the first sizeable corpus of English AD as part of the Television in Words (TIWO) project, based on 91 films representing different genres. He found that some word categories (e.g. action verbs) were more frequent in the AD corpus than in the general language one and thus concluded that AD is a special language type.

A big step forward in AD corpus research was the creation of the first multimodal corpus (TRACCE) encompassing over 300 Spanish films with ADs as well as 50 English, French and German audio described films (Jiménez and Seibel 2012). The films have been divided into segments of up to one minute long, with the corresponding AD. Each segment has been assigned to each of the following categories: narratology, cinematography and grammar, which allowed the researchers “establish comparisons and patterns of equivalence between the three levels” (Jiménez and Seibel 2012: 409). The corpus gives its users a range of research possibilities, such as searching for a specific camera movement and seeing whether and how different audio describers have reflected it in AD. Examples of other corpus-based studies in AD are Arma (2011) for Italian and Reviers (2018) for Flemish.

Since films tell a story, another important research approach in AD is narratology. Remael and Vercauteren (2007) propose a narratological model that would help students analyse the visual cues in a film, and then reflect them in the AD. They use Lucey's 12 strategies for building the visual narrative (Lucey 1996: 98–106) and apply them to analysing the exposition phase of *Ransom* (Howard 1996) in order to identify narratologically salient elements to be included in the AD. Kruger (2010) proposes to reflect the narrative effect of presented events in the description (which he calls “audio narration”, AN), as opposed to objectively describing what is visible on the screen (which he calls “clinical AD”). The author admits that although AD and AN are two ends of a continuum and that normally AD includes narratological elements, while AN is likely to include descriptive elements, AN is seen as an autonomous form of narration that “allows the audience to gain imaginative access to [the] fictional reality by means of narrative cues provided in a re-narrativisation of the filmic text” (Kruger 2010: 247). In a similar vein, Vandaele (2012) considers which film elements determine its narrative force and proposes to reflect in the AD those elements that invoke in the viewer the three basic “states of mind”: suspense, curiosity and surprise (Sternberg 2009). In this way, the audio describer’s task is to recount not only the events that have happened (“realized action”), but ones that may happen or could have happened but did not (“hypothesised action”), so that the blind viewer can derive pleasure from not knowing in time, just like the sighted viewer does.

There are also other important studies that could be classified as text-based, but which have not been included here due to space constraints. For example, Vercauteren (2012) discusses reflecting narratological time in AD, Perego (2014) proposes ways of reflecting filmic language in AD, while Jankowska (2015) studies the effectiveness of translating AD scripts from English into Polish versus writing AD from scratch.

## 5.2 Reception Studies

Since AD is created with visually impaired persons in mind, it has been important to verify whether the proposed description methods are effective, acceptable and enjoyable for the target audience. Thus, reception research (see the contribution by Di Giovanni in this volume) has constituted a significant portion of AD research. It has mostly “borrowed” methodologies from sociology, such as focus groups, in-depth interviews and questionnaires. With time, also more advanced methods have been applied (e.g. from the area of psychophysiology), but these studies will be presented separately in Sect. 5.3.

Reception research has been conducted by user associations, individual researchers or researchers working alongside user associations and/or broadcasters. In the first and last case, it is usually easier to reach respondents, which is one of the greatest challenges of this type of research (e.g. Chmiel and Mazur 2016). In the past, it was more common to contact respondents over the phone, later they were usually interviewed face-to-face (e.g. following the viewing of AD clips or entire films). Nowadays, with the Internet being commonplace, users may also be reached online, though at the risk of some groups of potential respondents being excluded (e.g. not that tech-savvy older generation, which constitutes a significant portion of the target audience). AD reception research could be divided into comprehensive studies that survey a range of different AD solutions, on the one hand, and ones that are more specialised focused on specific AD methods, on the other. First selected examples of the first type will be given, followed by a brief overview of the second kind.

One of the first large-scale reception studies was done in the years 1992–1995 by the European Audetel consortium of broadcasters and user associations, whose aim was to conduct “a thorough investigation of the technical, artistic, logistic and economic issues associated with the provision of an optional descriptive commentary of television programmes to enhance their enjoyment by visually impaired people” (ITC 2000: 3). The research had four stages in which data were elicited through questionnaires, post-viewing interviews, focus groups and feedback from persons testing AD at home. Although it was concluded that “there are many definitions of a successful audio description, not merely because describing styles differ, but because there are many fundamental differences in audience expectation, need and experience” (ITC 2000: 4), the end result was a document listing the main AD guidelines, which till this very day remains an important point of reference for audio describers in the UK and elsewhere.

Schmeidler and Kirchner (2001) studied the impact of watching science programmes with and without AD among 111 visually impaired participants, including 39% congenitally blind persons. The research showed that more information was retained after watching the programmes with AD. What is more, the participants reported that AD “makes programs more enjoyable, interesting and informative; and that they are more comfortable talking with sighted people about programs that had been described” (Schmeidler and Kirchner 2001: 197).

A multinational reception study was carried out by the European ADLAB consortium (2011–2014), whose primary aim was to produce comprehensive AD guidelines. Before that happened, however, different AD solutions had

been tested with the target users on the example of *Inglourious Basterds* (Tarantino and Roth 2009). The testing was done in all of the six project's partner countries and involved 80 respondents with visual impairment (63% of whom were congenitally blind). They were interviewed based on a questionnaire and after watching a clip with AD. In addition to general demographic questions and questions about preferences, the questionnaire included comprehension questions to test which of the two proposed AD solutions is more cognitively effective. The tested items were, for example, how to read out text on screen, character naming, the use of filmic terms in AD, description of gestures, intertextual references, describing unfamiliar sounds and a descriptive versus narrative description. Detailed results can be found in a report available online (ADLAB 2013).

Examples of the more specific reception research include testing how intonation impacts AD comprehension (Cabeza i Cáceres 2011) as well as whether AD users are willing to accept alternative solutions in AD, such as first-person AD (Fels et al. 2006) or the use of synthetic voices (Szarkowska and Jankowska 2012). There were also a number of studies that tested the respondents' sense of presence and immersion into the story world (e.g. Fryer and Freeman 2013; Walczak and Fryer 2017; Wilken and Kruger 2016).

As reception research based on users' preferences often yields inconclusive results, it is better to include more comprehension questions that would be correlated with memory scores of the visually impaired participants and compared to those of the sighted controls (Mazur and Chmiel 2016: 115). Also, in recent years some AD reception studies have combined self-reports with more objective data obtained using psychophysiological measures, examples of which are discussed in the section below.

### 5.3 Experimental Studies

Experimental research has been gaining ground in AD in recent years, as a way of gathering more objective data regarding creating ADs and their reception. One of the methodologies that has attracted a significant interest of AD scholars is eye-tracking (ET). By measuring fixations on specific areas of interest, ET has been used to determine where sighted persons look when they watch films, in order to later reflect such data in descriptions for the blind (e.g. Di Giovanni 2014; Mazur and Chmiel 2016; Orero and Vilaró 2012). Vilaró et al. (2012) studied the influence of sound on perception by recording the gaze of participants looking at the same images, with different soundtracks. They concluded that the sound has an impact on visual

perception, which confirms that the audio describer should take into account both the image and the sound when drafting the AD. Kruger (2012), on the other hand, combined ET data with descriptions of dynamic scenes to compare visual saliency as opposed to narrative saliency. His analysis showed that sometimes a visually salient element may have low narrative saliency and vice versa, which means that in AD narrative salient elements should take precedence, as they are essential in reconstructing the narrative.

Another application of ET has been testing the impact of AD on cognitive processing of visual and auditory information. For example, Krejtz et al. (2012) found that AD guided sighted children's attention when they watched an educational animated film. Those of the children who watched the film with AD outperformed the ones who did not in discussing new concepts from the film and using specialised vocabulary introduced there.

One of the latest developments in AD research has been the application of psychophysiological measures to test reception of AD (in combination with self-report data). For example, Fryer (2013) studied AD-induced presence based on self-report data and heart rate (HR) and electrodermal activity (EDA) measurements of visually impaired participants. Ramos (2015) looked into emotional activation (based on heart rate measures and questionnaires) in participants with sight loss using audio described clips portraying fear, sadness and disgust and found the highest levels of emotional activation in the case of fear-inducing scenes. Similarly, Iturregui-Gallardo (2019) researched emotional activation in visually impaired respondents based on self-reports, HR and EDA induced by different audio subtitling (AST) styles. Though the study did not concern AD per se, it was closely linked to it, as AST often accompanies AD in foreign language or multilingual productions. The researcher compared emotional activation by two AST voicing styles (dubbing effect versus voice-over effect) in scenes portraying the emotions of sadness, fear and anger. Save for the clip portraying fear, he found no statistically significant differences when it comes to the effects of the two voicing styles on the emotional activation of respondents. What is more, he found no correlation between psychophysiological and self-report data, an observation also made by Fryer (2013) and Ramos (2015), which can be viewed as a limitation of such studies. The researchers also point out that such experiments are difficult to control, as there may be other factors influencing the physiology of participants, such as room temperature, stress levels or bodily functions such as digestion. This means that although promising, the methodology still has some limitations for the purposes of studying AD reception.

## 6 (Didactic) Implications and the Future

Although the profession of the audio describer is not yet firmly established, courses teaching AD, both at universities and beyond, have sprung up. In an online study carried out as part of the ADLAB PRO project (ADLAB PRO 2017), data were collected concerning as many as 192 courses conducted over the last three years (of which 93 were taught in an academic and the remaining 99 in a non-academic context, for instance as in-house training). University courses teach AD as part of traditional in-class instruction (76%), remote learning (14%) and blended learning (10%). Overall, the most commonly taught type of AD is film description (81%), followed by museum AD (55%), theatre AD (40%) and AD for other live events (30%). The two predominant skills that are taught are AD drafting and raising the awareness of learners as regards the needs of the visually impaired. Twenty-two per cent of trainers always cooperate with the visually impaired, 23% do that often and a similar percentage (23%) do that sometimes. This points to the fact that AD teaching, like the service itself, is inclusive.

One of the goals of the ADLAB PRO project was to define the profession of the audio describer, by setting out their skills and competencies. A natural next step would be to work on the certification of the profession to make it more visible and recognisable. As the AD service is likely become more prevalent (e.g. due to legal requirements and the increasingly inclusive mindsets of societies at large), we can expect a greater demand for audio description work and professional audio describers. This, in turn, will call for more AD courses, including specialised ones, focused on AD subtypes, such as museum AD or AD for live events. This issue has also been addressed in ADLAB PRO, as its main deliverable has been a modular online course offering a range of training materials (such as core and additional videos on a whole variety of topics, reading lists, exercises and AD samples) in AD's main subfields (film, museum AD, AD for live events), made available on a Creative Commons licence. With e-learning platforms becoming more popular, we can also expect that more training will be offered online or in a blended environment. The ADLAB PRO materials can also be helpful in creating such courses, as they are fairly easy to adapt for e-learning purposes.

When discussing the future of AD, it is worth mentioning Universal Design (UD), a paradigm which assumes “the design of products, environments, programs and services to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design” (Ostroff 2011: 1.3). As put forth by Ellis (2016: 42):

Universal Design is not a ‘one approach fits all’ solution, but one that accommodates the needs of the maximum number of potential users, along with promoting the inclusion of a wide range of their views, including those with disabilities, early in the design stage. This helps avoid the large cost of retrofitting if accessibility has to be added to an existing product or service. In short, it demonstrates that designing for a wide range of potential users is good design.

UD has had an impact on various spheres of social life: spaces and buildings have been designed with impaired persons in mind, but benefit also those without impairments. For example, a ramp or a lift in a building can be useful for both wheelchair users as well as a person carrying a heavy suitcase; same goes for curb cuts—in addition to the main beneficiaries (again, wheelchair users) they are convenient for cyclists or mothers with pushchairs. The same idea has trickled down to media accessibility: subtitling is indispensable for the deaf, but it also benefits language learners or parents with rowdy children, attempting to watch a show. As for AD, there are a whole range of benefits for the sighted audience, including the cognitive, linguistic, experiential (esthetic) and social (Mazur 2019). UD has also been advocated for AD in that it should be included in a production from the start (rather than at the postproduction stage) and should involve the whole creative team. It was first applied to theatre productions by Udo and Fels (2010a, b) and then extended to films as accessible filmmaking (Romero Fresco 2013). In the case of museum AD, Szarkowska et al. (2016) created a mobile application with descriptions meant for persons with and without sensory impairments to be used at selected Polish museums. Fryer (2018) even goes as far as to suggest the “death” of the independent audio describer, and pronounces the advent of integrated AD “built in from the start in collaboration with the artistic team”, at least in the context of theatre AD (2018: 170). Though for now this seems to be still quite optimistic, especially in countries other than the UK, which is an undisputed AD leader in Europe, this is the approach that should by all means be championed and the hope is that in future all products will be created taking into account the needs of all users so that the accessibility barriers are dismantled and we can live in a truly inclusive society.

## 7 Final Remarks

In recent years AD has become a broad area of both practice and study. In this chapter we have barely scratched its surface by discussing its main types, history and research. This young discipline is slowly coming of age, having

developed its objects and methods of study. It is however still changing in front of our eyes, with new AD types (such as “easy-to-read AD” or “machine AD”) and new research trends (such as measuring the cognitive load of AD users) emerging. What is common to most AD research is its utilitarian character: most of it has the ultimate aim of improving the quality of AD and thus the well-being of its users who, as it turns out, may also be sighted persons within the Universal Design paradigm. If we treat accessibility (and AD) as a human right as proposed by Greco (2016), in the future we can hope for a truly inclusive society that will benefit all of us, and not just persons with disabilities.

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# 13

## Subtitling for the Deaf and the Hard of Hearing

Agnieszka Szarkowska

### 1 Introduction

Over the past few decades we have seen a growing interest in media access services. One type of such service is subtitling for the deaf and the hard of hearing (SDH). In contrast to standard, interlingual subtitling (see the contribution by Díaz-Cintas in this volume), SDH contains not only the written rendition of the spoken dialogues, but also the information about important sounds and speaker identification.

### 2 Typology

This type of subtitling is referred to as '*subtitling for the deaf and the hard of hearing*' or '*closed captioning*' (CC). The former term is generally used in Europe, whereas the latter is common in the US, Canada and Australia (Neves 2008). The term '*closed captioning*' refers to the way this type of text is usually displayed: unlike subtitles in the cinema which are burnt into the image and visible to all viewers (and hence known as '*open*'), captions are normally '*closed*'. In order to be visible, they need to be activated by the user (on a remote control or menu options). Neves (2008) argues that the

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terminological differences between SDH and CC can be simply put down to differences in British and American English, just like in the case of *taxi/cab*, which refer to the same concept, but use a different signifier. Some people use the term ‘subtitling’ for interlingual transfer only, and ‘closed captioning’ for the timed text produced specifically for deaf and hard of hearing viewers. Proposing the term ‘enriched (responsive) subtitling’, Neves (2018) argues for the need to adopt yet another term, free of the ‘stigma of disability’, a term that would better reflect current developments and ‘do away with much of the confusion and inaccuracy of terminology that is presently in use’ (pp. 83–84). It remains to be seen which term will prevail in the future.

Interestingly, the term SDH itself can be spelt out either as ‘subtitling for the deaf and hard of hearing’ or ‘subtitling for the deaf and *the* hard of hearing’. The second version is now becoming the preferred one in view of the recognition of the two distinct heterogeneous groups of viewers (Díaz Cintas: personal communication). Some authors mark this by adding another ‘H’ to the abbreviation: SDHH (Martínez Martínez and Álvarez 2014; Rodriguez-Alsina et al. 2012).

The vast majority of SDH is *intralingual*: it is done within the same language and does not involve a classic translation from one language into another, or ‘translation proper’ in Jakobson’s understanding (2012 [1959]). For instance, an English programme will have English language subtitles. However, SDH can also be *interlingual* (Neves 2009; Szarkowska 2013): a foreign language programme can be made available to deaf and hard of hearing viewers outside the country of origin. For example, an American show can be available as Polish SDH for Polish viewers.

In subtitling countries like Sweden or Belgium, in the absence of SDH in foreign programmes, deaf and hard of hearing viewers can rely on standard open interlingual subtitling to provide them with the written rendition of spoken dialogues in their own language. In countries which typically use dubbing as the main AVT method, like France or Germany, SDH is produced for deaf and hard of hearing viewers who otherwise would not have access to foreign productions (as they are dubbed). In this case, SDH can be made based on the dubbed version (intralingual) or be translated directly from the original (interlingual). In a similar vein, in countries which rely heavily on voice-over (VO) to translate foreign-language productions, such as Poland, interlingual SDH can be made from the voiced-over version or from scratch—depending on legal agreements and copyrights, among other things. Considering a lack of perfect synchrony between the VO translation and the original dialogue, when producing SDH for voiced-over productions, care needs to be taken to synchronise SDH with the original images and soundtrack rather than the VO translation.

### 3 Target Audience

The main target groups of this type of subtitling are, as indicated in the name itself, the deaf and the hard of hearing. However, SDH—predominantly in its intralingual English-to-English variety—is also used by people to learn foreign languages (Ofcom 2017; Vanderplank 2010, 2016). An increasing number of hearing viewers also rely on SDH simply to support the viewing process, for instance whenever it is not possible to listen to or hear the soundtrack—when travelling, in a gym and so on. Although the number of SDH users is growing dynamically and includes people with no hearing loss, it is important to bear in mind that the main target group are viewers who are deaf or hard of hearing and it is with them in mind that this type of subtitling is made.

According to WHO, around 466 million people in the world have ‘disabling hearing loss’<sup>1</sup> (WHO 2017), which constitutes over 5% of the world’s population. Hearing loss can either be congenital or acquired (Hawkins 2009). There are four main categories of the *degree of hearing loss*: mild/ slight (26–40 dB), moderate (41–60 dB), severe (61–80 dB) and profound (81+ dB) hearing loss (WHO 2017). Depending on the *onset of hearing loss*, three types are distinguished: pre-lingual, peri-lingual and post-lingual (Szczepankowski 1998). Pre-lingual hearing loss takes place either at birth or before acquiring language (up to 2–3 years of age); peri-lingual hearing loss occurs in the process of acquiring language (between 3 and 5 years of age); post-lingual hearing loss takes place after a person has acquired their first language (aged 5+). Both degree of hearing loss and its onset affect language development and, by extension, literacy and reading skills, which have a direct impact on subtitle processing.

As noted by Ofcom (2017), ‘people using access services do not fall neatly into homogenous groups’ (p. 18). Indeed, deaf and hard of hearing viewers are a heterogeneous group, with different reading skills, education background, communication preferences and expectations (Neves 2008). It is therefore difficult to have one version of SDH which would satisfy the needs of all viewers. On the one hand, some viewers, particularly those who are pre-lingually deaf and use sign language as their mother tongue, may prefer sign language interpreting (SLI) rather than SDH to support their viewing. On the other hand, those who are hard of hearing, who were educated in the oralist approach or who do not know sign language, may prefer SDH. Some viewers would like to have both SLI and SDH to choose from (Neves 2007).

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<sup>1</sup> That is greater than 40dB in the better hearing ear in adults and 30dB in children.

Given that deafness may be an important predictor of lower language proficiency and that it often coincides with poor reading skills (Musselman 2000; Traxler 2000), some researchers and educators advocate that SDH be displayed at a lower speed and that the text in the subtitles be reduced in order to allow deaf viewers to comfortably follow the film or programme (Cambre et al. 2009; Neves 2008; Romero-Fresco 2009). In an early discussion on the topic, dating from 1976, Phillip Collyer from the American WGBH claimed that their objective was ‘to serve as great a number of the audience as possible by seeking a more common denominator: a lower reading level and reading speed’ (cited after Downey (2008: 90–91)). However, many deaf and hard of hearing viewers as well as deaf organisations take the opposite view and argue for unreduced—or, in their view, uncensored—text in subtitling on the grounds of equal access and language learning through subtitling (Cooper 2018; Jensema and Burch 1999; Robson 2004). In a response to Collyer, also in 1976, arguing in favour of verbatim captioning, Doris Caldwell, one of the first captioners at PBS, said that simplifying text caters for the needs of only a small fraction of caption viewers, that is, ‘the prelingually deaf with inadequate schooling’ (cited after Downey (2008: 91)), and as such is unwarranted; it also poses danger of information distortion. In the same debate, representing Gallaudet College (today’s Gallaudet University), Donald Torr voiced his support for unreduced captioning on educational, equity and aesthetic grounds: first, thanks to continual exposure to captions, deaf students learn the language; second, as captioning at different speeds is impractical, all the words from the original dialogue should be captioned; and finally, reduced captioning can distort the intention of filmmakers and producers who scrutinise every word in their programmes—and only verbatim captioning ‘preserves the integrity of the original text’ (cited after Downey (2008: 84–85)).

The debate over ‘whether television programming captioned for deaf audiences should be *edited* for a lower reading level or presented *verbatim* for equality with hearing audiences’ (Downey 2008: 84) continues until the present day and has so far produced mixed results (Baker 1985; Burnham et al. 2008; Cambra et al. 2009; De Linde and Kay 1999; Jensema and Burch 1999; Jensema et al. 2000; Jensema et al. 1996; Romero-Fresco 2015; Schilperoord et al. 2005; Szarkowska et al. 2011; Szarkowska et al. 2016; Tyler et al. 2013).

## 4 Characteristics

Unlike standard interlingual subtitling for hearing audience, SDH contains not only the dialogues, but also other types of information such as speaker identification, descriptions of sounds, music and paralinguistic features.

### 4.1 Speaker Identification

Depending on the country, medium or even a commissioning company, different speakers can be marked in SDH using: (1) name tags, also known as labels, (2) different colours or (3) speaker-dependent placement. *Name tags* (see Fig. 13.1) are added before the dialogues when the context makes it difficult for deaf or hard of hearing viewers to distinguish the speaker. Tags may be placed in parentheses, square brackets or capital letters.

In many countries and TV stations, the main characters in a programme are allocated *colours* to help viewers distinguish between different speakers. The same characters are usually given the same colours throughout the film or the series; however, in the UK, colours change from scene to scene. Interestingly, in French SDH, colour-coding subtitles follow completely different rules: white is used to denote speakers visible on screen, yellow for off-screen speakers, red for sound descriptions, magenta for lyrics, cyan for narration and green for utterances in a foreign language.



Fig. 13.1 Name tags in SDH

*Speaker-dependent placement* consists in moving subtitles to different parts of the screen, depending on the location of the character in the frame.

In the US, speaker changes in the roll-up caption mode are indicated with chevrons placed at the beginning of a line (Robson 2004), as in the example below:

```
>> Do you think I could pop down
to your place?
>> Why, of course you can!
You're always welcome here.
>> I'm coming down then.
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To recap, although different countries and companies may use various conventions of marking speakers in SDH, the common denominator is that change of speakers is indeed marked one way or the other.

## 4.2 Description of Sounds and Music

Apart from the dialogue and speaker identification, SDH contains information about sounds, both *diegetic* and *non-diegetic* (Bordwell and Thompson 2010). Diegetic sounds are those coming directly from the story as a result of characters' actions, for instance door slamming, car tyres screeching in a car-race scene, floor squeaking in a horror film and so on. Non-diegetic sounds are added by filmmakers at a later stage to create atmosphere, such as ambient music; their source does not come from inside the story.

SDH includes a description of both *speech* and *non-speech sounds*. Speech sounds include information on accents ('in a British accent'), manner of speaking ('whispers'), foreign language ('in French'), whereas non-speech sounds are music, ambient sounds, onomatopoeia or even moments of silence. SDH subtitlers sometimes need to mark the silence moments, when it cannot be easily inferred from the screen, as in 'silence', 'people speaking indistinctly', 'inaudible whispering', 'music stops', 'mouthing' (Zdenek 2015). An important aspect of describing speech sounds is paralinguistic features, such as irony.

Any rendition of sounds into words, particularly in the case of non-speech sounds, implies an interpretation and negotiation of meaning. For instance, the following sound description: 'eerie, raspy grunting echoing from distance' (from *Aliens vs Predator: Requiem* cited after Zdenek (2015: 211)) can hardly be called objective. Zdenek (2015) argues that subtitlers must 'rhetorically invent and negotiate the meaning of a text' (p. 4) and that SDH 'is not an objective science'.

When it comes to describing music in SDH, a set of options are available to the subtitler, depending on the relevance of music to the film or scene. Focus can be placed on the instrumentation ('instrumental music'), the atmosphere the music creates ('cheerful music'), or a combination of both ('cheerful instrumental music'). The name of the artist can also be included, particularly if the artist or the music piece is well known and recognised ('Beethoven's Ninth'). If music has lyrics, they should be included in the subtitles. It is now technically possible to include a music note in a subtitle (♪) at its beginning, end or both. In the UK, # symbol is still used to mark music (Ofcom 2017). In the US, two notes are used to indicate that the melody is ending, for example (after Robson (2004: 27):

♪ MARY HAD A LITTLE LAMB,  
LITTLE LAMB, LITTLE LAMB. ♪  
♪ MARY HAD A LITTLE LAMB,  
ITS FLEECE WAS WHITE AS SNOW. ♪♪

Sound and music descriptions can take different grammatical forms, ranging from nouns ('jazz', 'piano', 'gunshots', 'explosions'), gerunds ('singing', 'whispering', 'groaning'), verbs ('whimpers', 'gasps', 'barks') to their various combinations ('sinister organ', 'woman speaking indistinctly', 'howling in pain', 'crickets chirping', 'discordant melody', 'orchestra playing slow melancholy music') (Kelly 2013; Zdenek 2015). In SDH for children, onomatopoeic expressions are used more often than in the case of SDH for adults; for instance, 'AHH!' instead of 'Howling in pain'. The CMP Caption Key suggests that both onomatopoeia and a descriptive expression be used together (Robson 2004: 26), as in:

[clock chiming]  
Bong, bong, bong.

Some researchers have proposed the use of icons rather than words to describe sounds (Civera and Orero Clavero 2010; Lee et al. 2007; Romero-Fresco 2015).

### 4.3 SDH Preparation and Broadcast

SDH can be prerecorded, semi-live or live. In *prerecorded* subtitling, the video material is available before the broadcast, which allows the subtitler to insert the time codes and synchronise the subtitles with the dialogues. Viewers can

expect highest quality from prerecorded SDH, as they are not burdened with severe time constraints present in semi-live or live subtitling.

In *semi-live* subtitling, subtitlers prepare the text, but do not add any time codes to the subtitles. Semi-live subtitling is most common on news bulletins. The text read by the news anchor from the prompter is usually available to the subtitling team before the broadcast. Subtitlers divide the text into subtitle segments, which are later displayed live, together with the broadcast. Traditionally, as they have no time codes, semi-live subtitles are released manually by a human operator.

As opposed to prerecorded and semi-live subtitles, *live* subtitles are produced in real time (see the contribution by Pablo Romero-Fresco and Carlo Eugeni in this volume). The two most frequently used methods to produce live subtitling are stenocaptioning in the US (Robson 2004) and respeaking (Romero-Fresco 2011). The process of creating live subtitling with respeaking is sometimes referred to as ‘voice writing’ (Robson 2004).

Respeaking is probably the most popular method of providing live subtitling (Eugeni 2008; Lambourne 2006; Romero-Fresco 2011). The method relies on the use of speech recognition software. A respeaker listens to the original dialogue and respeaks it, adding the necessary punctuation and editing the text when necessary. Respeakers’ words are then turned from speech to text, which is later displayed as subtitles on viewers’ TV screens. Stenocaptioning originates from court reporting and relies on the use of a special keyboard (unlike QWERTY). Thanks to pressing different combinations of keys at once, stenocaptioners can keep up with very fast speech rates at the same time achieving high accuracy rates (Robson 2004). Although stenocaptioning is probably more accurate than respeaking, the long training process combined with prohibitive prices of stenotype keyboards, makes it an unlikely solution to be used on a larger scale in the future.

Out of the three types of SDH, live subtitling is prone to the largest number of errors, resulting mainly from misrecognition of the speech recognition software and errors made by respeakers. Additionally, given the complexity and multiple steps necessary to complete the process, live subtitling is displayed with a delay of a few seconds. A popular tool to measure quality of live subtitling is the NER model (Romero-Fresco 2016; Romero-Fresco and Martínez 2015). The highest SDH quality is expected in the case of prerecorded subtitling as it is free from time constraints characteristic of live subtitling.

## 5 A Historical View

For a detailed overview of the historical developments of closed captioning in the US, see Downey (2008) and Robson (2004), and in Europe, see Neves (2005) and Remael (2007). Here, we only outline the most important milestones in the history of SDH.

### 5.1 Beginnings of SDH

The first attempts at making sound films available for viewers who are deaf or hard of hearing can be traced to 1947: Emerson Romero, himself deaf, developed a method of inserting ‘text-only frames’ between scenes, just like in intertitles (Neves 2005; Robson 2004). Two years later, in 1949, in a cinema in London, a film was screened with subtitles thanks to J. Arthur Rank, who invented a method where ‘skilled hearing operators slid pieces of glass with etched words, in and out of a projector’ (Neves 2005: 108) so that subtitles were displayed on a smaller screen in the lower left corner of the main cinema screen. Back in America, also in 1949, the creation of Captioning Films for the Deaf (CFD), a fund-raising organisation working towards making films accessible to deaf viewers, led to the first ‘color open-captioned film, *America the Beautiful*’ (Robson 2004: 9). A decade later, in 1959, thanks to the passing of the Captioned Film Act (Public Law 85-905) (Robson 2004), CFD could apply for federal funding to open caption films; its later amendment enabled the production and distribution of educational media for the deaf as well as research into the topic (Robson 2004: 10).

The year 1972 marked a new era for the development of SDH thanks to three major events: the first captioned TV broadcast of *The French Chef* with Julia Child, aired on PBS; the establishment of the Caption Center at WGBH, the first captioning agency; and the BBC’s announcement of the new Ceefax Teletext service, leading to the introduction of SDH in the UK in 1979. Also in 1979, the National Captioning Institute in the US was established, which was instrumental in developing the decoder box and 10 years later, together with ITT Corporation, helped invent a microchip in TV sets to help decode captions. Initially, SDH were available on TV only to those viewers who had bought special decoders; with time, new technological developments and regulations, however, they could be watched on any TV set. From the late 1970s and early 1980s onwards, SDH has become more and more available in many countries around the world (Robson 2004).

## 5.2 Legislation

The development of SDH is inextricably linked with the legislation requiring technology companies and broadcasters to provide solutions and access services for viewers with disabilities. Starting with the Captioned Film Act in the US in 1959, through the regulations of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), including those on Line 21 passed in 1976, the American with Disabilities Act and Television Decoder Circuitry Act, both from 1990, and the Telecommunications Act of 1996 (taking effect in 1998, with later amendments), SDH has become more and more widely available to American viewers (Robson 2004).

In Europe, legislation has proceeded in two parallel ways: in the form of national regulations implemented by each Member State and in the form of directives at the EU level. In 2007, Directive 2007/65/EC defined the means to achieve accessibility in television broadcasting, by explicitly naming sign language, subtitling and audio description when stating the rights of people with disabilities and of the elderly to participate in cultural life. In 2010, Directive 2010/13/EU encouraged media service providers to ensure that their services are ‘accessible to people with a visual or hearing disability’. In 2018, Directive 2018/1808 stipulated that media service providers should cater for the needs of viewers with disabilities, and required the providers to regularly report to national regulatory bodies how they implement their accessibility services and meet the requirements.

Thanks to the adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN 2006), the needs of people with disabilities have come into greater focus. Article 9 ‘Accessibility’ obligates the Convention signatories to ensure equal access to information and communications to persons with disabilities. It also requires the adoption of appropriate measures to develop ‘minimum standards and guidelines’.

An important part in defining quality standards and setting quality benchmarks and statutory targets has been played by national regulatory bodies, such as the Federal Communications Commission in the US or Office of Communications (Ofcom) in the UK. For instance, the FCC (1997)<sup>2</sup> requires captions to be accurate, synchronous, complete and properly placed:

- *Accuracy:* Captions should match the spoken words in the dialogue and provide nonverbal information, including speaker identification, music, lyrics, sound effects and audience reactions.

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<sup>2</sup>§79.1 Closed captioning of televised video programming in the Code of Federal Regulations.

- *Synchronicity*: Captions should coincide with their corresponding spoken words and sounds to the greatest extent possible and should be displayed on the screen at a speed that permits viewers to read them.
- *Completeness*: Captions should be displayed from the beginning to the end of the programme to the fullest extent possible.
- *Placement*: Captions should not block other important visual content on the screen, such as speaker faces, news updates and so on or any other important information.

Unlike the FCC, the British Ofcom (2017) requires broadcasters to monitor the quality of the subtitling they provide and sets forth very specific ‘best practice’ solutions related to synchronisation, speed of subtitling, non-speech information, layout, font, accuracy as well as maximum subtitle delay in live programmes.

## 6 Research on the Topic

Early studies on SDH were mainly concerned with the *benefits* of subtitles for deaf and hard of hearing viewers and thus compared watching videos with and without subtitles, or viewing videos with subtitles versus sign language interpreting (Boyd and Vader 1972; Norwood 1976, 1980; Propp 1972; Stepp 1965). From the outset, studies on SDH were very much focused on the target audience and their reception and perception of the subtitles. For a detailed overview of reception studies on SDH, both prerecorded and live, see Romero-Fresco (2018).

Once the benefits of subtitles for viewers were sufficiently established, researchers’ interest shifted towards various aspects of SDH, such as subtitle speed, text condensation, description of sound, font size, subtitle placement, the use of black or semi-transparent box as subtitle background—these discussions continue until the present day (see, e.g., Franco and Lucia Santiago Araújo (2003); Matamala and Orero (2010); Miquel Iriarte (2017); Romero-Fresco (2010, 2015); Szarkowska et al. (2011); Szarkowska et al. (2016); Ward et al. (2007). For a bibliography on SDH, see Pereira and Arnáiz Uzquiza (2010).

A fruitful research topic has been the use of SDH as a tool for *literacy* (Bean and Wilson 1989; Braverman 1977; Goldman and Goldman 1988; Jelinek Lewis and Jackson 2001; Koskinen et al. 1993; Linebarger 2001; Neuman and Koskinen 1992; Nugent 1983; Parlato 1977). This applies both to deaf and hard of hearing viewers as well as hearing audiences as language learners

(Vanderplank 2016). It is believed that subtitles are a source of comprehensible linguistic input and may contribute to lowering the affective filter (Krashen 1989), thus fostering language acquisition.

A number of authors proposed solutions specifically for SDH for *children* (Baker 1985; Lorenzo 2010a, 2010b; Tamayo and Chaume 2017; Zárate 2014; Zarate and Eliahoo 2014). General recommendations for SDH for children include lower reading speed and simplified vocabulary and syntax (Tamayo 2016; Tamayo and Chaume 2017). Lorenzo (2010b) and Pereira (2010) go even further, proposing that SDH should draw on the syntactic and lexical convergences between the sign and spoken languages.

Some studies looked into improving the rendition of *emotions* in SDH (Lee et al. 2007). One idea was to use emoticons to denote the emotions expressed in the characters' voices (El-Taweel 2016; Neves 2005; Romero-Fresco 2015). Whereas Neves (2005) found a positive response to smileys among Portuguese audience, a study conducted as part of the DTV4ALL project (Romero-Fresco 2015) showed more scepticism towards that solution. Some viewers stressed the impossibility of limiting a wide range of human emotions to a set of easily recognisable smileys (Szarkowska et al. 2015). Lee et al. (2007) proposed 'emotive captioning', which could include not only emoticons but also icons depicting sound effects, coloured borders around subtitles reflecting emotions and their intensity. Rashid et al. (2008) tested the use of 'animated text to represent emotions contained in music' (p. 505), and found positive reactions to such enhanced captions expressed by hard of hearing viewers. Advances in technology allow for more and more innovative solutions to be implemented in SDH, and it remains to be seen which of them will become established.

Other studies included the training of SDH subtitlers (De Higes Andino and Cerezo Merchán 2018; Romero-Fresco 2012; Szarkowska et al. 2018), SDH in multilingual films (Szarkowska et al. 2013, 2014), norms in SDH (Muller 2015), the effect of SDH on characterisation (McIntyre and Lugea 2015) and diachronic changes in SDH over the years (Downey 2008; Mliczak 2019).

Neves (2018) believes that research studies on SDH have contributed to new developments in the SDH industry, arguing that there has been a 'bi-directional circular motion, whereby academia and the industry feed into each other and work together' (p. 82). Indeed, the working together of researchers and professionals towards improving SDH services seems the ideal scenario to test and implement new solutions aimed at improving the subtitle viewing experience for 'the end-user—the ultimate beneficiary of the service' (Neves 2018: 87).

## 7 Future Prospects

The future of SDH largely depends on technological solutions, which are at the forefront of innovation. Developments in technology will probably bring important changes in SDH, particularly in three aspects: automation, customisation and innovation.

*Automation.* More and more subtitles are now being created automatically, without the intervention of a human subtitler. Probably the best known examples of this trend are automatically generated subtitles on YouTube, basing on automatic speech recognition technology. More and more companies are now producing semi-automatic subtitles, relying on speech recognition technology and post-editing, by creating their subtitles with dictation rather than typing, particularly in the intralingual context. This further blurs the spoken versus written boundaries in subtitling.

*Customisation.* Back in 1998, Gottlieb (1998) envisaged what he called ‘personal subtitling’, which would allow viewers to choose not only the target language of the subtitles, but also different subtitling options, including different subtitle speeds, degrees of text reduction (verbatim subtitles for fast readers and condensed subtitles for slow readers) or ‘pictogram-supported subtitling for the Deaf and hard of hearing’ (p. 248). Some of these solutions are already available now, be it on DVD or streaming services. More and more often audiovisual translation options can be defined by the end user on a range of devices.

*Innovation.* With new, more advanced tools, subtitle creators are offered more choices than ever before. Innovative ideas supported by technological solutions go hand in hand. For instance, ‘integrated titles’ (Fox 2017, 2018) or ‘dynamic’ subtitles (Brown et al. 2015) allow text to be placed in any part of the screen, depending on the characters’ positions, the function of the dialogue, its loudness and manner of speaking. Innovation is also entering the everyday workflow of subtitlers, who can take advantage of more and more sophisticated tools, available not only on their PCs but also in the cloud (see the contribution by Bolaños-García-Escribano and Díaz-Cintas in this volume).

## 8 Final Remarks

SDH is used by millions of people every day. The widespread use of SDH has clear social, didactic, business and research implications. Socially, SDH is an invaluable access service, providing inclusion for people who would not otherwise have access to the audio content of a film, programme or an event.

SDH also has an enormous educational potential, as hearing and non-hearing viewers alike may use it to learn languages and to support their viewing. In business terms, SDH is a growing, revenue-generating service, contributing to the development of new jobs and markets. Finally, in research terms, SDH is a continuously growing field, merging various interdisciplinary efforts into the common goal of creating subtitles which would better serve the needs of deaf and hard of hearing viewers.

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# 14

## Live Subtitling Through Respeaking

Pablo Romero-Fresco and Carlo Eugeni

### 1 Introduction

Widely held as one of the most challenging modalities within media accessibility, intralingual live subtitling (or “realtime captioning”, as it is known in the US) is defined by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU 2015: 5) as “the real-time transcription of spoken words, sound effects, relevant musical cues, and other relevant audio information” to enable deaf and hard-of-hearing persons to follow a live audiovisual programme. Live subtitles may be produced through different methods, including standard keyboards, multi-keyboard system, Velotype and the two most common techniques, namely, stenography and respeaking (Lambourne 2006). Stenography is the preferred method to produce live subtitles in the US and Canada, and it is also used in other countries such as Italy and Spain, especially for transcriptions and subtitles in parliaments, courtrooms, classrooms, meetings and other settings. Respeaking (known as “realtime voice writing” in the US) is currently the preferred method for live subtitling around the world. It refers to the production of written text (such as subtitles) by means of automatic speech recognition (ASR) technology and may be defined more in detail as

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a technique in which a respeaker listens to the original sound of a (live) programme or event and respeaks it, including punctuation marks and some specific features for the deaf and hard-of-hearing audience, to a speech-recognition software, which turns the recognised utterances into subtitles displayed on the screen with the shortest possible delay. (Romero-Fresco 2011: 1)

Thus, in many ways, respeaking is to subtitling (see the contribution by Díaz-Cintas in this volume) what interpreting is to translation, namely a leap from the written to the oral without the safety net of time. It is, in effect, a form of (usually intralingual) computer-aided simultaneous interpreting with the addition of punctuation marks and features such as the identification of the different speakers with colours or name tags. Although respeakers are usually encouraged to repeat the original soundtrack in order to produce verbatim subtitles, the high speech rates of some speakers and the need to dictate punctuation marks and abide by standard viewers' reading rates mean that respeakers often end up paraphrasing rather than repeating or shadowing the original soundtrack (Romero-Fresco 2009).

Although the term *respeaking* seems established now, only a few years ago it was just one of many labels used to refer to this discipline, alongside *speech-based live subtitling* (Lambourne et al. 2004), (*real-time*) *speech recognition-based subtitling* and *real-time subtitling via speech recognition* (Eugeni 2008a, b, c), as well as shorter alternatives such as *speech captioning*, *shadow speaking* (Boulianane et al. 2009) or *revoicing* (Muzii 2006). However, the increasing use of this technique as the most common live subtitling method in the industry and as an object of study in academic research has helped to consolidate the term *respeaking*. As a matter of fact, in the same way that the term audio-visual translation has become a household name in Translation Studies and no longer seems to need a hyphen, *respeaking* (Lambourne et al. 2004) has lost its hyphen as it has gained visibility. The situation is different in other languages, where the respeaking technique was introduced much earlier than the terminology. As a result, there is still some inconsistency to refer to what has sometimes been branded as a "tâche sans nom" (Moussadek 2008), a trade without a name. It is for this reason that languages such as Italian have opted for the calque *respeaking*, whereas others like French and Spanish are using *sous-titrage vocal*/*la technique du perroquet* and *rehablado*, respectively, while in German and Dutch, the expression speech-to-text interpreting is preferred (Eugeni and Bernabé 2019; Romero-Fresco 2008) with the respeaker being called a *Schriftdolmetscher* and *Schrijftolk*, respectively. As will be explained below, in some cases the different terms reflect not only a linguistic difference but also a different approach to the production of subtitles through ASR.

## 2 A Historical Overview

The origins of respeaking may be traced back to the experiments conducted in the early 1940s by US court reporter Horace Webb, who explains (National Verbatim Reporters Association (NVRA) 2008) that “the system was born in a Chicago courtroom. Its father was a pen shorthand reporter and its mother frustration”. Until then, court reporters used to take shorthand notes of the speech and then dictate their notes for transcription into typewritten form. Webb proposed to have the reporter repeat every word of the original speech into a microphone, using a stenomask to cancel the noise. The subsequent recording of the reporter’s words would then be used for transcription (*ibid.*). No speech recognition was used at the time and no live transcription was produced, but the basic principle of respeaking was already set. This was called *voice writing* and may thus be seen as the precursor of respeaking, which involves the same technique but uses ASR to produce TV subtitles, reports and so on. The very first use of respeaking in the US dates back to 1999, when court reporter Chris Ales transcribed a session in the Circuit Court in Lapeer, Michigan, with the ASR software Dragon Naturally Speaking (Romero-Fresco 2011).

In Europe, the origins of respeaking are linked to those of live subtitling for deaf and hard-of-hearing viewers. In 1982, the British channel ITV began to subtitle headlines of public events such as a visit of the Pope or the football World Cup using a standard QWERTY keyboard (Lambourne 2006). This method proved too slow and in 1987 ITV started using the Velotype, a syllabic keyboard developed in the Netherlands which allowed subtitlers to produce between 90 and 120 words per minute (wpm) after a training period of 12 months. Also in 1987, ITV set up its own live subtitling unit for news programmes. A tandem method was tested whereby two subtitlers would share the workload in a given programme. This increased subtitling speed to somewhere in between 120 and 160 wpm, much closer to the 175-wpm standard speech rate of news presenters in the UK (Ofcom 2015b).

In Flanders, the public broadcaster Vlaamse Radio- en Televisieomroeporganisatie (Flemish Radio and Television Broadcasting Organisation) (VRT) also experimented with the QWERTY method in 1981 and broadcast its first live subtitles in 1982. Velotype was also tested in Flanders, but it never went into production. In 1990, the BBC set up its own live subtitling unit, resorting first to keyboards and then to stenography. Following what the National Captioning Institute had done in the US in 1982, the BBC hired professional stenotypists to increase the speed of the subtitles. The result was

very satisfactory—live verbatim subtitles at up to 220–250 wpm, in other words, suitable for news programmes. The problem, however, was that the time required for training, between three and four years, made this method particularly expensive. In the UK, Damper et al. (1985) proposed the use of ASR combined with keyboards to change the colour and position of live subtitles and, in Italy, the EC-VOICE project used ASR to subtitle a conference in 1998 (Pirelli 2013: 3) and a football match in 1999 (Eugeni 2008b: 27). The BBC finally decided to test respeaking in April 2001 with the World Snooker Championship, just as it was being introduced in Flanders by VRT. In countries such as Spain, Italy, and France, respeaking was not introduced as a regular service until some years later (2004, 2006, and 2007, respectively), mostly due to “new legislation or other forms of agreement brokered between governments and, for instance, public broadcasting channels, following constant pressure from the deaf and hard of hearing organisations” (Remael 2007: 25). This legislation often set subtitling quotas of 90% and even 100%, thus including subtitles for live programmes.

However, the professional practice of respeaking, initiated by the BBC and VRT in 2001, was not immediately followed by academic training or research in this field. As a result, subtitling companies knew what they had to do (produce live subtitles) and had ASR to do it but, in the absence of codes of good practice or other conventions, they went about it in different ways. The next section shows this heterogeneous professional landscape, thus illustrating the many different roads leading to Rome as far as respeaking is concerned.

### 3 Respeaking as a Profession

#### 3.1 Production Method and Profile

Although, on the whole, respeaking has overtaken stenography as the preferred method to produce live subtitles for TV (Robert et al. 2019), the situation varies greatly from country to country. In North America, most live captions are produced by stenotypists. Some US broadcasters also resort to realtime voice writers, but their numbers are still significantly lower. English-language Canadian broadcasters are now beginning to contemplate the possibility of using respeaking, which is however more common in French Canada (EBG 2014). Stenography-made live subtitles for TV can also be found in other countries such as Italy, where they are still more common than respooken subtitles; Australia, where the distribution is around 50–50; and the UK, where stenotypists are now only used to subtitle the most challenging

programmes. Other countries such as Spain, Switzerland, Belgium, and France resort almost exclusively to respeakers, at least for TV subtitles.

According to the results obtained in the ILSA (Interlingual Live Subtitling for Access) project (Robert et al. 2019), which gathered replies from 126 professionals, live subtitlers are often women under 40, highly educated, typically with a Bachelor degree and a language-related Masters degree. Most of them have been working as respeakers for around 6 years. With the exception of a few respeakers working for public broadcasters such as TVE in Spain, respeakers tend to work for subtitling companies, either in-house or as freelancers.

### 3.2 Setting and Workflow

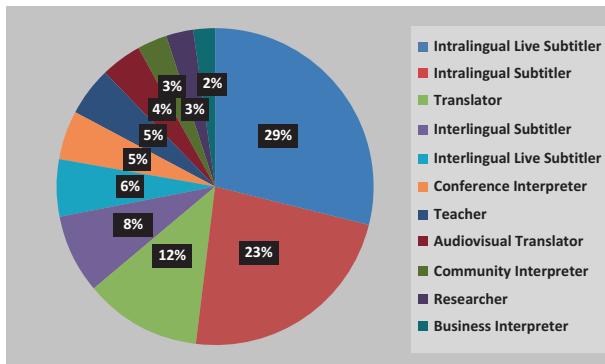
As far as the setting and equipment are concerned, the ideal situation is to have sound-proof booths for respeakers. Another possibility is to have sound-proof rooms where several respeakers can work together, although this may lead to interferences between them. Respeakers usually have a computer and a TV screen in front of them. They wear headphones to listen to the original programme and they use a USB microphone, with or without a stand, to respeak into. Software-wise, most respeakers use Dragon Naturally Speaking, a subtitling application to display the recognised utterances as subtitles on the screen, and a newsroom application where they can access the list of contents of the programme they are going to respeak and in some cases even some of the scripts that are going to be used in the programme itself. Indeed, whereas a few years ago most respeakers would have no option but to respeak programmes live in their entirety, the situation has now changed. The pressure exerted by some regulators to prompt closer collaboration between broadcasters and subtitling companies (Ofcom 2015a) has resulted in more scripts being available for respeakers before the start of a live programme and in the introduction of a hybrid mode, combining live and semi-live subtitles (Mikul 2014). For segments of the programme for which scripts are available before the start, respeakers will simply cue in real time the subtitles that they have prepared beforehand, whereas non-scripted segments will be subtitled live through respeaking (Marsh 2004). This can be done individually or in pairs.

The above-mentioned setting remains fairly consistent across countries, but there are also significant variations. In French-speaking Canada, for example, respeakers at TVA network use a joystick to include punctuation in the subtitles, which, in the case of the Italian company subtitling for Radiotelevisione Italiana (Italian radio and TV public broadcaster) (RAI), is done with the help of a touch screen that respeakers also use to introduce keywords that may crop

up in the programme they are subtitling. One of the main differences across countries lies in the correction of errors in the subtitles produced by respeakers. Indeed, accuracy and delay constitute an intrinsic part of live subtitling and are often described as a trade-off: launching the subtitles without prior correction results in smaller delays but less accuracy, while correcting the subtitles before cueing them on air increases accuracy but also delay. In the UK, the norm is that respeakers correct their own errors, but only the major ones and only once they have been displayed on the viewers' screens so that subtitle delay is kept to a minimum. In Spain, Switzerland and Belgium, respeakers often verify and, if necessary, correct errors in the subtitles before cueing them, thus favouring accuracy over the reduction of delay. This is taken to an extreme in France, where respeaking is approached in a collaborative manner with teams of three or four professionals: a respeaker, a corrector (who corrects the mistakes made by the speech recognition software before the subtitles are sent on air) and a whisperer, who suggests potential corrections to the corrector. Sometimes there is also a whisperer for the respeaker. Needless to say, this adds delay to the live subtitles but it also ensures high accuracy.

An extreme solution to tackle the issue of accuracy and delay is the introduction of the so-called antenna delay, also known as broadcast delay or signal delay (Rander and Olaf Looms 2010). It consists of inserting a short delay in "live" programmes in order to allow the subtitlers enough time to prepare, correct and synchronise the subtitles before they are displayed on screen to the viewers. This is common practice in the Netherlands, where a 60-seconds delay allows for the synchronisation and correction of intralingual subtitles for fast-paced daily talk shows, and in Flanders (Belgium), where the delays range from 5 to 20 minutes for intralingual subtitles and even longer for interlingual subtitles into Dutch (Ofcom 2015a). In the UK, Ofcom has proposed the use of antenna delay to reduce latency and improve the accuracy of subtitles for chat shows, which are notoriously problematic due to the presence of fast speech rates, overlapping speech, and non-scripted content. A first successful test was run by delaying the Welsh cookery programme *Coginio Byw* by 30 seconds. However, broadcasters tend to oppose this method arguing that the problems it causes (e.g. the fact that the viewers cannot use social media such as Tweeter or online betting applications during the programme if it is delayed) outweigh the benefits it has for the viewers.

Given the complexity of their job, respeakers are not normally expected to work live for longer than one hour at a time, as longer slots are likely to have a negative impact on their performance. In-house respeakers will typically divide their working day into three or four live subtitling shifts, time for preparation and production of pre-recorded subtitles and other translation-related tasks, as shown in Fig. 14.1 (Robert et al. 2019).



**Fig. 14.1** Respeakers' functions

### 3.3 Respoken Subtitles

As will be explained below, both accuracy and delay currently constitute key topics of research and discussion, not least when it comes to finding methods to assess and compare them. For the time being, suffice it to say that the average delay of live subtitles is around 0–3 s for subtitles produced with the hybrid mode, 3–5 s for stenography-made subtitles, 5–7 s for respoken subtitles with on-air corrections, 8–10 s for respoken subtitles with prior corrections and over 10 s for respoken subtitles with prior corrections by more than one subtitler (Ofcom 2015a). Accuracy largely depends on the model used to assess errors. At the moment and in the case of the widely spread NER model, the minimum requirement is 98% (Romero-Fresco and Martínez 2015).

Other key features of respoken subtitles relate to their display mode, their edition rate and the extent to which they include speaker identification, macros, sound effects and other features of subtitles for the deaf and hard of hearing (SDH). In the US and Canada, live captions are displayed in scrolling mode (and in capitals), whereas in Europe they may be displayed only in blocks (Spain, Switzerland and Belgium), only scrolling (France) or with a combination of scrolling for the live respoken parts and blocks for the scripted segments (the UK and Italy). The edition rate, which is closely related to subtitling speed and one of the most controversial issues in SDH, varies depending on tradition, national practices and subtitling methods. Stenography-made subtitles have a low edition rate and can sometimes be near-verbatim whereas respoken subtitles are hardly ever faster than 180 wpm, which means that respeakers are forced to edit down the many programmes that feature speech rates over 180 wpm. In general, all live subtitles identify speakers. This may be done with the use of a double chevron (Canada), colours (the UK) or name tags (Spain), and they may or may not include information about important sounds and music.

Regarding quality control, companies often have their own internal assessment methods that are used for regular review and feedback. As far as external methods are concerned, 80% of respondents in the ILSA study apply the NER model for assessing respooken subtitles, either internally or by an external contractor (Robert et al. 2020).

### 3.4 Other Contexts and New Approaches

Over the past years, standard intralingual respeaking for live TV programmes and court reporting has expanded to other applications and contexts. In many companies, subtitlers are using respeaking to subtitle pre-recorded programmes in order to increase productivity. This technique, initially known as *scripting* (Marsh 2006), allows respeakers to pause the original soundtrack if they wish, which brings this type of respeaking closer to consecutive interpreting than to simultaneous interpreting. Once the programme has been respooken, the subtitles are synchronized with the audio by another subtitler and/or with the help of specialised software. When pre-recorded subtitling is done manually, with no respeaking involved, the usual ratio of working time versus film duration is around 10:1 minutes. When done with respeaking, it can go down to 6:1. Furthermore, it allows subtitling companies to spread their work among different staff members and to prevent respeakers from spending their working day subtitling on air.

As well as on TV, respeaking is also being used in live public events such as conferences, talks, religious ceremonies, university lectures and school classes, and in private contexts such as business meetings and telephone conversations. This is known as CART (Communication Access Real-time Translation) in the US and as (speech-to-text) reporting in Europe and it may be done through respeaking, stenography, keyboard and other production methods. In these contexts, respeakers may work on site or remotely and they may or may not have visual access to the speakers. They can work individually with self-correction or in pairs, alongside an editor who can often take over and respeak.

As far as new developments are concerned, the use of live editing with or without automatic subtitling and the introduction of interlingual respeaking are two of the most relevant ones. As has been mentioned, live subtitles often involve live editing by at least one person working alongside the respeaker. In order to analyse this process, Eugeni and Marchionne (2014) distinguish between the source text (what is received by the subtitler), the mid text (what is first produced by the subtitler before it is modified by the live editor) and the target text (what is received by the viewers). These authors stress that live

editing does not only concern the mid text, and identify three stages at which editing is possible:

- *pre-editing*: before listening to the source text, the respeaker or the editor introduce terms specifically related to the program to be subtitled, such as proper names, technical terms, other realia;
- *peri-editing*: before producing the mid text, the respeaker applies safety strategies to avoid situations which may lead to the production of a mistake, such as repeating word for word a text whose speech rate is above one's MARS (Most Accurate and Rapid Speech-to-text production rate), repeating a word which is thought not to be in the vocabulary, or repeating a word with which the respeaker or the software usually encounter difficulties;
- *post-editing*: before broadcasting the target text, the live editor identifies, assesses and corrects relevant mistakes found in the mid text (Velardi 2013) through an interface especially designed to do so (see Fig. 14.2).

The rapid development of speaker-independent ASR (which, unlike speaker-dependent ASR, turns the original audio of a programme into subtitles without the need for a respeaker in between) has brought about new approaches to live subtitling and live editing (especially concerning post-editing). An extreme version of the process described above involves the use of



**Fig. 14.2** Example of a live-editing interface. (Source: Cf. [www.pervoice.com/en/solutions](http://www.pervoice.com/en/solutions) (last accessed 8 April 2019))

modern ASR software to transcribe the voice of the speaker without the need for a respeaker. This is done in countries such as Japan (Imai et al. 2008) and normally requires a source text that is devoid of the critical features that undermine the performance of ASR software (noise, accents, overlapping speech, etc.). Broadcasters in Portugal, the US, Canada and Spain are going a step further, showing live subtitles produced by ASR engines without any editing or human intervention. As mentioned below, the quality assessment of these unedited automatic subtitles is a particularly fruitful area of research.

Finally, as for interlingual respeaking, it is a relatively new technique that bridges the gap between audiovisual translation (AVT) and simultaneous interpreting. It is being used, amongst others, by broadcasters such as VTM in Belgium (de Korte 2006) or the BBC in the UK (Marsh 2004) and in public events, although not as extensively as intralingual respeaking. It is the main focus of the ILSA project, whose main aim is to create the first comprehensive training programme for interlingual respeakers. There are several approaches to the production of interlingual live subtitles (ILS):

- *Computer-Aided ILS*: a simultaneous interpreter translates the original speech and a live intralingual subtitler transcribes what the interpreter says on the fly (Den Boer 2001); alternatively, the same subtitler directly translates the original speech when producing the subtitles into English (Marsh 2004);
- *Human-Aided ILS*: an automatic translation software translates the input into several languages. As Manetti (2018) shows, when the input from the operator is syntactically linear, automatic translation is particularly reliable. However, a live editor is needed. In general, the more automated the process, the less accurate it is. However, automating the process allows quicker (reduced delay) and quantitatively more important results, because humans may not get some words or are not able to keep the pace of the original speech.
- *Fully-Automated ILS*: as in the well-known case of automatic subtitles offered by web-based platforms, an ASR transcribes the original entity and produces the transcript. Some programs also offer the possibility to automatically introduce punctuation, and some others allow automatic translation into several languages (Eugení and Bernabé 2019)

## 4 Training in Respeaking

Even though respeaking was introduced in Europe as a profession in 2001, the provision of formal training at higher education (HE) level did not start until 2007. During this six-year period, and given the lack of research, codes of practice or even basic guidelines, companies had no option but to train their own professionals, many of whom were already working as pre-recorded or live subtitlers (see Fig. 14.3, from Robert et al. (2019)).

### 4.1 Training at HEIs

Whereas courses on subtitling and SDH have proliferated in Europe over the past decade, respeaking training at university level is still scarce. Most of it can be found in self-contained modules or as part of larger modules within MAs in interpreting or AVT, where the prerequisite is a translation or language-related BA (Robert et al. 2019). Thus, respeaking training at HEIs ranges from introductory sessions on respeaking as part of postgraduate courses on AVT (such as at the University of Leeds, in the UK, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, in Spain, and the University of Parma, in Italy) to the more thorough training offered by the University of Antwerp (a six-month face-to-face course in Dutch), the University of Roehampton (a three-month face-to-face module in English, Spanish, French, Italian and German) and Universidade de Vigo (the first online course on interlingual respeaking, including modules on simultaneous interpreting, intra- and interlingual respeaking).

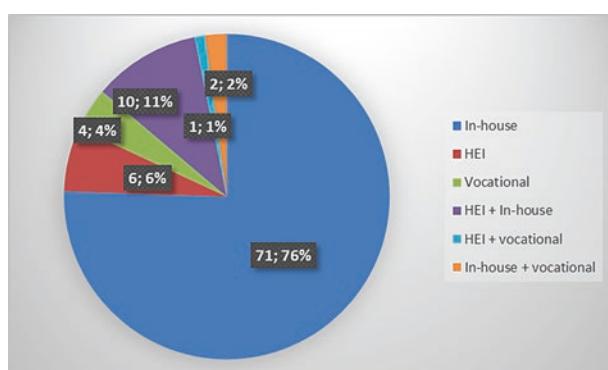


Fig. 14.3 Type of training for intralingual live subtitling

Training time varies widely, from one hour per week during eight weeks to two hours a week during 28 weeks. Course structures also differ, but some elements are recurrent. In Europe, training is usually focussed on elements that are specific to respeaking (especially those related to the use of ASR software) and elements from both interpreting and SDH (Arumí Ribas and Romero-Fresco 2008). From the latter, the key aspects are general subtitling skills, awareness of the needs of deaf and hard-of-hearing viewers, and familiarity with subtitling software and conventions. As far as interpreting is concerned, the emphasis is often placed on the multitasking skills required to listen, comprehend, and synthesize the source text and to reformulate it and deliver it live as a target text. Courses normally start with a theoretical introduction and are followed by a period of familiarization with the ASR software, the creation of a voice profile, dictation practice, and respeaking practice. For the latter, the most common setup is individual respeaking with self-correction but other alternatives such as individual respeaking without correction and respeaking with parallel correction can also be found (Robert et al. 2019). In the US, respeaking (or voice writing) training is approached in a more technical and less academic way, focusing first on deaf culture and then on Dragon NaturallySpeaking, SpeechCAT (a specialised software designed to improve Dragon's captioning performance), computer maintenance and troubleshooting, vocabularies and realtime rules, a thorough understanding of the encoder equipment required for live captioning, and of remote communication tools such as Adobe Connect, Zoom, Streamtext and YouTube.

The description of the skills involved in respeaking begs the question of what is the most suitable profile for the job and especially of whether subtitlers or interpreters are better suited to this discipline. Although there is widespread agreement that respeaking combines interpreting (as far as the process is concerned) and subtitling (especially regarding the product and the context), it was adopted from the beginning as a new modality of AVT, which may explain why most respeaking jobs are filled by subtitlers instead of interpreters and why it is mostly AVT scholars and not interpreting scholars have conducted research in this area.

## 4.2 In-house Training

When it comes to candidates to be trained in-house as respeakers, companies often look for graduates in languages and, ideally, postgraduates in subtitling. This is not always possible and the reality is that the background and profiles of the first respeakers were as varied as an MPhil in Medieval and Renaissance

Literature and a BA in Swahili and African Culture (Romero-Fresco 2011). Depending on the company, candidates are required to fill in an application form that may include a brief language/subtitling exercise, a knowledge test on current affairs, and sometimes a series of increasingly complex dictation and respeaking tests.

In-house training courses are normally delivered face-to-face, they may last anywhere between three days and three months and they are mostly practical. As in the HEI group, the most frequent setup for respeaking training is individual respeaking with self-correction, whereas others opt for a combination of individual respeaking without correction and parallel correction. Candidates are often asked to conduct subtitling quality assessment, for which they use the NER model (Robert et al. 2019).

## 5 Research

Research on respeaking is still scarce, especially taking into account the popularity and widespread use of this technique in the industry, its social impact and the increasing number of publications dealing with AVT and, more specifically, with media accessibility. A quick search on the translation and interpreting database BITRA ([https://aplicacionesua.cpd.ua.es/tra\\_int/usu/buscar.asp?idioma=en](https://aplicacionesua.cpd.ua.es/tra_int/usu/buscar.asp?idioma=en)) shows that only 4% of the academic publications on accessibility deal with live subtitling and respeaking, a figure that decreases to 0.8% if compared to publications on AVT in general.

So far, research in this area has focused on the respeaking process, the training of respeakers, the analysis of respooken subtitles, their reception by users, and finally the application of respeaking to other areas.

As far as academic publications are concerned, from its birth as an object of academic scrutiny in 2006 (Eugení and Mack 2006), respeaking has been the focus of MA dissertations (Marchionne 2011; Marsh 2004; Moores 2014), PhD theses (Eugení 2009), articles (Bouliané et al. 2009; Luyckx et al. 2013) and even two monographs (Eugení 2008b; Romero-Fresco 2011). Early publications, including most papers in the special issue of InTRAlínea on respeaking, delivered general descriptions of respeaking (Eugení and Mack 2006; Lambourne 2006; Mack 2006; Romero-Fresco 2008) and of how live subtitling and more specifically respeaking was first implemented in countries such as Italy (de Seriis 2006), Denmark (Baaring 2006), Taiwan (Chen 2006), Spain (Orero 2006), the Netherlands (de Korte 2006), Belgium (Aline Remael and van der Veer 2006) and the UK (Marsh 2006). Other contributions focussed on technological solutions for respeaking (Aliprandi and Verruso

2006) and its application to contexts such as speech reporting (Trivulzio 2006) and the university environment (Pirelli 2006).

The special issue of InTRALinea also included the first academic reflections on how to train respeakers in the contributions by Muzii (2006) and especially by Remael and van der Veer (2006), who outline the main skills and exercises from subtitling and interpreting that are needed to train respeakers at higher education. The latter laid the foundations for the first respeaking module delivered at university level, in this case at the University of Antwerp in 2007. It was also the starting point of the first comprehensive pedagogical model for the training of respeakers, developed by Arumí Ribas and Romero-Fresco (2008), which was applied in the respeaking courses taught at Universidade de Vigo, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (Spain) and the University of Roehampton (UK). This model has been reviewed and expanded (Russello 2010) as well as updated on the basis of feedback obtained from students (Romero-Fresco 2012a).

Respeaking training is the topic addressed by two recent EU-funded projects, LTA (Live Text Access) and ILSA (Interlingual Live Subtitling for Access). LTA aims to design a curriculum for realtime intralingual respeakers and velotypists with open-source training materials that can be suitable for in-house, vocational and higher education training (Eugeni and Bernabé 2019). ILSA seeks to identify the skills and profile of a new professional, the interlingual live subtitler, and to develop, test and validate the first training course on interlingual live subtitling for TV, political/social settings and the classroom. As part of this project, Dawson (2019) conducted the first comprehensive comparative analysis of the performance of interpreters and subtitlers doing intra and interlingual respeaking. In general, interpreters obtained better results than subtitlers in both intra and interlingual respeaking, but there were differences within and across groups. Thus, and especially when it comes to interlingual respeaking, being an interpreter does not guarantee good respeaking performance, just as being a subtitler does not need to be an obstacle to become a good interlingual respeaker. The good performing interpreters were strong live translators and were able to keep up with fast speeds and to deal with the multitasking aspect of respeaking. Much like the good performing interpreters, good performing subtitlers had clear dictation, good live translation skills and also seemed to keep up with the text. It appears that although interpreters may be better equipped initially to deal with the complexity of interlingual respeaking, students from other backgrounds may also have the necessary task-specific skills to perform well. This highlights that the most important aspect for trainees may be the development of the task-specific skills that they lack from previous experience rather than having a particular professional profile.

As far as the respeaking process is concerned, Luyckx et al. (2013) analyse it by adopting an empirical approach based on newly developed statistical analyses, keystroke logging and eye tracking. In their study, they draw conclusions on the causes and consequences of errors in live subtitling, the relationship between the correction of errors and the degree of editing of the source text and the respeakers' reliance on visual input for the collection of information.

As well as the process of respeaking and the training of respeakers, research has also focussed on the reception of respooken subtitles by the viewers. Eugeni (2008c) is the first and, to this date, still the largest reception study on live subtitling, including data from 197 signing deaf on their reception of live subtitles for the news in Italy. The study explores the efficiency of syntactically and semantically edited live subtitles while balancing the needs of the deaf community and the main public broadcaster, RAI. It finally offers a solution as a compromise to satisfy both: subtitles mirroring the grammar of Italian sign language while respecting the Italian grammatical rules. The first reception studies conducted in the UK (Romero-Fresco 2010, 2011, 2012b), analysed reception on the basis of the users' views, comprehension and perception on live subtitling. The users' concerns about the accuracy and delay of live subtitles, although partly determined by their unrealistic expectations about the accuracy of speech recognition technology, proved justified by the low scores obtained in an experiment testing the comprehension of live subtitled news programmes. The eye-tracking-based perception tests showed two potential reasons for these poor comprehension scores: the speed of the subtitles and their scrolling mode. The faster the subtitles, the more time the viewers spend reading them, as opposed to looking at the images, which has a negative impact on comprehension. This has recently been substantiated by eye-tracking data obtained across Europe (Romero-Fresco 2015a, b), which shows that an average speed of 150 wpm (in English) tends to lead to an equal distribution of attention between subtitles and images (50–50%). In contrast, subtitles at 180 wpm lead to a distribution of 60–40% and subtitles at 200 wpm lead to 80–20%, thus turning the viewers into subtitle readers.

In the Tiro project, carried out by the city council of Rome in order to make their meetings accessible in real time to deaf people through sign language and subtitles, Eugeni and Venuto (2018) study the reception of the subtitles produced in two ways: respeaking and live editing (a respeaker produces the mid text and an editor corrects it) and live editing only (when the quality of the source text is considered good, the respeaker turns into a second live editor correcting the input from the ASR directly connected to the speakers). Analyzing the amount of idea units from the source text that were rendered in

both types of subtitles, the researchers find that the quality of the subtitles produced through live editing only is just as good, and sometimes even better, than that of the subtitles produced through respeaking and live editing.

As for the display mode, the results, corroborated by Rajendran et al. (2013), show that scrolling subtitles cause the viewers to spend significantly more time on the subtitles (and less on the images) than block subtitles. These findings have been used by countries such as Switzerland to replace their scrolling subtitles by block subtitles and by regulators such as Ofcom to require broadcasters to use block subtitles for their hybrid mode.

Finally, in France, Muller (2015) shows that the national policy to have a four-people respeaking team in order to improve accuracy to the detriment of latency is not necessarily motivated by the users' preferences. In her study, most users prioritised the reduction of delay over the correction of errors, which would require a different approach to the one that has been adopted nationwide. In general, reception studies in live subtitling are scarce and mostly limited to surveys commissioned by user associations (Matthews 2015). Useful as these may be, they must be complemented with more academic reception research to ensure that the viewers are not just receivers but also to some extent participants in the decisions adopted for the guidelines on live subtitling.

An area that has been explored more thoroughly is the analysis of live subtitles and their main features, including accuracy, delay, speed, edition rate and display mode. The analyses come not only from academics (Eugeni 2009; Jensema et al. 1996; Luyckx et al. 2013; Romero-Fresco 2009) but also from official reports elaborated by user associations (Apone et al. 2010), broadcasters (EBG 2014) and regulators (Ofcom 2015a). Although the aim of these studies was initially to describe the main characteristics of live subtitles, the focus is now being placed on the assessment of live subtitling quality. This is arguably the most debated topic of discussion in this area and one in which the requirements of the industry and the users seem to have met the interest of many researchers in the field. Different models have been put forward to assess the quality of live subtitles, whether based on subtitling theory (Eugeni 2012), on the everyday practice of live subtitling (Dumouchel et al. 2011) or on the automatization of quality assessment (Apone et al. 2010).

In Canada, for example, the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) set up in 2012 a two-year project requiring broadcasters to analyse the quality of their live captions in 265 programmes using the so-called verbatim test (EBG 2014), which regards accuracy as the extent to which the captions match word for word the audio of a programme. Only 19% of the programmes monitored met the 95% threshold established

by the verbatim test, which was criticised by the broadcasters for not being a reliable determinant of accuracy and for punishing captioners who achieve better quality through adept editing than through verbatim captions that may be too fast for the viewers to read. With a view to accounting for the possibility of correct and incorrect editing and for the presence of different types of errors in live subtitling, the NER model (Romero-Fresco and Martínez 2015) was created in 2012 and since then it has been adopted by universities, broadcasters, access service providers and regulators in countries such as the UK, Spain, France, Switzerland, Italy, South Africa and Australia. In the UK, Ofcom adopted the NER model to set up the largest study conducted so far on the quality of live subtitling, analysing the accuracy, delay, speed and edition rate of 78,000 subtitles from all terrestrial TV channels in the country between 2013 and 2015 (Romero-Fresco 2016). The results show an overall accuracy rate of 98.4% (above the 98% threshold set by the NER model), an average delay of 5.4 seconds (exceeding the maximum of 3 seconds established by the Ofcom guidelines), an average subtitling speed of 140 wpm (exactly the same speed found by Jensema et al. in 1996 in their analysis of 205 US TV programmes) and an average edition rate of 22%.

In Canada, following the criticism of their verbatim test, the CRTC undertook, alongside the first author of this chapter, a research project to ascertain if the NER model can produce consistent results (different evaluators using the system should come to the same conclusions) and to find out if these results are in line with subjective impressions of caption quality in Canada (Romero-Fresco 2019). As for the first objective, the study concluded that, provided that evaluators are trained in the use of the model, its results are “reliable and useful, i.e. NER results are ‘repeatable’ within reasonable ranges” (2016 Working Group 2018). As for the second objective, the project showed that, in general, the NER scores correspond to user satisfaction, that is, NER results and consumer perceptions align well (2016 Working Group 2018: 14). Following these results, the CRTC has published a final call for comments (CRTC 2019) proposing an amendment of the English-language closed captioning mandatory quality standards for live programming so that (a) the (Canadian) NER model, with a threshold of 98%, replaces the verbatim test as the official method for live captioning quality assessment and (b) that two programmes, of which one must be news, are assessed every month, with results published every year. The CRTC have now asked LiRICS (Romero-Fresco et al. 2019), the first certification of live subtitlers in Europe, run by the UVigo research group GALMA, to certify NER evaluators who can help to assess the quality of live captions in the country.

Despite the many differences across countries, the features of live subtitles are largely dependent on the live subtitling method used, the display mode of the subtitles, the genre of the programme analysed and the speech rates of the speakers in the programme. What remains consistent across countries is the debate regarding the speed and edition rate of live subtitles. Some access service providers and broadcasters argue that live subtitles should not have a maximum speed and should therefore be fully verbatim, including every word spoken in a programme (Sandford 2015). This would bring about a dramatic decrease in the time (and therefore the cost) involved in subtitling, but at the same time it would also result in subtitles that would be too fast for many readers to follow (EBG 2014; Romero-Fresco 2015b).

Finally, alongside the above-mentioned studies on respeaking training, its process and the nature and reception of respooken subtitles, researchers are beginning to explore the use of respeaking in different contexts and for different purposes, such as respeaking in live events and respeaking for transcription purposes. In the UK, the Respeaking at Live Events project has outlined how respeaking might be introduced into the live event sector, establishing how the roles and responsibilities of the respeaker shift in this new setting where there is in-person presence and interaction (Moores 2019). In addition to addressing questions on quality, practice and training, this user-centred project situates respeaking within wider questions of accessibility, universalist accounts of access and social and epistemic justice (Greco 2018). As for the use of respeaking for transcription, several authors have compared the efficiency of respeaking to that of manual transcription and of automatic speech recognition (Bettinson 2013; D'Arcangelo and Cellini 2013; Sperber et al. 2013). In the medical field, and mostly in the US, researchers have looked into the feasibility of replacing manual transcriptions of patients' data with a semi-automatic approach based on respeaking (or voice writing, as this technique is known there). Al-Aynati and Chorneyko (2003) found ASR-based transcription to be a viable tool to transcribe pathology reports but also more time consuming than manual transcription, given the extra time needed to edit the errors caused by the speech-recognition software. In turn, Zick and Olsen (2011) analysed the accuracy, word-per-minute dictation time and turnaround time of speech-recognition-based transcription versus that of manual transcription for physician charting in emergency departments. They concluded that the former is nearly as accurate as traditional transcription, it has a much shorter turnaround time and is less expensive than traditional transcription.

Taking into account the encouraging results obtained in the medical field in the US and in these EU-funded projects, Matamala et al. (2017) tested the

efficiency of respeaking as a transcription tool for documentaries by comparing manual transcription (by far the most recurrent method used nowadays in the film industry) to respeaking and to the revision (or post-editing) of a transcript generated by automatic speech recognition. The results show that manual transcription was the most efficient method, which is not surprising given that the participants were professional manual transcribers with no experience or training in respeaking. However, it was respeaking that allowed the highest number of participants to finish the transcription in the time allocated for the task, especially for those who combined the use of hands and voice. This points to the need to further test the use of respeaking (combined or not with manual input) in the transcription industry, especially since most participants complained about the taxing and boring nature of their manual job and expressed their wish to start using this new technology.

In Europe, three EU-funded projects, Translectures, SAVAS and EU Bridge, have explored the use of speech recognition and in some cases respeaking to improve the efficiency of transcription and subtitling. Translectures (<https://www.translectures.eu/>) aimed to develop tools for the automatic transcription and translation of online educational videos. In the studies conducted as part of the project, the automatic generation of subtitles through speech recognition plus a manual review process to eliminate errors proved considerably faster than the traditional manual production of subtitles (Valor Miró et al. 2015). The SAVAS project (<http://www.fp7-savas.eu/>) aimed to develop speech recognition technology in seven languages (Basque, Spanish, Italian, French, German, Portuguese and English) for the production of fully automatic and respeaking-based subtitles and transcriptions. As in the case of Translectures, the SAVAS technology showed very promising results both in terms of accuracy and efficiency when compared to manual transcriptions (Álvarez et al. 2015). Finally, EU Bridge aimed at developing automatic translation and streaming technologies to produce interlingual subtitles for audiovisual products or speeches in multiple languages (Rödder 2013).

## 6 Final Remarks

As well as consolidating in most countries as the preferred method for the production of live subtitles for TV, respeaking is currently expanding to other live contexts, such as public events (conferences, talks, religious ceremonies, university lectures, school classes, etc.), business meetings and telephone conversations, with respeakers working on site or remotely and with or without visual access to the speakers. Off-line respeaking for the production of

pre-recorded subtitles is also becoming more popular, as is the introduction of interlingual respeaking, which edges this technique closer to simultaneous interpreting. In the near future, the use of automatic speech recognition, which is turning some respeakers into editors of automatically generated subtitles and transcriptions, may become more widespread, as will perhaps the still controversial insertion of antenna delays, which allows time for teams of subtitlers to prepare fully synchronized, error-free intra- or inter-lingual subtitles for “live” programmes.

Respeaking training is still not as prominent as it should be and certainly much more scarce than training in subtitling or interpreting. However, there are now several universities teaching respeaking modules in a range of formats (face-to-face and online, in one or multiple languages), which complements the in-house training that is still provided by many companies. Successful as they have been, these universities must now adapt to the above-mentioned changes regarding new applications and technological developments in respeaking. In addition, the development of interlingual respeaking may help to arise the interest of the interpreting community in this area, which could result in new and much-needed professional opportunities for interpreters and in the introduction of respeaking as an element within interpreting training.

As for research in this area, it is still limited to a few enthusiastic authors who are making the most of the social importance of respeaking by leading national and international projects and setting up fruitful collaborations with access service providers and governmental regulators. Now that the quantity of live subtitles is beginning to be regulated, many countries are considering the introduction of measures to assess the quality of live subtitling (Romero-Fresco 2019). Research is thus more necessary than ever, not least because the imminent introduction of automatic live subtitles (which are, by definition, fast and verbatim) may pose an important challenge for many viewers.

To conclude, it is hoped that the increasing visibility of respeaking in the industry and its social importance will result in the creation of further training opportunities at universities and in the development of research in this area in order to ensure that the new guidelines on live subtitling are based on empirical evidence that is in line with the viewers’ experience.

## 7 Suggested Reading

- Eugeni, C. (2008). Respeaking the News for the Deaf: For a Real Special Needs-oriented Subtitling, *Studies in English Language and Literature*, 21, National Taiwan University of Science and Technology, Taipei.

This is the largest reception study conducted so far on live subtitling, including data from 197 signing prelingual deaf on their reception of live subtitles for the news in Italy. The study explores the efficiency of syntactically and semantically edited live subtitles while balancing the needs of the deaf community and the main public broadcaster, RAI. It finally offers a solution as a compromise to satisfy both.

Romero-Fresco, P. (2011). *Subtitling through Speech Recognition: Respeaking*. Manchester: Routledge.

The first and so far only monograph on live subtitling and respeaking, this book covers the origins of live subtitling, the different methods used to provide live subtitles and the training and professional practice of respeaking around the world. It also features an in-depth respeaking course and a detailed analysis of the reception of respeaking, featuring information about viewers' preferences, comprehension and perception of respooken subtitles obtained with eye-tracking technology.

Romero-Fresco, P. (2016). Accessing Communication: The Quality of Live Subtitles in the UK. *Language & Communication*, 49, 56–69.

The largest study conducted so far on the quality of live subtitles, it analyses the accuracy, delay, speed and edition rate of 78,000 subtitles from 300 programmes broadcast on all five terrestrial TV channels in the UK.

Romero-Fresco, P., & Martínez, J. (2015). Accuracy Rate in Live Subtitling: The NER Model. In J. Díaz Cintas & R. Baños (Eds.), *Audiovisual Translation in a Global Context: Mapping an Ever-changing Landscape* (pp. 28–50). Palgrave Macmillan.

This chapter presents the NER model currently used by universities, broadcasters, access service providers and regulators around the world to assess the quality of live subtitles. This chapter includes the background of quality assessment in live subtitling, a comparison with other models and examples of the application of the NER model in several languages.

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# 15

## Key Concepts in Game Localisation Quality

Miguel A. Bernal-Merino

### 1 Introduction

Playing video games has by now become not only an acceptable leisure activity but also a popular one for people across the world. While the classic gaming demographic of young men is still an essential part, insights gathered for the Interactive Software Federation of Europe (ISFE) by Ipsos Connect show that there is growing interest in gaming across age and gender groups ([isfe.eu](http://isfe.eu)). In Europe, both the 25–35 and the 45–64 groups play more than 6.2 hours a week on their portable devices or their home systems (Ipsos Connect 2017). Not only that, 44% of players are female and they average more than 4.5 hours of play per week (*ibid.*). The growth is due to three main factors: the ubiquity of highly capable portable devices, the availability of a wide array multimedia interactive of entertainment software in multiple languages, and the demand for first-person experiences in new media (Bernal-Merino 2018b). Today's smartphones and tablets offer both the easy mechanics of traditional arcade games and the more involved gameplay of desktop entertainment systems thanks to the increased storage and fast microprocessors. This technological advancement has been utilised by developers and publishers who are

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porting many of their top titles to these new platforms, turning video games into truly mass-market products. All game genres (from platformers to sports, fighting, rhythm, RPGs, action-adventure, etc.) can be played on any platform. Contrary to what many may think, the majority of games available are not violent or gory. The Pan-European Game Information ([PEGI.info](#)) reports that, by the end of 2017, 90.6% of the 29,143 games rated since 2003 have received the 3, 7, 12 or 16 label. Such a high amount of games and the opportunities of markets across the globe have required the growth and specialisation of language service providers that have developed tailor-made workflows and tools in order to cope with the demands of the game industry (Bernal-Merino 2015). Professional linguist profiles for this industry ask for ample flexibility in their stylistic output for the different text-types, as well as translation tools proficiency, reporting accuracy and playing agility.

As will be explained in this chapter, game localisation requires much more than text-to-text translation. The team of game localisers is not only allowed but encouraged to use their creativity in their work (O'Hagan and Mangiron 2013). Due to the fact that video games are conceived as global products, localised versions are produced almost in absolute parallel with the original one which enables a degree of co-creation (Bernal-Merino 2016a). There is shared responsibility between freelance translators, linguistic testers and style editors because their industrial workflow requires their collaboration to guarantee the playability of each of the localised versions. Accessibility has also become a concern of such teams because small improvements in game design and user interface practices can remove barriers for other collectives (hearing or vision impaired) to enjoy games as well. So localisers need to work both interlingually and intralingually to enhance user experience and guarantee playability. Since video games are game-machines, the concept of playability becomes essential when determining whether a translation is fit-for-purpose. As a complex polysemiotic creation coded into a digital computer, each of the game assets has to be programmed and activated at the correct time and in the correct place. The localisation process replaces some of those assets but only linguistic testers can ascertain that it all functions as expected during linguistic play testing, so each version has to be controlled separately but concurrently in order to guarantee global sim-ship. Glocalisation is the business strategy for product development that game companies have favoured in the current decade because this allows them to control their IP better as well as fight piracy and grey markets.

The following sections will explain in detail these key concepts of the video game localisation industry and how this novel professional practice is pushing the boundaries of Translation Studies.

## 2 Text Translation Versus Game Localisation

A video game is not a text, although some can contain millions of words. A video game is a digital machine made up of hardware and software that generates polysemiotic virtual experiences. This multimedia interactive entertainment software (MIES) combines characteristics from previous media to enhance players' sensory and emotional engagement with the virtual creation generated in real time, a world where players become protagonists (Bernal-Merino 2015). Video games utilise a variety of storytelling techniques from literature, comics and cinema adding to this polysemiotic opus the pragmatic dimension of semiotic cues through interaction. Players act and react to modify situations through conversing, running, fighting... in short, deciding how they want the experience to continue. Traditional text translation notions and practices do not therefore suffice to achieve quality game localisation (Ellefsen and Bernal-Merino 2018). In other words, a translation can be grammatically correct but unsuitable for the playing experience being provided for its target locale (O'Hagan and Mangiron 2013). Playability becomes the key quality metric of video game localisation, where text translation is only a part of a complex, polysemiotic whole. In other words, you translate a text, you localise a video game.

Localisation challenges have to be considered from the viewpoint of pragmatics as player decisions tie in with the semiosis put forward by the game-machine. Interactive art places its emphasis in eliciting an experience, i.e., localised versions have to play as cohesively as original versions which may mean that they have to be different, however counterintuitive it may sound. Just like literal translation often yields an unwanted result, text-focussed localisation tends to diminish playability. Some of the most common hitches in localised games can be grouped into four categories: language environment (spelling mistakes, lexical and syntactical calques, poor writing style of translation), sound environment (flat performance by actors, inappropriate music), visual environment (inadequate user interface font size and colour, confusing icons), cultural environment (culturally offensive graphics, taboo language, inappropriate body gestures) (Bernal-Merino 2016b: 247).

The game sector has been growing its revenues worldwide year-on-year since the nineties and industry analysts estimate that its global value was \$140 billion in 2018 (Newzoo 2019). The industrial workflows of game development and publishing where localisation processes are embedded favour streamlined solutions so that they do not have to change all multimedia assets every time. For this reason, it tends to focus on written and recorded language, although graphics, textures, sounds, music, animations and interactions carry

a great percentage of the meaning in any one game. Since all semiotic signs are semantically intertwined, lack of coherence between layers affects the pragmatic elicitation by players in what they think that they are doing and what they decide to act on, in other words, game localisation requires the concept of playability as a measurement of quality.

As full localisation slowly becomes standard practice for more game in more locales, a number of professionals in the language services and the game industries have started implementing enhanced localisation, what McKearney (2007) refers to as 'deep' localisation as a higher level of quality beyond full localisation (Maxwell-Chandler and O'Malley-Deming 2012). This adjective is used to indicate an improvement of the game in relation to consumer expectation in each locale. In other words, amendments that favour the enjoyment of the game-world and are capable of increasing the immersion of players through familiarity with gameplay features and specific story preferences can be considered and accepted as the right way to approach a particular community or market. It may seem that there is nothing novel in this approach but, whilst previous efforts had aimed at breaking into markets by simply eliminating basic language barriers, enhanced or deep localisation staves off competition from other top games by presenting a product that caters directly to local player sensitivities in a systematised way. The 'glocal' business approach looks at this issue unemotionally; if it generates more sales, assimilate it in the production cycle, like companies such as Disney or McDonald's have done before. It is the glocalisation model.

### 3 Pragmatics and Translation

Passive media such as novels, comics or films can utilise up to five layers of semiosis: written language, spoken language, image, music and sound (Bernal-Merino 2016b). The model of communication is unidirectional from the novel, comic or film to the reader or viewer. In interactive entertainment media, the player has to constantly decide on information provided by the game-machine to experience more of the digital creation. Such information can come from any of the five semiotic layers mentioned above (written language, spoken language, image, music and sound) or the three new layers unique to interactive media: touch, proprioception or equilibrioception, for example, the flight simulator experiences where the cabin rotates and vibrates in synchrony with what the player does. Players' decisions change the game in real time so that no two 'playthroughs' are ever exactly the same. Therefore, the communication model between game-machines and players is, in contrast

to passive media, necessarily bidirectional. In this sense, the video game creation guides localisers on how to adapt the playing experience to each target locale. It cannot be a random or capricious decision because this would betray the game interaction created by designers.

Game designers can utilise a wide array of peripherals for players to ‘converse’ with the game-machine such as touch screens, gamepads, joysticks, microphones, cameras, driving wheels, guns, dancing mats, balance boards, guitars and so on. Hence, the pragmatic confirmation of game mechanics carried out by testers is essential to ascertain the playability of games. In this sense, the player/game-machine communication is interdependent because both interpreters vary their reactions based on the other’s input. The game-machine has to be considered as an interpreter despite not being a person because it is a proxy-interpreter for the designers and programmers that created it. If none of the pre-programmed inputs—or signs—are produced by players following Gricean cooperative principle and conversational maxims (Grice 1975), communication breaks down and playing stops. Pertinent game pragmatics can only occur when players understand the signs of each particular game and choose the right combination of responses to converse with each game-machine (Williams 2013). Such conversation can utilise up to six senses: sight, hearing, touch, mechanoception, proprioception and equilibrioception. The integration of peripherals designed for each of these senses enriches the virtual playing experience for players since they can derive meaning from each type of input imitating reality, for example:

1. Loudspeakers in game controllers make players feel that they are holding a particular item or pet;
2. Vibrating steering wheels to simulate driving off-road;
3. Compressed-air vests replicating environment interaction;
4. Virtual reality headsets adjusting visual and acoustic input to head movements.

Each of the signs in the eight semiotic layers has variations within its category in essence and intensity (font size, colour, volume, vibration strength, etc.) as well as variations based on synergies, for instance, an explosion in front of players’ avatar would generate bright colours, a loud detonation sound, pain utterances and a blurring of graphics, as well as the vibration of the controller and sudden pressure from the gaming-vest. The gaming experience does not have to be true to reality but to the logic of the game-world. Players are willing to suspend disbelief within the confines of the conventions set by the game itself; it is a ludic simulacrum based on constant communication

between agents. The limits are clear within each game genre. For instance, players of racing games do not expect to step out of the vehicle and chase drivers on foot just because they could in real life, but they would be disappointed if driving on asphalt felt the same as driving on ice, water or rocks. The feeling of appropriateness is elicited by the cohesion amongst layers of signs simulated in the computer thanks to game code: graphic animations, textures, vibration, sound, loss of traction, decelerating graphics, dirt clouds, spectators' screams and so on. The more closely knitted the layers of signs are, the higher the likelihood that all players will understand the correct meaning or semiosis intended by game creators.

Such cohesiveness may be disrupted during the localisation period if translators do not have enough information and Linguistic Quality Assurance (LQA) testers are not given enough time because felicitous semiosis breaks when the game itself does not adhere to its own signs and rules consistently. The signs exchanged between game-machines and players follow the conversational cooperative principles (Grice 1975: 45). Just like people speak accommodatingly and respect each other's turn within their given context, the human/game-machine interaction assumes both interpreters will cooperate to achieve the ludic end of the exchange, that is, to complete the game successfully. It goes without saying that this applies equally to each locale-specific versions. Grice's conversational maxims (*ibid.*) can help to confirm the cohesion of the signs and the correctness of interaction between players and game-machines:

- Maxim of quantity: The wrong amount of peripheral input produces unwanted or no results.
- Maxim of quality: Trying to utilise a peripheral input that has not been programmed for the task in hand yields unwanted or no results.
- Maxim of relation: Activating peripheral inputs randomly produces unwanted or no results.
- Maxim of manner: Partial and asynchronous peripheral inputs yield unwanted or no results.

When the game-machine does not comply with these conversational rules, players will conclude that it has been badly conceived by designers and programmers. If players fail to observe such maxims, the game-machine will deduce that they are unskilled players unable to 'converse' with the game. The pragmatics of players' locale needs to be bridged in order for users to understand the pragmatics of the game-world without undue hardship, i.e., a difficulty that does not exist for source culture players. If all layers of semiosis

and pragmatics are cohesive within the game-world, the game can be said to have achieved ‘unicity’ (Bernal-Merino 2016b: 245), in other words, it has become a super-sign that epitomises a unique experience for players. However, such unicity can be easily broken during localisation because the changes that become necessary to allow global players to interact with the game-machine have to be reassessed through semiotics and pragmatics to guarantee playability in each and every one of the versions. The most common errors in localised games can be grouped into four categories: language environment (spelling mistakes, lexical and syntactical calques, taboo language, poor translation style), sound environment (flat performance by actors, inappropriate music, asynchronous recordings), visual environment (culturally offensive graphics, inadequate user interface font size and colour, unreadable subtitles and captions, confusing icons, inappropriate body gestures), pragmatic environment (unresponsive controls, mismatch between triggers and reactions, culturally inadequate gameplay demands). Localisation tends to focus on written and spoken language, and sometimes graphics and music, but because all signs are semantically intertwined, the semiotic networks across layers may be broken, disrupting playability. Working with such a creative medium, video game designers and writers invent all types of engaging worlds, characters and storylines as artistic as those found in passive media, so the translation process is going to require co-creation, an involved collaboration amongst developers and translators to maintain the uniqueness of the experience.

## 4 Co-creation

Most authors understand that translation is an artistic endeavour and they tend to have clear parameters on what translators can and cannot do with their creations as seen with acclaimed professionals such as J. R. R. Tolkien, S. Beckett, G. Grass, A. Uderzo & R. Goscinny, S. Laurel & O. Hardy, and P. Collins to name but a few (Bernal-Merino 2018a, b).

William Barnes, head of localisation services at Blizzard Entertainment, stated at the GDC Localization Summit that “English is not a special case! English is just another language!” (Barnes et al. 2013). He continued by saying that “[as] localisation professionals, we need to think beyond just translation, and start acting as the voice of global interests within our team” (*ibid.*). In order to achieve this, the workflow changed from mono- to bi-directional so that the communication between designers, writers, programmers and localisation teams across countries is constant. Bashkim Leka, Head of Localisation at ArenaNet, shares this vision and strategy confirming that they

“check centrally that, for the English original and the localisation languages, all steps are carried out in exactly the same way” (Leka et al. 2014). Playability is maintained because the entertainment value of games depends greatly on helping players to make the right decisions, regardless of the language they are using. Since decisions are mostly based on individuals’ world knowledge, localisers input is essential, for some things will be obvious to players in some locales but not others.

A good illustration of how the concept of playability is essential in game localisation is in-game riddles. Although riddles in video games may appear the same as those in books or films, the need to focus on playability changes the emphasis for they can stop the conversation between the game-machine and players. The puzzles in *Batman Arkham City* (2011) focus on language alone. After a question by the Riddler, there are several words split in two and radially arranged into two six-spoke wheels with segments of different words as in the example (Fig. 15.1).

We find more complex, polysemiotic examples in *Assassin’s Creed: Unity* (2014) with the enigmas of Nostradamus. In these riddles, players have to pick up the clues that will take them to the right location within the three-dimensional architecture of the virtual world in order to unlock each secret glyph, so the poetic riddle alludes to a place within the game. Even more challenging are the cases found in *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt* (2015) where players need to, after reading a poem, interact with four separate statues in the right sequence in order to open a hidden passageway. Not solving the verbal



Fig. 15.1 Localisation of interactive puzzles in *Batman Arkham City*

puzzle by activating the statues in the right order means that the game cannot continue.

There are games where actually most of the localisation work requires full rewriting (Crosignani and Ravetto 2011). This is the case of the *Buzz!* quiz show video game series for PlayStation (2005–2010). Localisers had to invent related but culturally relevant questions for each of the locales following the spirit of the English original. Again, bad localisation decisions would mean that the game loses playability and users are not able to complete it for no failure of their own.

Finally, linguistic variables are used in combination with macros in order to handle the many adaptable strings that appear in-game, for example, in the *Guitar Hero* series player feedback is often given through the front page of a newspaper where the main headline refers to the performance of the player. This is one of the linguistic formulas utilised by the game engine: “[GH\_ADJ] {GH\_NOUN} from {GH\_BAND} at {GH\_VENUE}”. Such formula feeds from lists of adjectives, nouns and venue places found in different parts of the game code and could, for example, generate “Brilliant show from MiguelRock at the Garden” or “Decent performance from TheCrazyGoats at BarnRock”. While English syntax and morphology allow for such itemised sentence building, languages such as Spanish or German cannot be made to fit such simple formulae due to the existence of masculine, feminine and neutral linguistic gender and the way in which articles and adjectives are declined in agreement with nouns.

The above examples illustrate why game localisation needs the concept of ‘playability’ as a marker of quality and why ‘co-creation’, ‘shared authorship’, amongst all the different stakeholders is the only way of guaranteeing that players each locale enjoy a comparable gaming experience. Due to game production workflows, translators do not see the game and only have access to text strings collected in an MS Excel-type table where none of the additional game assets that the player will experience are present in any way. This can be due to overzealous copyright protection or to the simple fact that the game may not have been finished. For this reason, linguistic play testing (a.k.a. Linguistic Quality Assurance) was created in the 1990s (Maxwell-Chandler and O’Malley-Deming 2012).

## 5 Linguistic Quality Assurance (LQA)

Linguistic play testers are responsible for the final proofreading of textual game assets, from spelling to grammar, punctuation and style as well as the amendment of errors connected with the very nature of the digital medium

such as overlapping strings, text-box clippings, text bleeding, character length restriction, text-image agreement, linguistic variables and concatenated strings.

The ten most common LQA bug categories are compliance (first-party naming conventions, guideline failure), legal (end-user agreement, terms and conditions), technical text (code issues, corrupt text, incorrect string called), incorrect translation (inappropriate content, incorrect translation), missing translation (placeholders, missing translation, missing text), game terminology (glossary, internal inconsistency), audio (missing audio, cut-off, wrong audio language, timing), contextual mistranslation (out of context), text display (overlaps, cut-offs, bleeds) and spelling and grammar (spelling and orthographical errors, grammar, punctuation) (Samora and Airey 2011).

As in any other business process, while perfection is desirable it is not a goal in itself; pragmatism is central to all business decisions even more so when multiple locales are being targeted with different levels of localisation. Linguistic bugs found in multimedia interactive entertainment software are grouped in four levels of priority: A—Cannot be sold like this, B—Playable but affects playability, C—Noticeable but does not affect playability, D—Barely visible.

Broadly speaking, the tasks carried out during LQA by play testers can be grouped into four stages: preping, bug finding, bug reporting and bug regression. The volume of work is nowadays high enough that there are companies such as Testronics and Poletowin that specialise almost exclusively in this area of game localisation. They utilise cloud-based software tools for reporting and tracking each bug lifecycle to allow for concurrent teams of testers working together in the different language versions, as well as to allow for different shifts of testers to guarantee that all are finalised at the same time and ready for sim-ship.

In this sense, it could be said that translation responsibility tends to reside with freelance translators and localisation responsibility with LQA testers for they are the only ones that check the cohesiveness of all assets *in situ*, in other words, they check localisation ‘playability’.

## 6 Game Accessibility

In the search for new players, game developers and publishers are showing a more proactive approach to accessibility such as the example with Electronic Arts (EA) that has recently integrated a game accessibility expert to review their games prior to release. In this sense, the target players that they are

aiming for do not align with a particular country but with a community of people that share a particular requirement or preference in the way that they interact with the game-machine, and this is also a question of playability. EA writes on their website: “Accessibility is the correction of any mismatch between a person and their environment, including those resulting from medical differences. At EA, we feel it’s important to consider accessibility when making our games, so everyone can play.” ([www.ea.com/able](http://www.ea.com/able))

It is perhaps a sign of progress that the word ‘disability’ or ‘handicap’ are no longer seen as adequate. Accessibility features try to palliate the mismatches between game-machines and players around vision, hearing, speech, mobility or cognition. Not all options can be enacted in all games but the simple fact of having options where there used to be none, is already a significant change. While, strictly speaking, these issues supersede traditional localisation practices, such awareness was initiated in localisation departments when checking UI (User Interface) text and subtitles during linguistic play testing. Subtitles (or captions) are important for some players while they feel unnecessary for others, just like in audiovisual products such as films. Game designers and programmers tend to be in the second camp so, for very long, menu boxes were only adequate for English text and subtitles used small fonts and were too long for comfortable reading while playing (Mangiron et al. 2014).

Although progress in this area is much slower than in the audiovisual industries where intralingual and interlingual subtitling, as well as audio-description for the blind can be accessed on TV, in cinemas and theatres, it is fair to say that such business interest grew only after legislation was introduced by the European Union (Díaz-Cintas and Remael 2014; Fryer 2016). Access to audiovisual media (information and entertainment) is considered an essential citizen right. This is not the case with MIES, which is still considered a luxury, but game accessibility has started to improve in the current decade. Websites such as [GameAccessibilityGuidelines.com](http://GameAccessibilityGuidelines.com) provide all the information that developers and publishers may need to easily make their games attractive to communities of game fans that have often not been catered for. Through options in the game settings, vision-impaired players can adjust the size of and amount of subtitles, daltonic players can choose different colour schemes, hearing-impaired players can change the volume of speech against music and special effects, players with motor impairments can change the level of difficulty of the game and so on. These modifications are actually beneficial for everybody across age groups and locales regardless of medical disabilities, because they allow for the fine customisation of the playing experience to the way that users want each time, even if it involves playing in different rooms, with different colleagues, on different platforms, with different levels of skill, etc.

Like in the case of the audiovisual industry, it is the language service providers that inform and deliver most of the accessibility features once game companies integrate such design changes. More often than not, the conventions applied are directly borrowed or adapted from the existing accessibility features that have been in use by the audiovisual industries (Mangiron et al. 2014) such as: Text should be against a solid or semi-opaque background (known as letterboxing), ideally combined with an outline or shadow too, no more than 40 characters per line and two lines per subtitle ideally, text should not be smaller than 46 pixels in a 1080 pixel resolution screen and so on. ([gameaccessibilityguidelines.com](http://gameaccessibilityguidelines.com)).

Hence, playability as tested during LQA presents itself as the final true measure of game localisation quality, whether interlingually or intralingually, because it is the only part of the process in which the translatable assets that make up each semiotic layer of the game are checked in the right playing context and with each player group in mind.

## 7 Playability: The Measure of Quality Localisation

A formula to measure the playability of a localised game should be based on the appropriateness of the eight layers of semiosis and the pragmatics they elicit in order to guarantee that the playing experience is the one intended by developers. Its simplest version could be reduced to positive and negative where any one negative would make the whole result negative for its category. An example of a new VR game with poor translation and some inappropriate graphics could be assessed in this manner (Table 15.1).

A quantitative approach to measuring the quality of each localised version, could assign +1 or -1 to each of the categories, reaching a maximum positive score of +8 or a maximum negative score of -8. Zero should only be used when a semiotic layer is not used at all in any version. All other changes would be noticed by players in each of the receiving locales (and would quickly become common knowledge thanks to the Internet). The highest score is the

**Table 15.1** Simple formula to measure playability in localised games

Written language	Spoken language	Image (textures)	Image (animations)	Music	Sound	Touch	Proprioception	Equilibrioception
-	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	0

one that estimates that there is unicity; playability has been transferred adequately and players in that locale do not see their fun or decision-making hindered. The pragmatic layer of game semiosis has been preserved by the industrial localisation process. Let us take the Arabic localisation of *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt* as a case study. CD Project Red decided from the very beginning that they needed to enter the market with respect and confidence so they proceeded to look at their game from the viewpoint of players in Arabic-speaking countries. PEGI rated this game for EU countries as “18” restricting availability to adults due to its violence, swearing, depiction of naked bodies and sexual relationships. Had the game been translated with no regard for sensibilities in Arabic-speaking countries, it would have incurred a negative reaction of players and a legal challenge or ban from the authorities. The quality of the localisation could be represented as  $0/8 (-4 + 4 + 0 = 0)$  localisation points out of a possible 8) (Table 15.2).

Ainara Echaniz, senior localisation project manager for *The Witcher 3*, explains how they worked with translation agencies to make sure that they preserved playability and the unique adventure style of the game while adapting all other aspects (signs) that could be misinterpreted or deemed offensive (O’Dwyer 2017). In this spirit, they translated the UI and subtitles, eliminated references to fantasy gods, reduced gory visuals and added clothing to naked body textures. As a result the VR Arabic version released addressed 7 of the 8 semiotic layers ( $+7 - 1 + 0 = 6$  localisation points in total out of a possible 8) because the audio language remained in English (Table 15.3).

A score of 0 signifies that companies have not really carried out due diligence and the localised version fails unnecessarily in far too many ways destroying playability. By contrast, a score of 7/8 means that all seven semiotic layers were checked for consistency bearing in mind the specifics of the target locale, and the localised version is almost as good as it could be hoped for,

**Table 15.2** Numeric formula to measure playability in localised games

Written language	Spoken language	Image (textures)	Image (animations)	Music	Sound	Touch	Proprioception	Equilibrioception
-1	-1	-1	-1	+1	+1	+1	+1	0

**Table 15.3** A better localisation score confirming playability

Written language	Spoken language	Image (textures)	Image (animations)	Music	Sound	Touch	Proprioception	Equilibrioception
+1	-1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	0

missing only the implementation of Arabic voiceover for all content. Playability is not hindered because subtitles in Arabic were provided.

The awareness and early planning on the part of CD Project Red illustrates very well the glocalisaiton business model that many interactive entertainment companies are starting to embrace.

## 8 Glocalisation

One of the defining aspects of the glocalisation approach is that it requires the integration of localisation within each content-creating department in the process of game production. As a result, input from more professionals is required in order to ascertain and advise on how playing experiences are received by players in each of the importing locales. The move of some game localisation processes from the postproduction stage at the very end of product development to the planning stages constitutes a radical change requiring serious restructuring in most game companies as many of them had organically become accustomed to disregarding the preferences of foreign markets, owing to the fact that outsourced language service providers would undertake this part of the work at a later stage. The glocalisation strategy is a further production refinement following internationalisation where companies allow for the natural structural or design variations that entering a new market may require. This is necessary now because we have a globalised market where the leading companies need to do simultaneous global releases (*sim-ship*) so as to not lose their edge against the competition or piracy.

The glocalisation strategy signals a shift in which localisation becomes closely involved with video game creation, effectively generating new versions of the game that incorporate the legal requirements and player preferences of each target locale. In this sense, translators and linguistic testers are also invited to take on a creative role in the process, alongside writers. Linguistic creativity can be said to form an integral part of translation, an aspect that becomes more evident the more artistic texts are, as has been pointed out by scholars in the translation of stage plays (Santoyo 1989), children's literature (Lathey 2006), music (Desblache 2019), or advertising (Abad and Valdés 2004).

One of the most decisive factors determining this enhanced localisation approach, and perhaps the one that applies more directly in the case of video games, is that these products are conceived from the very beginning as global mass market consumer products, and not as canonical works of art, as some literary and filmic creations are regarded nowadays. The underlying principle is that there is co-creation (Bernal-Merino 2016a) and shared responsibility

for the revenues the games are expected to generate globally. When localisation becomes an integral part permeating all stages in the development process of an entertainment software product, developers, publishers and localisers have to reimagine or remove some game elements that are unfavourable to, or could be misinterpreted by the target locale. These might include aspects as simple as the addition of masculine and feminine genders as well as ethnicity and profession to players' avatars, such as in the *Mass Effect* series (2008–present), where users are able to choose many characteristic for their avatars, i.e., their embodied playable character. On other occasions, the strategy involves resorting to local brands and celebrity players can easily relate to, even changing storylines and locations so as not to alienate consumers in particular locales. It is certainly a sensitive way in which to approach the game and one that is discussed by Milder (2009) when analysing the modifications the *Wolfenstein* game series typically undergoes in order to please USK, the German age rating board. Localising characters, storylines or graphics can appear to distort the original considerably, however, the focus is not so much on the content but on the playing experience. In other words, if a text string, graphic texture or character can detract from enjoying the playing experience in a particular locale, they can be changed for that locale. This is something that has been in practice in the entertainment industries for decades and it is not necessarily censorship but market adaptation. Localisation should not be perceived as a mandate to modify everything but rather as an awareness of the sensitivities and preferences of other locales. In this sense, it is game-worlds themselves that establish their creative parameters by indicating what would be admissible and what would not. As highlighted by Giné (2009), one of the benefits for developers and publishers is that, with accurate knowledge of each locale, country-specific downloadable packages can be created for old games with a view to a second release, thus lengthening the profitable life of the games. This glocalisation approach combined with the incredible capabilities of current smartphones is responsible for the revival of old games we have been experiencing in the current decade.

The main six reasons behind a glocalisation strategy can be summarised in the acronym G.L.O.C.A.L. (Bernal-Merino 2016a): Growth readiness to even more locales; Legal compliance with the regulatory frameworks of each country; Outsmart competitors and copycats; Charm skippers, the digital natives that have no time for unappealing content; Acclaimed IP assuring the protection of ideas; Loyalty guarantees label permanence for the franchise.

Similar to the way entertainment licensors have become full-fledged, creative collaborators with producers to generate higher profitability (Morris 2013), integrating localisers as co-creators is the final step that articulates

global input and income. This is the first time in the software entertainment industry that companies can address all their global clients directly and simultaneously without losing control through intermediaries. The maturing game industry is starting to put into practice internationalisation and glocalisation practices embracing shared-authorship with considerable improvements in playability. In our globalised marketplace, the future requires that global companies understand glocalisation and partner with experts in each locale, not only because foreign clients may be as valuable as local ones but also because they are more abundant.

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# 16

## Intersensory Translation Mitigating Communication Mismatches

Josélia Neves

### 1 Introduction

Anybody looking at translation in the present moment will find accessibility to be one of its most vibrant areas, both for the educational and research opportunities it offers and for the direct impact it has in the industry and in society. Regularly connected to audiovisual translation (AVT), accessibility has gained the interest of scholars, professionals and society, for constantly providing challenges and opportunities to those working in the field.

It is an established fact that translation—in all its forms—is all about accessibility. Translation offers a means for communication to take place, as it bridges between languages and cultures, sign systems and codes, and compensates for losses that may be inherent to any of the elements involved in the communication cycle. In fact, communication itself only happens if all barriers are (reasonably) overcome during the process of encoding and decoding the messages carried between senders and receivers through the diverse number of channels (and media) now available. Advances in technology have dictated significant changes in the way people communicate, adding layers of

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complexity to the forms translation takes. While traditional translation proper is still seen as the act of translating from one language to another (interlingual translation), intralingual and intersemiotic translation (Jakobson 1959) have gained special interest, particularly when they are used for the benefit of persons with disabilities (PWD), in contexts such as access to the media and the arts. It was in making audiovisual text available to vision or hearing impaired audiences that accessibility became a core element of (audiovisual) translation, alongside interlingual audiovisual translation modalities such as subtitling and dubbing. In the entry on audiovisual translation in *The Encyclopedia of Applied Linguistics*, Chiaro (2012: 1059) echoes this mainstream approach to AVT by focusing on Subtitling, Dubbing and Accessibility to say that 'accessibility endorses intralingual translations in the form of subtitles, sign language interpreting for the deaf and hard of hearing, and audio descriptions for the blind and visually impaired'. This, at present, may be a reductionist take on AVT, and so much more on AVT for Access that has grown beyond the domains of audio and visual mediality or conventional translation parameters. Accessibility, in the broader context of human communication, is no longer limited to compensating for sight or hearing loss; instead, it involves multiple ways of engaging the senses to make tangible and digital realities available to all.

Even if we may be heading towards the existence of a new field of study/expertise, which may no longer fit within the framework of (audiovisual) translation, it is still valid to address the topic of mediation/interpretation/facilitation for specific purposes/audiences in the light of the existing frameworks in Translation Studies (TS) and related areas. While the market grows and accessibility services gain momentum, a new professional profile frames itself, and a new multidisciplinary 'discipline' grows out of the complexity of understanding innovative ways to make all spheres of life available to all. Even if only a holistic integrated approach can fully guarantee access to each person, everywhere and at all times, it is important that the topic be addressed from particular standpoints, for a better understanding of what each area can contribute to what needs to be a holistic experience. This paper aims to reflect upon how translation, in its broadest (multidisciplinary) sense, might contribute towards this quite diffuse understanding of 'accessibility' in the context of communication, and how it has become a vehicle for change in academia and in society. Such a stand can only be taken if we incorporate notions from Disability Studies, Communication and Translation Studies as well as insights from Psychology, Cognitive Sciences, Reception Studies, Information Technology, Material Studies, Adaptation Studies and, more specifically, from the perspective of Universal Design, Inclusive Design, Interaction Design and User-Experience Design.

## 2 Accessibility in (AV) Translation Studies

In 2003, Gambier used the term ‘screen transadaptation’ to name the changing landscape of audiovisual translation (AVT), distinguishing between dominant and challenging types of AVT. At the time, he considered translating scenario/script, intralingual subtitling, live (or real time) subtitling, surtitling and audio description (AD) to be ‘particularly challenging’ (Gambier 2003: 174). Three of the then listed challenging types—intralingual subtitling (SDH) (or captioning), live (or real time) subtitling and audio description (AD)—have since been regarded as important accessibility services for persons with sensory impairment. This scholar has repeatedly placed accessibility services within the realm of AVT (cf. Gambier 2006, 2008, 2009, 2013) in an effort to position accessible media services/products within the established paradigms of TS. The difficulty to step away from conventional AVT modalities makes Gambier stay within the realm of linguistic transfer by focusing on the most conventional accessibility modes in AVT. In 2016 he does, however add that:

Accessibility is a key word in AVT, not only as a legal and technical issue but as a concept that shakes up the dominant way of assessing the quality of a translation, the aim being to optimize the user-friendliness of AVT, software, websites, and other applications. It covers features such as acceptability, legibility, readability (for subtitles), synchronicity (for dubbing, voice-over, and free commentary), and relevance in terms of what information is to be conveyed, deleted, added, or clarified. (Gambier 2016: 898)

What may be learned from existing efforts to capture the nature of accessibility services within a traditional (AV) translation framework is a recurrent notion that (audio/visual) messages are mediated by verbal components that are read or heard, by making auditory messages visual and visual messages auditory. Although areas such as web accessibility, Braille and sign language interpreting are touched upon, and even incorporated among AVT types, as seen in Gambier (2009) and Chiaro (2012), it is SDH and AD that take centre stage in accessible AVT studies, a tendency which continues in very recent publications (cf. Díaz-Cintas and Nikolić 2018; Di Giovanni and Gambier 2018). This raises numerous questions to those working in the field: Are Braille and sign language interpreting truly AVT proper? How and where will we position other accessibility types, such as tactile materials (replicas, 2 ½ D raised images, pictographic messaging or immersive experiencing)? Might we still be talking about translation if no words are used? Might one

formulate a reception-based translation type? And finally, is accessibility bound to become a distinct (inter)discipline that brings together expertise from general communication and disability studies as well as area specific knowhow, as happens when addressing mediating for the media, the (visual and performing) arts, museums and cultural venues, tourism, or for (special) education, to name a few?

Even if these questions remain unanswered to date, reflection is ongoing among professionals and scholars in the field. The difficulty to grasp what accessibility fully entails and to position it within conventional (academic) domains leads to new proposals that may challenge the *status quo* described above (see Greco 2018 and Romero-Fresco 2018 on the proposal of the new discipline of media accessibility). Efforts to define this expanding area are also found in two large-scale projects in Europe. In an attempt to capture the nature of accessibility services in cultural contexts, the ACT (accessible Culture and Training) Project,<sup>1</sup> led by the Catalan Transmedia Research Group, suggests a new professional profile—media accessibility expert/manager. The AMATRA Project, carried out by scholars in Granada, outlines the profile and work of ‘accessible translators and interpreters’ working on accessible communication in museums (Jiménez-Hurtado et al. 2012). These two projects, which still frame themselves strongly within AVT and TS, are indicative of the need to rethink a domain that is growing beyond translation and beyond conventional text types, given that the transfers and the products at stake do not fit clearly within the realm of translation as it is seen in mainstream academic contexts.

### 3 Understanding the Concept of ‘Accessibility’ in Present-Day Communication Environments

As presently understood, accessibility is a basic human right inscribed in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UN 1948), and is further developed as one of the guiding principles of the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (CRPD) (UN 2007). The full scope of what accessibility entails in this context is presented in Article 9 of the CRPD, in regards to two main domains: (a) buildings, roads and transportation and other outdoor and indoor facilities and (b) information, communications and other services.

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<sup>1</sup><http://pagines.uab.cat/act/>.

While access to the built environment has become mainstream, access to information and entertainment has been slow in the uptake. Communication accessibility services only gained recognition in the second half of the twentieth century, when they became available in the media, and on television in particular. It is in this context that audiovisual translation for access became a regular service, growing in offer and visibility as PwD demanded for more SDH, sign language interpreting and AD on their favourite information and entertainment programs. The introduction of digital technology, which allowed for greater versatility in the placement of picture over picture and multimodal and multichannel delivery of content, improved the quantity, quality and ease of use of such access services. A further enhancement to ‘old media’ (print, radio and film) access came with Web-based multimedia content and the technical possibilities that digital distribution and media conversion and portability now allow for.

In fact, the Web has stimulated the deliberate uptake of accessibility measures in global communication. The World Wide Web Consortium (W3C),<sup>2</sup> whose mission is ‘to lead the Web to its full potential’, supports Web accessibility in the understanding that it is a basic human right. Further to supporting social inclusion, accessibility is used as a business case, given that it enhances usability and thus brings financial benefits to all those who incorporate it. This is due to its ability to reach out to excluded groups in rural or developing areas, while making life easier for underprivileged, elderly or disabled populations. By hosting and distributing content in multiple formats, and allowing people to select and use content at will, while using the technology and interfaces that best suits their personal profile, the Web has become a vital tool in promoting accessibility.

Ubiquitous media and the Internet of Things have broadened the scope of Web-based accessibility services by introducing smart solutions that mediate between the tangible and the digital worlds, in all contexts. ‘New media’—Websites, mobile apps and gadgets, virtual worlds, multimedia, computer games, human-computer interfaces, computer animation and interactive computer installations, among others—are now allowing for integrated intelligent solutions with tailored adjustments to enhance both physical and digital personal and social experiences. These facilitate virtual and face-to-face interaction with people and built environments. They expand the reach and diversity of communication modes while increasing the text types that may

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.w3.org/Consortium/>.

require specific mediation given the multiple ways and places in which they are made available and may be accessed.

At present, as recurrently stated by Jones Jr. (2016), dichotomies such as ‘old media’ *versus* ‘new media’; ‘analogue’ *versus* ‘digital’; ‘producer’ *versus* ‘consumer’; ‘professional’ *versus* ‘amateur’, or ‘mass media’ *versus* ‘social media’ *versus* ‘personal media’, are no longer applicable. Notions and boundaries are becoming progressively blurred by the way technology is integrating and converging, and agency is being democratized, where people become engaged prosumers (Tapscott and Williams 2006), actively contributing to what is being offered to them. One may also question to what degree such diversity and flexibility promote (or detract from) accessibility and inclusion, and how this new landscape requires that basic notions of accessibility be reconsidered.

In recent decades, we have seen a clear move from a medical to a social model in the way disability is viewed, removing the onus from the person to place it on the (social and physical) environment. However, a strand of thought has developed a cultural model to understand the difficulties inherent to ‘communication between a person (or people) without disabilities and a person (or people) with disabilities, be those disabilities physical or developmental’ (O’Brien 2012: 3). In his take on the matter, O’Brien (2012: 5) presents ‘interability communication’ as a form of intercultural communication. This post-colonial take reinforces the notion that the main communication breakdowns are between people with and without disabilities. This makes us see PwD as (cultural or linguistic) minorities that remain excluded from mainstream society (Allen 2011: 155). In this context, communication between differently abled persons is said to be improved by ‘facilitation’ or ‘alternative’ communication methods, as is the case of the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) or Braille, for instance; a position that seems counter-productive in present contexts, given that it accentuates the need for ‘special (assistive) solutions’ for ‘special needs’. Rather than flattening differences, by embracing human diversity as natural and positive, this approach heightens ‘difference’. Even if the goal of interability communication activism is to empower (dis)abled (minority) social groups through communication, it reinforces the *les uns et les autres* that continues to be found in the way disability and accessibility issues are still addressed in numerous contexts. It may be argued that the simple denomination of AVT services as ‘subtitling for the deaf and hard of hearing’ will fall within this mind-set. The ideal take on accessibility will make it mainstream and natural, rather than a solution for a minority, given that, as posited by Holmes (2018), accessibility is all about overcoming the mismatches that exist between the world and each person’s abilities.

Despite the enforcement of the social model, that sees disability in the environment rather than in the person, it is very difficult to move away from the need to make up for a loss that is inherent to the person's profile, or to the notion that there are some who are different from the majority. Such paradigms might be overcome if, instead of being related to disability, accessibility were to be connected to *inability*, which happens whenever someone is unable to accomplish what she/he aims to do, regardless of the underlying reasons. In a noisy environment, for instance, someone may be unable to hear what is being said on television; when looking at a work of art one may be unable to understand the messages the artist wished to convey; or when following IKEA furniture instructions, one may not manage to assemble the piece in reference. In all cases, inability is not necessarily connected to impairment, but will be due to barriers of quite diverse nature that may go from environmental sound pollution, to lack of previous knowledge about art, or poor haptic abilities. In a similar vein, when addressing access to museums and cultural venues, for instance, Dodd and Sandell (1988: 14) list physical, sensorial, intellectual, economic, emotional, cultural or social inequalities as barriers that hinder full access. In so doing, they are addressing a bigger picture and demonstrating that accessibility should not be addressed at the level of (conventional) text—the focal point of TS. They highlight the array of factors that contribute to exclusion/inclusion and, again, expand the notion of accessibility beyond disability. This said, to be taken further, accessibility is to be regarded beyond providing equal opportunities (to minority groups) to be addressed as plain equity and social justice. It is, therefore, the role of professionals working in fields related to communication to carry out 'deliberate and specific intervention' to develop what Perry et al. (1998) call 'accomplishment spaces', where people can overcome their inability, which may be due to intrinsic (personal) or extrinsic (social and environmental) factors.

## 4 Defining 'Intersensory Translation'

In order to redefine accessibility as a multifarious form of translation, I would like to return to the basics of communication, to focus on the notions of perception and on the materiality of texts. This is done by focusing on two of the main components of the communication chain, the receiver and the text; and on the process by which texts can be mediated for new/different receivers by engaging different senses.

## 4.1 On the Senses and Perception

When addressing reception in communication, it is ‘Perception’ we may need to consider, for sensing alone does not guarantee effectiveness. The *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* defines perception as ‘a) the way you think about something and your idea of what it is like; b) the way that you notice things with your senses of sight, hearing etc.; c) the natural ability to understand or notice things quickly’. Beyond its dictionary entry, perception is understood as a complex process, carried out by sensory systems that bring together the physical ability of recognizing and selecting information through the senses, organizing it in view of experiences, expectations and personal values, in order to interpret it. As much as perception depends on sensory input, it works with memory and emotion for meaning making.

Ou (2017: 19–20) states that ‘perception of our physical and social world is an internal operation where we select stimuli and process them through our nervous systems and brains until we create structure, stability, and meanings for them’.

The physical component of perception is closely related to the mechanics of the senses organized in seven vital systems: the vestibular system that regulates balance; the proprioceptive system that determines our own body awareness; and the systems connected to the better known senses of touch, hearing, sight, smell and taste. Human perception is multisensory in nature, for various senses work together at all times in the effort to decode complex texts. However, sight and hearing are considered primal given their strong connection to intellectual processing. For this reason, these two ‘distal senses’ are considered central in the exchange of information and have proven to be directly involved in the processing of ‘non-present’ referencing. For their ability to carry and interrelate multiple sets of information simultaneously, these two senses are actively used in the production and reception of language and in most relational communication events. They are vital components of all communication that happens via (old and new) media and, for these very reasons, have gained the interest of scholars in TS, and particularly of those working in AVT.

In Aristotelian terms, sight and hearing are accompanied by three other senses—touch, smell and taste—, which are considered to be sensuous and proximal in nature, and demanding shared space and time. While the five senses are basic to perception, all human organisms share a vast array of other senses, among which are the lesser acknowledged senses of temperature, kinesthesia, pain, balance, vibration, acceleration and time, among others. While

exteroceptive senses allow us to make sense of the world around us, interoceptive senses allow us to feel our internal organs. Often times, these two activate each other, particularly in emotional states. Intersensory integration, which in heightened states leads to synesthesia, happens constantly. In practice, the senses are transducers that ‘translate’ the world so that it may be understood by the brain. When any of the senses are not fully operative, other senses are used to compensate and to lighten the effort of decoding the world.

We need to add, however, that perception also has a psychological dimension because, returning to Ou (2017: 20) ‘it is people’s values, attitudes or motives (the psychological dimension) rather than their sensory organs (the physical dimension) that determine what stimuli will attract people’s attention and hence receive meanings’. This means that perception is inevitably culturally bound, and controlled by emotional factors, through the application of filters that are unique to each person (cf. Prosser and Hayward 1985; Katan 1999; Li and Wu 2005; Ou 2017) determining the way people select, organize and interpret what they perceive through the senses.

The acknowledgement that perception is a complex combination of factors that lead to perceptual diversity is important when studying communication, and accessibility, in particular. Varner and Beamer (2006) refer to the fact that communication only happens when verbal and nonverbal behaviours are perceived and assigned meaning. Assigning meaning is a personal construction. In fact, the acceptance of perceptual diversity becomes central when addressing the translation/mediation of art forms, in which perception is taken to yet another degree of interpretative subjectivity. This notion may also account for much of the discussion that TS have developed around the topic of objectivity and subjectivity for, while objectivity may exist in objects in the tangible world, it is quite unachievable in the world of thought and the fact is that all processing only happens at the level of perception.

This said, all the translator/mediator working in accessibility can do is work with the sender to develop multimodal stimuli that enable sensory engagement that facilitates perception, so that the receiver is able to interpret the message with his/her personal tools.

## 4.2 On Coding and Materiality

If we take communication to be ‘a realm of intangible phenomena that mediate our embodied human experiences of the concrete world’ (Packer and Wiley 2012: 3), then all communication is built upon coded materiality, the stimuli that are captured by the senses and decoded by the brain. In modern

times, materiality is both physical and digital in nature. Our physical world is composed of tangible materials,—those (objects) that can be perceived through both distal and proximal senses; and intangible materials,—those that exist in natural settings but that cannot be touched, as in the case of light and sound that require a medium to provide them with embodiment. Materiality has an element of physicality, in which ‘infrastructure, space, technology, and the body become the focus’, situating ‘communication and culture within a physical, corporeal landscape’, but it can also be seen as ‘communication itself, focusing on discourse as inscription in the material strata of sound, optical media, the built environment, and the brain’ (Packer and Wiley 2012: 3).

When addressing accessibility, it becomes important to understand how messages can be taken across materials to allow for multisensory engagement. When seen within TS, we tend to stay within the realm of verbal and/or audiovisual text, and to focus on linguistic or semiotic motions in view of source and target texts that may vary in language, medium or mode, but that will continue to exist within the parameters of intangible materiality. Seldom do we look at situations in which intangible messages are reversioned as tangibles, i.e. when intangible messages are given a tangible existence in the form of an object/artefact or a physical experience to be perceived through proximal senses, such as touch. An example of such a transfer will happen when a painting is recreated as a tactile drawing or an assembly of various objects (Eardley et al. 2016; Dobbin et al. 2016). This awareness that translation/mediation for access can imply turning intangible messages into tangible experiences reinforces Baker and Saldanha’s view (2009: viii) on how Translation Studies has been restrictive in defining its object of study, and how we have ‘hardly started to scratch the surface of this multifaceted and all-pervasive phenomenon’ of translation. This is even more evident if we think about the intersection that is presently happening between the digital and the physical world. Kwon et al. (2014: 651–652) remind us that ‘currently, we belong simultaneously to a physical world that is represented by tangible materials and a digital world that embodies digital computation via user interfaces, which increasingly blur the boundary between computation and materials.’ In fact, atoms and bits are now entangled in new compositions that allow for interactivity and enhanced embodied experiences. This is the case of augmented reality, for instance, in which immaterial data is projected onto physical objects or when ‘programmable smart materials and effortless computing [are] seamlessly coupled with an artefact’s composition to generate tangible aesthetic interactions’ (Kwon et al. 2014: 656), as happens with video mapping or morphing installations.

Should we wish to see accessibility as intersensory translation, as I truly believe it is, we have to see how translation can reversion messages in quite distinct materials that go beyond the conventional verbal or verbally bound texts that primarily engage the distal senses of sight and hearing.

### 4.3 Intersensory Translation: From Translation to Adaptation to Creation and Everything In-between

The discussion above takes us to address accessibility in communication as an extension to Jakobson's triad. While intra- and interlingual translation have clearly settled verbal transfers, intersemiotic translation (or transmutation) has taken the onus of covering all other forms of translation. It accounts for the adaptation or reversioning of any/all text type(s) into renditions of a source text that is echoed in a target text to a greater or lesser extent using different sign systems, all of which falling within the realm of intangible materials. In all instances, we are in face of some degree of intertextuality that allows for texts to be compared or connected among themselves for sharing features or conveying similar messages. In Jakobson's proposal, the focus is always on the (verbal) codes, even in the case of intersemiotic translation, which is said to be 'an interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of non-verbal sign systems' (Jakobson 1959: 261).

If we are to address accessibility as a form of intermaterial or intersensory translation, the focus will no longer be on coding. Notions such as source and target texts may also be challenged because there may not be a clear one-to-one relationship/equivalence and the 'target text' may be an original text/event in its own right or a unique complex mixture of diverse stimuli. This is the case when blind people attend dance performances, for instance. Their experience is one that results from the integration of multiple stimuli that may include audio description, visits to the stage and interaction with the dancers, as well as the integration of the stimuli during the live performance itself: the music, the sound of the movements on stage and the overall atmosphere in the theatre.

As we move away from conventional notions of translation to focus on materiality, sensory engagement and perception, it is necessary to question whether accessibility might be considered within the realm of translation at all and even more so if we consider it from inception, as proposed by Romero-Fresco (2013) in the context of filmmaking. Díaz-Cintas (2003: 194) asserts that the term translation is broad enough 'to subsume new and potential

translation activities within its boundaries', a belief that is reiterated by other TS scholars (Baker and Saldanha 2009: 5–6). Assuming such a case, the question remains on how to place adaptation or creation, under this umbrella term. As it is understood in the Humanities, adaptation is 'an acknowledged transposition of a recognizable other work or works', 'a creative *and* an interpretative act of appropriation/salvaging' and 'an extended intertextual engagement with the adapted work' (Hutcheon and O'Flynn 2013: 8). However, I tend to agree with Ruud's (2018: 246–247) view that adaptation is 'experience expressing experience'. Ruud adds (2018: 246) 'adaptation makes a mediated experience of cultural text both sensuous and sensible' and 'if an adaptation expresses the *experience* of a text rather than the text itself, then the response "you should have better experienced it another way" is an irrational commentary 'and this 'decenters—if not elides—the issue of fidelity to another text.' So, and now to borrow from Hutcheon and O'Flynn (2013): 120, emphasis in original) 'if we do now know that what we are experiencing actually *is* an adaptation or if we are not familiar with the particular work it adapts, we simply experience the adaptation as we would any other work', that is, as an original creation.

I would like to argue that the notions of '(trans)adaptation' or '(trans)creation' are operational in the context of accessibility. To this end, I build on the notions presented by Gambier (2003) and Neves (2005) to view transadaptation as any action taken to make messages perceivable by receivers that are, otherwise, left out from communicative events. The degree to which the 'source text' is still perceivable seems irrelevant, particularly because what is at stake is functionality, which may demand for additive or substitutive measures to make messages perceivable and the 'experience' possible. Furthermore, accessibility shares what Ruud (2018: 248) says about adaptation, 'these [complex aesthetic and sensory] experiences incorporate rhythm, movement, time, sound, smell, and spectacle' for 'rather than treating sensory experiences as means to the end of signification or narrative sense, it is perhaps time to grant that experience can be both and end in itself and a reflection on itself'.

In short, we revert to the basics of communication to readdress the notion of accessibility as all and any physical or digital means and action (translation, adaptation, creation and everything in-between) that facilitate perception, understanding, interaction and experience, in presence or at a distance, in synchronous or asynchronous exchanges, by providing multimodal stimuli that allow for multisensory engagement.

## 5 Accessibility as 'Achievement Space'

I further encapsulate my understanding of accessibility in communication as 'achievement space', a refinement of Perry et al.'s (1998) notion of 'accomplishment space'. The goal to be achieved is effective communication, and that may require that (envisaged or existing) barriers be overcome through alternative or complementary communication strategies that promote multi-sensory engagement enabling perception, understanding and experience.

This understanding has led to the development of a framework (Fig. 16.1) that accounts for the various parameters that convene in communicative events and that will serve to better understand the shifts and balancing acts that take place when proposing achievement spaces through accessibility services. In this context, by communicative event, I mean any occasion in which

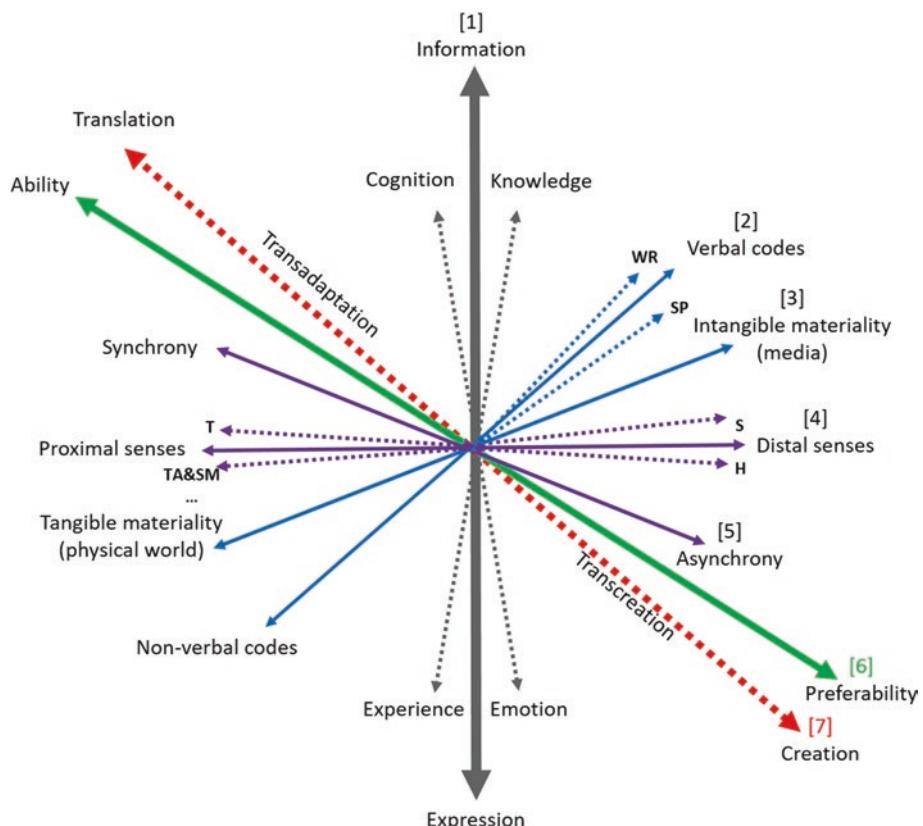


Fig. 16.1 Achievement space framework

somebody interacts with or makes sense of the world. This positions the receiver at the heart of the event and leads us to consider ‘text’ to be all that carries meaning: anything from a political speech to a poem, a rock, a monument, a tribal dance or a bowl of soup.

All communication events serve a purpose that lies somewhere between the two poles of information and expression [1]. Following the traditional parameters of the communication scheme, communication takes place when the sender and the receiver use shared codes [2], which can be verbal (writing [WR] or speech [SP]), and nonverbal codes that are infinite if we are to take everything to be potentially meaningful. Such codes are necessarily anchored in tangible and intangible materials [3]. This is done in a given time and space [5], which may be synchronous or asynchronous. Texts engage the receiver’s senses [4], be they the distal senses of sight [S] and/or hearing [H] or the proximal ones of touch [T] and/or taste [TA], smell [SM] or others. These will feed into perception, which encapsulates each individual’s cognitive and emotional state as well as personal characteristics and cultural beliefs. Such engagement will lead to the acquisition of knowledge, stored in memory, or to an experience, lived in the form of (inter)actions or emotions [1]. Each person’s achievement space [A] will be a combination of the various elements, in a multitude of combinations and proportions to achieve a given aim [1]. If the sender’s communication framework matches the ability and preferences of the receiver [6], the achievement space will be naturally there. Should there be a discrepancy between the sender’s expectations and the receiver’s requirements, then there will be a need for a mediator who will translate, adapt and/or create [6], as needed, to mitigate possible/existing mismatches.

It will be rightly argued that the categories in this framework add nothing to the multiple existing frameworks that explain communication. What this model allows us to do is to understand how ‘achievement spaces’ may result from the adjustment of the balancing point between the various axles to suit the requirements or preferences of any particular receiver. Finding that delicate balance will be the job of a translator/mediator who will propose alternative (additive or substitutive) analogue and/or digital solutions to overcome barriers. This may happen through multiformat texting, the use of specific tools, or the development of infrastructures that will be essential to some users or simply preferable to others. In all cases, this implies that each person’s achievement space will be a unique equilibrium of multiple interdependences. Understanding such delicate balances will be the ultimate goal of anybody working in accessibility.

## 6 Achievement Space in Practice: The Tale of Peter Rabbit

To better explain this framework we will address the issue beyond the sphere of disability, by looking at the simple case of the conventional experience of reading/exploring a children's picture storybook, to discuss how such an object may be made accessible through simple actions that fall within the multiformat/intersensory translation approach outlined above.

Let us take *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* by Beatrix Potter in its original (1902) printed book version, before being published by Frederick Warne & Co., in 1902. Let us forego the fact that this book has been translated into 36 languages, sold over 45 million copies and is considered one of the best sellers of all times. For the sake of the exercise, let us also forget the numerous spin-offs in the form of merchandizing, toys, games, food, films, plays, and other related versions. When Beatrix Potter wrote and illustrated her story (in 1893), she did it with a particular addressee in mind: the five-year-old son of a former governess, for whom she regularly wrote and illustrated stories that were sent out as letters. *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* is a fable, with a clear moralizing storyline, in which humans and animals interact, in attempts to outwit each other. The story ends, as children stories usually do, with a sense of 'they lived happily ever after'.

When published, the target addressee will have expanded to include readers of diverse profiles, but we will keep the initial addressee as prototypical, for the sake of the reflection. The text has one sole sender, Beatrix Potter, who wrote and illustrated the original story. As other (conventional) books, it consists of paper sheets that are bound together in a particular sequence that is dictated by verbal and visual codes (words and pictures). It is therefore a concrete object, made from tangible materials—paper and ink. It has form and texture and may carry odours. The user of the book will use the proximal senses of touch (feel and movement) and perhaps of smell to engage with it in a synchronous shared space and time. This book's tangible materiality is, however, overpowered by its intangible materiality that embodies the most important components of the message. This will be the words and the illustrations that are mainly received through the distal sense of sight. Perception takes place as the sensory input is processed through cognition and emotion in the integration and interpretation of information and aesthetic contemplation. A book is, therefore, a complex multimodal stimulus that will engage the

reader as a perceptive whole that will lead to physical action, cognitive and emotional engagement and build on pre-existing knowledge.

With *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*, Beatrix Potter wanted her young reader to engage with her work to learn and remember the *fabula*. Beatrix Potter will have presumed that her addressee would:

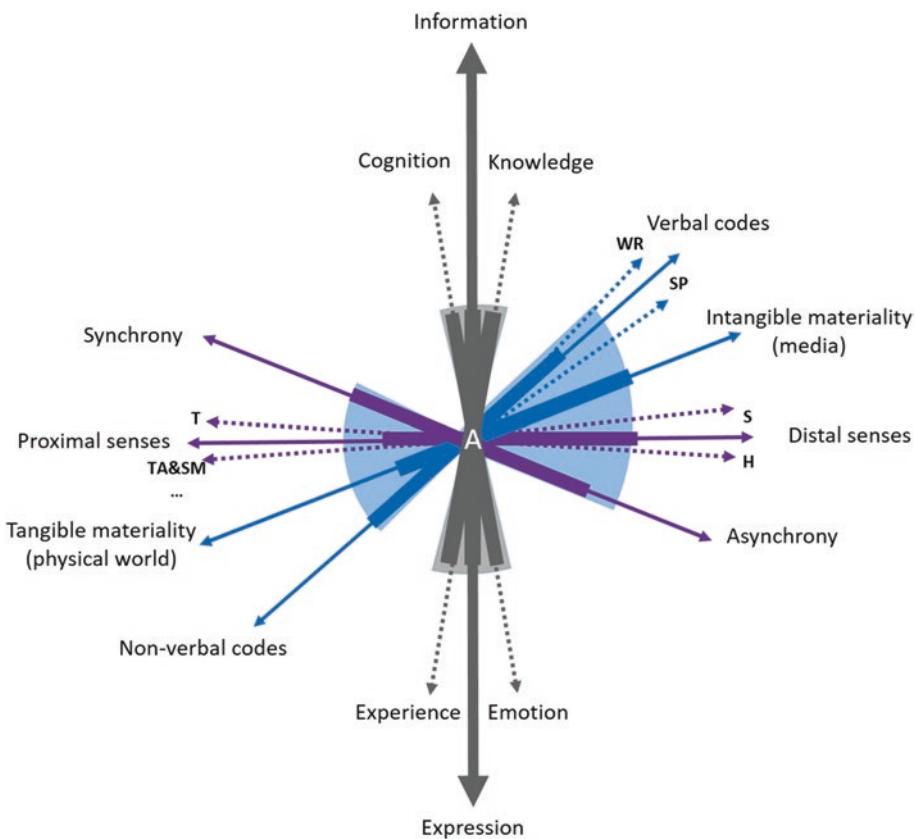
- have the sensory and motor abilities to manipulate the book and to engage with the intangible components (print and illustrations) through sight;
- would master the verbal and nonverbal codes in use (written English and the water coloured drawings);
- would have sufficient emotional and cognitive intelligence to integrate the various levels of expression in the construction of the intended meanings;
- would integrate the new information with previous knowledge and personal experience of the world;
- would relate to the anthropomorphic features of the animals as metaphoric expression of human traits.

In its original (printed book) form, *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* will engage the senses and be experienced as seen in Table 16.1, while the envisaged achievement space can be visualized in Fig. 16.2.

Given his young age, it seems plausible that the young boy's mother, will have come to his assistance by reading out loud, perhaps even changing the wording or describing (or interpreting) the pictures for the child. In so doing, the mother will have become a spontaneous mediator seeking to make the storybook accessible to her son. She will have enhanced the child's experience, compensating for the fact that the child did not know how to read or have the cognitive and emotional tools to decode the pictures, the anthropomorphic nature of the animal characters or even the intended moral. The mother may have also pointed out details in the pictures, highlighting Peter Rabbit's blue jacket, selecting different elements at different times, relating to the child's world knowledge. It is also possible that the mother will have read and retold the story various times and in different ways in every iteration. In an effort to bring the pictures to life, the mother may have taken the child's finger to point at or outline the figures; she may have asked the child to draw a picture of Peter Rabbit or may have used dough to model little figures for the boy to play with and to retell the story. Still in the context of the time of reception of the original text, the mother may have recreated the story through hand shades using a candle in the dark, or cut out figures. All of this will have been done with one particular addressee in mind—her son—whose requirements, preferences and specificities she knew well.

**Table 16.1** Sensory engagement in original print book

		Perception								Processing	
		Sensory Engagement									
		Vision				Hearing				Touch	
Sensory modalities / stimuli		MI Still image 2D	WW Moving image 2D	SP Written words 2D	NS Oral speech 2D	SE Natural sound 2D	Sound effects 2D	M Music element 3D	TC Tactile 3D	HE Haptic exploration 3D	PC Proprioception 3D
Original book	●	●			○	○	○	○	○	●	●



**Fig. 16.2** Intended achievement space of *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* (original book)

If we are to view how sensory engagement differs in the various communication strategies used by the mother (Table 16.2), it becomes clear different senses are engaged in each mode. It is also noticeable that senses that are central in the reception of some modes continue to be used in a secondary way in other modes.

If we were to redraw the framework to include the various versions/experiences, we would see that the achievement space has reshaped itself by engaging proximal senses (Fig. 16.3). It is plausible that the young boy may have only appropriated *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* once he experienced it in its (accessible) versions, while engaging with it through all his senses in a participatory manner. In fact, the overall result will be the conjunction of the original and the mediated versions in one multimodal accessible object to be explored by different senses and perceived in multiple ways.

**Table 16.2** Sensory engagement original alternative formats

		Perception										Processing	
		Sensory Engagement					Touch					Smell Taste	
		Vision		Hearing			M			HE		PC	
Sensory modalities / stimuli		SI 2D	MI 2½D	WW 3D	SP	NS	SE	Natural sound effects	Sound	TC	Haptic	Proprio-expo-ception	Cognition Emotion
		Still image	Moving image	Written words	Oral speech	NS	SE	Sound	M	Tactile element	HE	PC	Cognition Emotion
Original book	●	●								○	○	○	●
Voiced reading	○		○	●						○	○	○	●
Describing	○	○			●	○				●		●	●
Pointing outlining	○	○				○			●		●	●	●
Drawing	●					○			●		○	○	●
Modelling	○					○	○		○		○	○	●
Shadow play	●					○	○		○		○	○	●

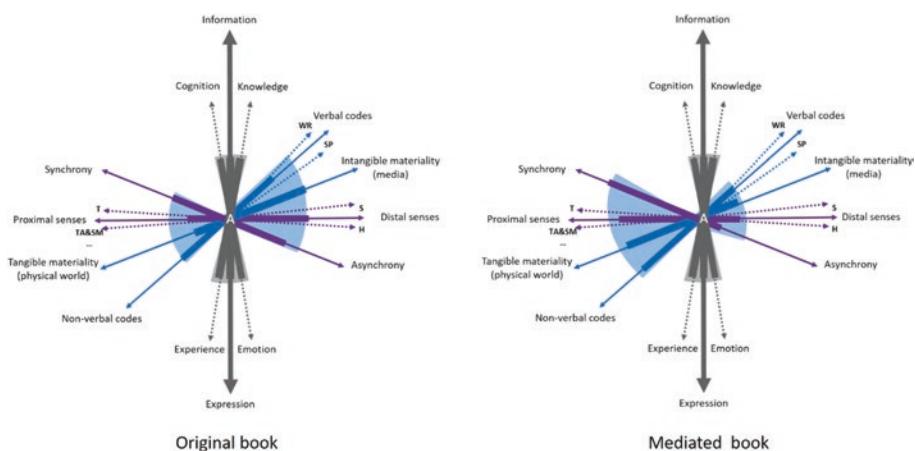


Fig. 16.3 Achievement space shift

## 7 Conclusions

If we are to transpose the exercise above to present-day communication scenarios, with specific receivers in mind, as is the case of PwD, we may infer how accessibility is part of communication and how providing access is all about creating achievement spaces, that is, offering alternative means to achieve similar ends. In a nutshell, universal access may equate to the provision of multiformat communication products/events to be experienced through multiple/diverse senses, a stance that removes the onus on personal inability to elevate perception through multisensory stimuli. If products/events are developed, from inception, within this principle, as proposed by Romero-Fresco (2013) in his approach to accessible filmmaking, there will be no need for translation or mediation, strictu sensu, because the exercise will have been carried out as part of the initial creative effort. In a similar guise, multiformat publishing in analogue and digital formats, to be used as alternatives or in complementary ways, will allow people to pick, mix and match in view of their needs and preferences. Should multiformats not be guaranteed from the beginning, a universal access translator (UAT) or an accessibility designer (AcD) can propose and/or develop alternative communication modes, taking advantage of tangible and intangible, analogue and digital materials, to engage each receiver's active senses. Audiovisual translators will continue to develop mainstream alternative formats (e.g. SDH and AD);

however, comprehensive multimodal/multiformat production of inclusive products will not be the job of one person, but that of a multidisciplinary team. An example of such an endeavour is found in the multiformat book *O Menino dos Dedos Tristes* (Neves 2013), which entails a printed version with a DVD containing an audio text, a signed (video)book, printable (2½ D) raised drawings, a pictographic and a Braille version. The UAT/AcD, who also happened to be the author of the book, worked closely with teams in the publishing house, a sign language interpreter, film crews, graphic designers, Braille and pictographic versioning specialists and IT teams. In a similar guise, if what requires mediation is a venue (a museum, an airport, a hotel,...) or an event (a play, a live concert or sports event,...), then the team will inevitably expand to include other domains, such as marketing and ticketing, physical access and directionality, services and hospitality and/or staging, again, just to name a few. In all cases, what will need to be found and offered will be enhancers to give people/users the opportunity to find their personal achievement space in which they can learn and live personal experiences.

A possible conclusion is that accessibility in the sphere of communication is not necessarily about PwD and will inevitably be a form of translation/mediation that lies beyond the limits of audiovisual translation. However, if translation is to continue to be a productive portmanteau concept, TS will need to broaden its understanding. This means it should not simply address transfers between languages, modes and codes, but also the shifts and moves that occur between tangible and intangible materials, and across digital and analogue realms, to acknowledge that, ultimately, access implies being given opportunities for active sensory engagement with the world around us.

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# 17

## Collaborative Translation and AVT

Lingjuan Fan

### 1 Introduction

Collaborative translation took place long before the foundation of Translation Studies as a discipline. Lin Shu, a Chinese literary figure, knew no foreign languages, yet managed to complete 180 translations with the collaboration of his over 20 assistants, who interpreted the STs orally so that Lin could produce a written rendering of the works (Hill 2012). Buddhist translation during the Han and Tang dynasty was also organised collaboratively (Cheung 2006; Neather 2015). Even the traditional idea of solitary translation meant creating texts that had to be polished and finalised through joint effort. Given that different degrees of collaboration surely exist throughout the translation process, then, the challenge for researching collaborative translation comes from having only a vague knowledge of its process and the identities of collaborators (Trzeciak Huss 2018).

AVT places special focus on collaboration because the media play an essential role in making ST accessible to foreign viewers. Linguistic proficiency alone cannot complete the task of providing an audiovisual translation. Collaboration is not only a means of resource optimisation but tailors the

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media platform to the needs and patterns of human interaction. The patterns are varied and updated on a daily basis, making it difficult to arrange all under the canopy of one chapter.

Collaborative translation in digital media emerges with the features of volunteerism, collective intelligence and activism. This chapter will focus on these three key concepts to further delineate them.

## 2 Defining Collaborative Translation

Collaborative translation involves the joint efforts of translators and experts in related fields. Because collaborative translation is a fuzzy concept to define, it has to be trimmed down to the joint work made between direct contributors in the production of a translation. If collaboration were extended to cover any expertise related to translation, such as ‘lawyers, pencils, erasers, colleagues, royalties, family members, critics’ (Trzeciak Huss 2018: 392), or any ‘interactions spanning space and time’ (*ibid.*), it would be too unfocused. Therefore, collaborative translation here sticks to the traditional sense of cooperation between contributors with different areas of expertise directly contributing to the translation process. The typology of collaborative translation can then be divided into different categories: professional versus non-professional, and collaboration between translators and other experts or viewers.

A number of concepts related to collaborative translation are to be introduced. Non-professional translating and crowd-sourcing translation emerge as the two most prominent forms of collaboration, and often overlap. Non-professional translation refers to translations created by translators with no professional training background. Though the majority of non-professional translating is of a voluntary nature, with typical examples including the translation of some high-profile websites such as Wikipedia, Facebook and TED, some translations do involve payment, and sites become commercialised. Yeeyan, a Chinese online translation community, for instance, was initiated as a volunteer translation community but gradually shifted to commercialising their collaborative translation projects, though most of the contributors remain non-professionals. Non-professional translating is gaining momentum in translation studies, because of the huge impact it is having on the industry and because of its social-political implications. The novel and creative patterns of collaboration between humans, as well as between humans and technology, make it an exciting area in which to explore the nature and prospect of translation as an industry.

Another interesting pattern is the increasing participation of consumers in the process of translation. The embedding of social media in the translation platform enables translators and viewers to interact with each other. Viewers are encouraged to raise questions and leave comments on the on-going translation projects, so that translators are able to detect any errors or problems in translation (Fan 2015). Digital media make it economical and convenient to update a translation with the collaboration between translators and viewers. Collaborative translation here is confined to the joint works engaged in by different agents in digital media, and with a focus on AVT.

Collaborative translation has also become more visible with the rise of Internet technology. In an age that strives for immediate access and circulation, collaboration has become an established practice in ‘participatory culture’ (Jenkins 2006). As a result, collaborative translation has been increasingly seen as an ‘electronic situated practice’ (Scocchera 2015: 169). User-generated, crowd-sourced and fan-created translations are typical types of collaborative translation in the digital age. It is not only the political implications of these various modes of participation that matters but also their cultural implications, as well as the creativity demonstrated by these grassroots translation fans. The many kinds of non-professional collaborative translations that are generated ‘represent an additional and quite necessary process in picking up what professional markets cannot fulfill in a strictly business sense’ (Jiménez-Crespo 2017: 3).

Probably no other industry has been affected more than that of cultural products such as journalism and entertainment. As the world is becoming multimodal, AVT has been embedded in various translation contexts and has claimed its own place in translation studies by its interface between ‘verbal and visual semiotics, complete with its industrial and social dimensions’ (Pérez-González 2019: 2). The evolution of film production has influenced how translation is produced and received by audiences.

## 2.1 Professional Versus Non-professional Collaborative Translation

AVT involves the multimodal presentation of semiotics, so the complexity of audiovisual production makes linguistic translation only a part of the whole process. Taking TV news translation as an example, once a topic is decided, the source materials will be viewed and selected by a translator for producers to review. After some initial elimination by the producer, the translator starts translating the news pieces, which will be revised and polished by journalists.

Once the translation is done, a broadcaster will read out the translation to try and match its pace with the image. Meanwhile, images from the source film will be selected and the screen image and subtitles synchronised. Finally, the translated news product will be assessed by the producer for post-editing. Translators provide a linguistic service to support audiovisual products, but the overall quality also depends on the collaboration between producers, journalists and announcers.<sup>1</sup>

In the case of non-professional translation, fansubbing (see the contribution by Massidda in this volume) typically represents the creative forms of collaborative translation. Collaboration in fansubbing is informed mainly by its participants.<sup>2</sup> Fansubbing groups have teams specialised in different aspects of translation production: proofreading, post-editing, art effects, resources, production and time frame. The source film is called a ‘seed’ (种子) in Chinese, and fansubbing groups are often equipped not only as translators but as experts in special effects. However, the fansubbing groups have rather high benchmarks for new members. Participants have to pass a subtitling test to be allowed to join the community.

The general procedure of subtitling is similar: distributing tasks and determining the scheduled time for release. A resource team goes to find the source of the film along with the original subtitle and then passes it to the translation editing team. The team leader then allocates the job to its members, with tasks assigned depending on the total number of translators. The usual size of a subtitling translation team is around five to six, and each is assigned a task that occupies around seven to eight minutes. The translation is done while listening to the original subtitle, and the translated version is then passed around for proofreading. The completed parts are then given in turn to the special effects team before the subtitle is made to correspond with the images. The final step is to insert the translated subtitle into the original film. This takes a considerable amount of time. The translated subtitle will undergo several rounds of post-editing until it reads relatively satisfactorily. Fansubbing functions as an assembly line, and each team has explicitly allocated tasks in the translation process so that there are only a few hours’ gap between the release of the source film and the translated one.

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<sup>1</sup> Information about the procedure of TV news translation is based on an interview with a translator working at a local TV station in China.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.douban.com/group/topic/48534127/?start=200>.

## 2.2 Translators and Other Experts/Viewers

In the case of online translation, readers have an increasingly visible presence in translation revision. Readers as consumers have decisive roles in directing the trends and tastes in media products. In certain cases, readers play a crucial role in directing the revision of the translation (Fan 2015). The anticipated reception of the viewers sets the tone for the selection of voices and the dubbing techniques. Audiovisual translation, which aims to trigger different senses while viewing, is a collaborative effort that goes far beyond linguistic translation. For instance, graphic editing certainly involves technical skills and artistic taste, and ‘the sound engineers reassemble and edit the tracks that have been dubbed separately’ (Bosseaux 2019: 53). The ever-increasing amount of collaborative translation requires a wide range of expertise to co-create a media product.

## 3 A Historical View

Dubbing and subtitling have proven to be the most popular solutions to cater to the needs of foreign audiences; some forms of collaboration might be indirect but crucial for the release of foreign films. The translation of the original dialogue is often reworked by a dialogue writer to make the dubbing possible (O’Sullivan and Cornu 2019); in other cases, it can mean collaboration between ‘a high-profile comedian, comedy scriptwriters, and a professional translator’ (Kang and Kim 2019: 1). Dubbing involves collaboration between ‘translators, dialogue writers, dubbing directors, actors and sound engineers’ (Bosseaux 2019: 52). Bosseaux (2019: 50) describes the process as ‘synchronization’, which means that some adjustment has to be made to make the screen image match the lip movements. According to Bosseaux (2019), translators only provide a rough sketch for dialogue directors to work out how to match dialogue to each character’s lip movements, to make the necessary notes and to polish the vocal delivery to make it seem natural.

‘Western European dubbing workflows’ follow a specific ‘production chain’ (Chaume 2012: 29) that begins when translators are sent a script to produce a rough translation, and sometimes also a first draft of the target language dialogue. Therefore, dubbing involves several stages of drafting and polishing, and film translation relies as much on translators as on dialogue writers.

When translating and dialogue writing is done by different professionals, dialogue writers are responsible for the following tasks: synchronizing the text to

the screen characters' mouths; adding dubbing symbols, i.e. indications inserted in the translation that are meant to help actors to recreate a number of paralinguistic features of the original actors' voice and performance; segmenting the translation into 'takes'—i.e. units that play an important role in organizing the recording of voice talents and even setting the translators' fees, depending on the country; and making the translated dialogue sound like spontaneous speech. If all these tasks are not carried out by dialogue writers they are taken over by dubbing assistants. (Bosseaux 2019: 52)

Voice-over is a case of 'revoicing' (Pérez-González 2014: 19) and shares similarities with spontaneous interpreting in 'the use of a superimposed voice to deliver the translation on top of its original counterpart' (Matamala 2019: 65). Voice-over does not need to retain lip synchronisation, and is often based on a written dialogue. Translators and the voice-over narrator collaborate to reproduce the original meaning and tone. This process of translation involves adapting the original text to make it more succinct and comprehensible to the target audience. The translated scripts have to be acted out by different narrators to reproduce the characters, and these narrators have to work together to make the voice-over operate smoothly (*ibid.*).

Another new component in films and TV series are new texts projected onto the screen, which are named 'decotitles' (Kofoed 2011), 'authorial titling' (Pérez-González 2012) or 'impact captioning' (Sasamoto 2014) (see more in Romero-Fresco 2019: 502). The texts, which appear as further layers of image and message, can enhance viewers' understanding, as the texts can inform audiences about the content of a phone message or what is in the mind of a character. The texts often appear in animated form and add to the cohesion between image and subtitle, but translated impact captioning demands cooperation from other technical professionals to reproduce a similar dramatic effect, which means often overcoming challenging differences between languages and the layout of texts.

Collaborative translation in AVT is best represented by fansubbing, which is said to have emerged as a response to the censorship of Japanese audiovisual products in the US in 1982 (Massidda 2015). Fansubbing in Asia may also be driven by the demand to enjoy the products more efficiently and economically, because fansubbing communities often produce their versions of the latest released movies or TV series to cater to the wide demands of viewers. The pirated versions often hit the market before the release of the official ones.

Yet the amateur translators are often engaged in subtitling not for market value but for their own aesthetic needs. The most efficient method is to produce a film translation as a team. These fansubbing groups rely on the

convenience of Internet technology and social media devices and forums, which lay the foundation for the later, more devoted fansubbing communities (Jiménez-Crespo 2017). Collaborative translation in AVT is demonstrated in the form of a subtitling team, in which each member is assigned a specific task and a film can be translated within a few hours. Speedy translation and release depend on the collaboration between translators, who are assigned different roles in translation production and where the assessing and editing process is only rudimentary. Efficiency and economy are the priority for subtitlers for making the translated movie available to viewers, but translation quality may be sacrificed due to the lack of translator competence. For example, an installment of *Harry Potter*'s Chinese translation was completed within 48 hours of the release of the English one (Munday 2008); similarly, movies and TV series are translated as soon as they are available in the market. Generally speaking, viewers are willing to sacrifice quality and accept some flaws in translation for an early taste of a cultural product.

Most collaborative translation platforms are initiated in chat groups or forums. The collaboration involves two aspects: distribution of materials and translation of the ST. Later on, given that more readers are also bilingual, they contribute significantly to the revision and polishing of translations. If a community is well-established and attracts much commercial interest, it has the potential to enter the translation market and have the platform commercialised.

Fansubbing emerged in China around 2000, with the influx of international TV series and Japanese Anime. For example, a craze for watching 'Prison Break' spread across the Chinese market in 2007 (Osnos 2007), and many fansubbing groups competed to complete the quickest release of the translated version, and the time was reduced from a few hours to six hours after the original version was released in the US. The original version is called 'raw meat' (生肉), and the translated 'cooked meat' (熟肉) in Chinese. Most viewers do not read English, so the growing demand for 'cooked meat' makes Chinese fansubbing one of the most vibrant collaborative translation methods.

When the law was still somewhat relaxed, a number of fansubbing groups were established online, including Renren, Eden's Garden, Youyou, Sheshou and so on. It is said that a TV series of 45 minutes took up to three to four days' collaborative work by teams of ten members. Fansubbing groups have greatly accelerated the pace of bringing international films and TV series to Chinese viewers, while official versions are typically delayed by seven to eight years. So, viewers turn to the Internet to 'catch up with the TV series'. Besides, these amateur subtitlers are creative in reproducing content in the ST that can often produce dramatic effects that are absent from the official version.

Although the majority of members are amateurs, the translation quality of these translations can be surprisingly sound, and even well applauded by the viewers. Besides, in China, detailed annotations are provided in ‘hard subtitles’: subtitles of culturally specific expressions.

Fansubbing communities are under increasing pressure because of the risk of being shut down. Most fansubbing productions demand the deletion of their translated versions within 24 hours, but this does not protect them from being closed. The fast expansion of fansubbing groups has been restricted as they broach the red line of copyright and face legal charges. Because it is illegal to circulate unauthorised audiovisual products, a number of high-profile fansubbing sites have been closed, such as RenRen, Eden Garden, Youyou and so on. Fansubbing communities face a great crisis of how to sustain themselves and ensure their own survival, and so quite a few have become commercialised and have deviated from the culture of volunteerism.

Barrage cinema appeared in China in 2014 (Dwyer 2017). Here, viewers can directly send their comments to screens from their mobile phones. This was referred to as ‘hecklevision’ (*ibid.*), and is regarded as part of teen culture in Asia. It is said that this function was introduced to attract more interactivity among mobile users, but it has also received much criticism. Western viewers regard it as intrusive. They have commented that it ruins the whole viewing experience, even though they do not read the language of the so-called bullet screen (Dwyer 2017). This divergence may suggest different perceptions of film entertainment between Asia and the West. Traditional cinema-going as a purely aesthetic and emotional experience has now been changed into a collective social experience. We cannot help wondering what viewers can gain from such a collective but often chaotic viewing experience and how translation scholars can theorise the phenomenon and shed light on the role of film translation in the digital age. It would be interesting to examine the motives for deliberately inviting disruptions of shared collective spectatorship.

As with fansubbing, the unofficial localisation of videogames is known as ‘rom hacking’ and emerged in the 1990s (Jiménez-Crespo 2017: 48). This form of collaboration translation initially focused on role-playing games. Rom hacking demands high-level technical skills, such as programming, which makes it less widespread than fansubbing, and the collaborators are mainly avid players themselves (*ibid.*). Open software localisation is less known in TS, but this trend continues as App translation flourishes (*ibid.*).

## 4 Research on the Topic

Translation norms are an essential issue in AVT. It is claimed that highly creative and even ‘abusive subtitling’ (Jiménez-Crespo 2017) is born out of discontent with the target-oriented translation practices taken up by professionals; but fansubbers also take film translation as a site of carnival, so that the quiet and solitary viewing process is being replaced by barrage, which maximises interactions between viewers. What fascinates researchers most is the deviation of fansubbers from the professionals. And so, ‘flouting a convention can be seen as a creative or strange strategy and does not lead to any penalty’ (Jiménez-Crespo 2017: 184). In some cases, fans intervene in the translation to such a degree that they adopt ‘remediation, bricolage and shoveling’ in amateur subtitling (Pérez-González 2014: 215). Translation norms, especially in how they collide with or deviate from the professional ones, are a main issue to be discussed.

Collaborative translation has been discussed with the rise of amateur translation, fan translation and volunteer translation, but it is not restricted to non-professional translating, because professional translators are just as collaborative (Pym 2011). Costales (2012) revisited the concept of ‘collaborative translation’, as opposed to the technological turn in translation studies. Technology is certainly a decisive factor in making the media resources available, and in assembling as many human resources as possible to facilitate collaborative translation.

Different types of collaborative translation have been covered: companion collaborative translation, author-translator collaboration, editor-translator collaboration and, more recently, the trend of translator-reader collaboration (Trzeciak Huss 2018). This typology is not exhaustive, as collaboration has gone far beyond humans. Besides, various aspects of collaborative translation in AVT have been examined: the translation process, translation quality, translation tools and some of the ethical and pedagogical implications of collaborative translation.

Meanwhile, crowd-sourcing and collaborative translation have become correlated concepts in the digital era (Jiménez-Crespo 2017). Facebook Translations (Dombek 2014) and TED Open Translation (O’Hagan 2012) are examples of crowd-sourcing translation. Digital translation communities represent the form of collaborative translation created by and for media consumers. ‘By opening it up to a massive self-selected, interest-based crowd for timely delivery of a large variety of translation’ (O’Hagan 2016: 933), crowd-sourcing is becoming a new trend in collaborative translation. Crowdsourcing

goes hand in hand with amateur translation to provide wider information and media accessibility.

Professionals may recognise the chaos created by the wave of amateur engagement in audiovisual translation. The issues of translation quality and breach of copyright also cast dark shadows over the seemingly prosperous fan-subbing communities. The fansubbing groups are thus difficult to thoroughly investigate due to the obvious difficulties in soliciting authentic data from insiders (Pérez-González 2014).

Such issues include the impact of amateur translation on the social recognition of professional translators' expertise and discretion; the growing orientation of amateur mediators towards collective recognition at the expense of referential accuracy in carrying out their translations; their lack of concern about copyright or neutrality; and finally their active contribution to the hybridization of communicative practices. (Pérez-González 2014: 213)

AVT has emerged from a long era of silent and intertitle translation to now include dubbing and subtitling. Film display is a combination of multimodality involving semiotic, acoustic and visual stimuli, which makes it impossible not to require collaboration from different professionals. Dubbing and voice-over are two of the most commonly used methods for film translation. In dubbing, for example, synchronisation has to be guaranteed, and the viewer's reception has to be considered in relation to 'acceptable lip-sync, credible and realistic lines of dialogue, coherence between images and words, loyal translation, clear sound quality and acting standards' (Bosseaux 2019: 50). Bosseaux (2019) classifies three types of synchronization—lip, body movements and time duration, based on the features of the viewing experience.

Meanwhile, genetic translation studies has shifted the focus from translation products to the evolution of the translated text, which reveals collaborations that exist between translators and other agents (Cordingley and Montini 2015). This approach can contribute to the understanding of collaborative translation and allow us to scrutinise the roles played by different members. Traditional authorship is thus being challenged, as hitherto many contributors went unnoticed.

This has the advantage of acknowledging the joint effort that eventuates in the production of a translation, with agency distributed throughout a network of human and non-human actors (including networks of networks and their products), while also providing a way to individuate responsibilities for processes occurring within the network, and allowing for distinctive or hybrid roles as required by the exigencies of the case in question. (Trzeciak Huss 2018: 391)

Computer-based collaborative translation has also been examined through the lens of translation genetics (Scocchera 2015). Both Scocchera and Fan (2015) examined the tensions that exist in translation collaboration: Scocchera (2015) deals with the relationship between the translator and revisor, while Fan (2015) identifies the reviser as a reader. Both revisers and readers are bilingual and have some working knowledge in translation, so they tend to propose different treatments for the same ST. The intimate collaboration between translators and readers can be interactive throughout the process of revision. Collaborative translation thus covers aspects both of professional practice and amateur engagement with media content. Wikipedia Translation (Dolmaya 2014) is an increasingly popular topic in collaborative translation and media accessibility.

Film translation has invariably been examined from a multimodal perspective, as both sound and images are part of the factors in translation. Different modes in film can also influence how translation is produced and presented. Film reception remains an under-researched territory due to the lack of data, but the general trend in TS is that digital media bring audiences right in front of the screen, and collective spectatorship contributes to the subtitling through immediate feedback via social media devices. In some countries, for example Korea, China and so on, a few sites have started to allow viewers to send text messages which fly across the screen like bullets—known as ‘bullet screens’, or *dan mu* (弹幕) in Chinese. This originally emerged as a practice in online video in China and Japan, and catered to young online users because of its interactivity, but now has spread to cinemas. When watching bullet screen movies, the screen will show viewers’ comments in real time. As media consumers are equipped with more digital and translation literacy, their passive role as receptors has gradually been changed into one of critics and even collaborators as subtitlers. ‘Empowered by social networks and digital devices, they actively share reviews and engage in discussions concerning translation method and quality, translators’ identities, and translation effects’ (Kang and Kim 2019: 1).

In academia, the ethical issues involved in volunteerism in collaboration translation are also brought into the debate. Apart from copyright issues, which remain a grey area in many countries, the free video products produced and circulated by fans can be exploited by the industry for profit. The platform owners may also benefit from this volunteerism economically. From 2000 onwards, collaboration translation has been widely adopted for website and social media translations. These translations are not only translated but also assessed by online users. Software such as Adobe, Norton, Avast, Microsoft

and Skype have also been translated by volunteers with sufficient programming proficiency (Jiménez-Crespo 2017).

This software is gradually transitioned to ‘web platforms that facilitated and streamlined the work of users and allowed collaborative subtitling processes to thrive’ (Jiménez-Crespo 2017: 56), including ‘Amara’ which is the platform for the TED translation talk project, one of the most popular crowdsourcing projects (*ibid.*).

More recently, O’Sullivan and Cornu (2019: 15) have given a chronological account of AVT, which is gradually taking shape against the development of ‘translation practices, technical processes and marketing strategies’. While there are overlaps between AVT and more traditional translation studies, some distinct features of AVT make it possible to claim its own domain in TS. The shift from silent to sound, from monolingual to multilingual, has enriched the forms and terms in AVT. If the translation of silent films remains a gap in TS, then the collaboration on the ‘translation of title cards’ and ‘film editing and paratranslation’ must also be worth academic attention (O’Sullivan and Cornu 2019: 16), because language has never been absent from the production and release of films.

While fan participation plays an increasingly important role in contributing to film translation assessment, other research gives us a more detailed picture of how fansubbing communities operate, and how each member collaborates based on their expertise. Li (2019) adopted net-ethnography as her research method and joined a fansubbing group after winning the trust of the community following an assessment. Net-ethnography is more interested in the interaction between translators and with the social interactions expanding from the subtitling team.

Quite often, we also discussed our viewing experiences of the content being subtitled, which opened up further conversations on various topics, ranging from mundane topics such as weather, pets and hobbies, to more intimate or sensitive ones, pertaining to love relationships, sexuality, pornography, and domestic politics. (Li 2019: 390)

Social media play an important role in setting up chat groups and establishing the community identities of translators. Collaboration between members involves problem solving in subtitling projects, and their collaboration extends to creating community bonds through sharing media content and mundane topics (Li 2019). Thus, collaboration and information sharing are not confined to translation, but constitute a much wider social experience.

There are also aspects of political activism, such as volunteer subtitling practices and the positioning of subtitlers within the Mosireen and Words of Women (Baker 2016). Baker discusses their dilemmas as subtitlers and their caution at taking on their activist roles (*ibid.*). Baker argues that ‘translation, including subtitling, is an integral part of any political project, whether those involved in the project are aware of its impact or not’ (*ibid.*: 17); but questions remain as to who has the say in identifying the role of translators and subtitlers, or whether the translators would still participate if they knew they would be pinned as political activists despite their own resistance against the label.

The emergence of AI technology has been discussed as posing some threat to the translation industry. Human translators confront competition from technology, but it is often not a choice but an essential tool for human translators (see the contribution by Bywood in this volume). This is especially the case with AVT, which is both constrained and fostered by technology to make collaborative translation possible. For example, Reel Voice can change the quality of the sound and Video Rewrite can write the footage (Pérez-González 2014). Media accessibility has been greatly enhanced by the use of subtitling software. Respeaking is another form of collaboration between humans and the machine, such as by the use of speech recognition software. Automatic speech recognition and automatic live subtitles will change the way translation operates.

The aspect of human and non-human interaction and collaboration has often been taken for granted as part of the translation mode; actually, the invention of tools and software not only redefines our relationship with the world but also how we work with our peers. As to the collaboration between humans and tools, machine translation is not well adapted to the professionalisation of these communities, and editing tools are constantly in the making and being introduced to the community. The invention of new tools has speeded up the process, but technology cannot replace the ‘collective intelligence’ of human experts.

Translation Memories (TMs) are useful for some specialised translation; the most widely used commercial systems are ‘Across, De ‘ja’ Vu, memoQ, MultiTrans, SDL Trados, Similis, Transit and Wordfast’ (Giovannetti et al. 2017: 47), and non-commercial ones include ‘OpenTM, OmegaT, Olanto, Transolution and Matecat’ (*ibid.*). Electronic platforms are established for collaborative environments; for example, Traduco allows translators to insert notes and references, ‘the design and development of Traduco required the adoption of a multidisciplinary approach, leveraging on advances in software engineering, computational linguistics, knowledge engineering, and

publishing' (*ibid.*). The scope of collaborative translation at this stage will expand greatly from cooperation among people towards multidisciplinary and multimodal co-creation.

Game localisation has been developed independently from business software. It has some tricky issues to be dealt with in translation (see also the contribution by Bernal-Merino in this volume). Its multimedia presentation demands more perception consideration from translators. The nature of games can be interrogated as being unethical for translation if too much violence and crime is on display. Translating such games will fall into the category of reproducing negative values and mentalities as a result (O'Hagan 2019).

Finally, translation strategies and reception have been thoroughly discussed in translation studies (*ibid.*), but collaboration among translators and other contributors has been under-researched. There are linguistic, cultural, technical, commercial and legal considerations for game localisation. Translators have to be familiar with the industry landscape and conventional practices in the game industry. Technical skills are essential for translating games, and localisation has to be coordinated with other experts in the game industry and with linguistic testers. Multimedia devices will enable translators to draw more attention to the match between different dimensions and channels of information. As a result, translation has to be coordinated with other professionals.

## 5 Implications

The ever-evolving technological landscape demands more updated training for translators. Tutorial sessions for subtitling are essential for trainers to understand the operations and the nature of collaboration involved in subtitling. Non-professional practices in subtitling groups can be adapted for classroom teaching and tutorial sessions. The tools that amateurs have introduced into their digital communities can also be experimented with by trainees to improve translation efficiency. Social constructivist theory has long advocated the participation of students in translation projects (Kiraly 2014), which applies to AVT translation as well. Subtitling trainees are thus encouraged to attend authentic subtitling programs to combine classroom learning with industry experience.

Corpus-based and eye-tracking approaches open up more pathways to knowledge for understanding the patterns in translation collaboration, and the results will in turn make us aware of how AVT translation not only has practical implications for the film industry but also has social implications,

rippling out from entertainment to knowledge sharing. The selection and intervention of translators in subtitling may challenge the status quo of mainstream discourse. Meanwhile, as AVT becomes an independent field in translation studies, the innovative combinations of humans and tools will break through new frontiers in collaborative translation.

The social implications gained from AVT practice can in turn enrich scholars' and trainees' understanding of the tension between entertainment and politics, of citizens' creativity and of authority surveillance. Art is thus not a pure expression of narratives, but has a wider and more significant social-political impact that flows through every aspect of our life.

## 6 Future Prospects

Future studies can further explore the dilemma brought up by the technological turn in translation studies, especially the impact of AI technology on the whole translation industry.

The research in AVT has extended far beyond translation and reception. The development of dubbing, subtitling and voice-over has made translation somehow invisible in the process of sound production. Collaboration among different agents and between translators and other contributors has only been scarcely mentioned in previous research. More focus on cooperation and the tension between human agents and technology should be discussed in the research on AVT, especially the practices in non-Western contexts. Much conceptualisation and theorising remain to be done on the collaboration of translation in AVT. Translation scholars need to work with practitioners to gain an insider's knowledge on collaboration in film translation. In addition, the tools with which the professionals are equipped in the industry should also be covered to investigate how the patterns of human collaboration may be altered and translation quality affected.

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# **Part III**

## **Methodology of Audiovisual Translation and Media Accessibility**



# 18

## Translation Process Research in Audiovisual Translation

Gary Massey and Peter Jud

### 1 Introduction

The last thirty years have witnessed a steady increase in the pursuit and status of translation process research (TPR) within translation studies (TS). The same holds true for audiovisual translation (AVT) research, which has grown from what was very much a niche discipline prior to the mid-1990s into an ever-broadening field of investigation. In this chapter, we explore the ways in which TPR and AVT research have and have not intersected in the past, consider the current underdeveloped state of TPR in AVT and sketch out the prospects for more extensive interfaces in future within the framework of an incipient “cognitive audiovisual translatology” (Kruger et al. 2016) paradigm.

### 2 Definitions and Research Typologies

In the succinct words of a leading exponent of the last two decades, TPR “seeks to answer one basic question: by what observable and presumed mental processes do translators arrive at their translations?” (Jakobsen 2017, p. 21). Since Krings’s (1986) ground-breaking work on exploring the cognitive processes within the black box of translators’ minds, researchers interested in

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the way translators work and how they produce their translations have been using tools and techniques to investigate the processes behind translation products and the effects of those processes on the quality of target texts (TTs). They have also been addressing the competences of groups of translators with different degrees and forms of experience, from beginners to seasoned professionals, and the ways in which translators' skill sets develop over time.

As is to be expected from a branch of TS situated largely "within a behavioural-cognitive experimental methodological paradigm" (Jakobsen 2017, p. 21), the various methods and tools deployed in different combinations to research translation processes have been borrowed from psychology, cognitive science, psycholinguistics and writing research (O'Brien 2013). Taking stock some twenty years after his initial work, Krings (2005, pp. 347–352) presents a typology of the methods he has identified in the field. He distinguishes between online collection (or "periactional") techniques, by which data are gathered concurrently during the translation process, and offline (or "postactional") ones, by which data is collected post hoc, ideally as immediately as possible after the process of translation has taken place. Online techniques can be sub-divided into two broad areas. The first is verbal data elicitation, which includes think aloud protocols (TAPs), spoken and transcribed records of what translators and observers are thinking as they work (e.g. Kiraly 1995), as well as dialogue (e.g. Kussmaul 1995) and collaborative (e.g. Pavlović 2009) protocols, in which verbal interactions between translators and observers during the translation process are recorded and transcribed. The second is behavioural observation, whose methods and tools comprise summary protocols written by observers, workplace video recordings, keystroke logs, computer screen recordings, eye tracking, various types of neuroimaging, like electroencephalography (EEG) or functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), and other psychophysiological methods such as galvanic skin response and heart-rate monitoring.

As Jakobsen (2017, pp. 38–42) himself acknowledges, the interest of translation process researchers in observing behaviour has extended beyond experimental studies of the purely cognitive act that takes place in translators' minds to the sociotechnical environment in which translators work and to their interactions with its diverse actors, factors and artefacts. As technologies and methodologies continue to evolve, TPR has been moving out of the laboratory and into "the field" (Risku et al. 2017) to research socio-cognitive practices and processes (Risku and Windhager 2013) in the authentic, situated settings of the translator's workplace by applying combined ethnographic and experimental techniques in mixed methods approaches. Thus, Ehrensberger-Dow et al. (2017, p. 116) start from a similar orientation to Jakobsen's in

focussing TPR on “translating as an activity rather than on translation as a phenomenon or on translation products”, but then go further by explicitly extending the interest and scope of TPR beyond Jakobsen’s rather narrower initial concept “from the microlevel of solving linguistic challenges to the macro level of the influence of societal expectations on translatorial decisions”.

Their definition captures the essence of what Muñoz Martín (2016a, b) calls the “reembedding” of TPR. He traces TPR’s development from a classical view of cognition that regarded translating largely as a single task that can be decomposed into reading, transfer and writing phases or activities to a new “cognitive translatology” paradigm. Based on 4E cognition (see Newen et al. 2018), this is driven by an embodied, embedded, extended and enacted approach to the way the mind works (see also the contribution by Deckert in this volume). TPR has been reembedding translation within its real-life environments. Among other things, it has addressed the situatedness of translation work and competence (e.g. Risku 2010, 2014), translation as human-computer interaction (e.g. O’Brien 2012), the physical, cognitive and organisational ergonomics of translation in the workplace (e.g. Ehrensberger-Dow and Hunziker Heeb 2016; Ehrensberger-Dow and Massey 2017), the role of intuition and emotion in translation performance and competence (e.g. Hubscher-Davidson 2013; Rojo López and Ramos Caro 2016), the complementary social, process and product dimensions of translation quality (Jääskeläinen 2016) and, lastly, the reception of translated texts (Kruger et al. 2016), that is to say “the cognitive aspects of interacting with translations in people other than the translators and interpreters involved in creating the TT” (Muñoz Martín 2016a, p. 15). It is above all in audience reception studies (see the contribution by Di Giovanni in this volume) that the more recent and technologically advanced methods used in TPR have been most widely and successfully deployed in the context of investigating AVT.

In theoretical terms, the types of research pursued in AVT are guided by what Pérez-González (2014, pp. 91–139) terms “allochthonous” models, that is to say those derived from the wider context of TS and/or linguistics and “imported” (Pérez-González 2014, p. 92) into AVT research, and “autochthonous” ones that have been specifically developed within or for AVT studies. Applying Chesterman’s (2000) general typology for TS, Pérez-González divides the models up into *process models*, describing and accounting for the different phases and decision-making aspects of the translation process; *comparative models*, constructing relations between source and TTs and seeking primarily to describe and explain the nature of translation products in those terms; and *causal models*, representing the influences of various societal,

sociocultural and situational factors on TT production to determine the effects of TTs on their audiences.

Quite obviously, it is the psycholinguistic, cognitive and neurological models into which Pérez-González (2014, pp. 98–110) subdivides his process category that potentially and actually underpin the bulk of TPR in AVT research. The comparative models to which he refers are first and foremost product-oriented; wherever they do address the process by which a product comes about, they rely on what Chesterman (2013, pp. 160–161) calls “reverse engineering” rather than evidence of actual translators’ processes, using deviations between TT renditions of source text (ST) segments to determine translation problems, translators’ difficulties, problem-solving procedures and/or strategies. They are therefore of no immediate interest to TPR. By the same token, the causal models Pérez-González (2014, pp. 121–133) discusses are restricted to (poly-) systems, norm-based, discourse and ideological models with no ostensible connection to the situated cognitive decision-making processes that lies at the heart of TPR. Nevertheless, a link can be established by way of reception studies. As Kruger and Kruger (2017, p. 72) cogently argue, the two processes of translation production and reception are interrelated. Production involves the cognitive representation of perceived potential reception, which affects decision-making as the translator addresses an implied reader.

It is based on just such a premise that Muñoz Martín’s (2016b) volume on TPR can include the previously referenced study by Kruger et al. (2016), which purports to “lay the foundation for a cognitive audiovisual translatology by investigating the impact of an AVT product like subtitling on the cognitive processing of the audience” and “offers a scientifically rigorous methodology for investigating the cognitive processing of AVT products that will be beneficial in future studies on the process, product and reception of AVT” (Kruger et al. 2016, pp. 186–187).

The transversal categories of theoretical models of inquiry discussed by Pérez-González, among others, only partially account for the full complexity of AVT as a discipline in which theory converges so closely with practice. Over the years, sub-disciplinary distinctions have tended to be mapped directly to AVT practices themselves. The mapping has been continually expanded and adapted to accommodate the rapidly broadening scope of AVT, both as a profession and as a research field. Chaume (2013) is a case in point, who goes so far as to refer to the “turn” of audiovisual translation as it embraces ever new technologies and combinations of different modes to respond to shifting markets and address new audiences, such as the young or the visually and hearing impaired. His typology distinguishes between “revoicing” modes “based on recording and inserting a new soundtrack and subsequent sound

synchronisation” (Chaume 2013, pp. 107–11), such as dubbing, voiceovers, interpreting and audiodescription (AD), and “captioning” modes “based on a written translated or transcribed text inserted on or next to the screen where the original text is shown”, including interlingual and intralingual subtitling, both for the hearing and for the deaf and hard of hearing (SDH), surtitling, respeaking to produce live subtitling and non-professional fansubbing (Chaume 2013, pp. 112–114). He concludes that the old binary options of dubbing or subtitling have been replaced by a present and future of “myriad viewing and listening options” to meet the needs of diverse, multilingual audiences (Chaume 2013, p. 121). Chaume’s grouping of modes is replicated in large part in the most recent typology known to the authors: Díaz-Cintas (2020) adopts all of Chaume’s categories and all the subcategories, the only difference being the nomenclature: he replaces Chaume’s “captioning” with the new industry-inspired term “timed text” to designate the written text added to the original production.

Research across the various modes of AVT practice appears to have focussed on five main clusters of inquiry (Gambier and Ramos-Pinto 2016, pp. 186–189; see also Díaz-Cintas 2020, p. 215). Alongside the longer established traditions of research into AVT history and language policies, including workflow optimisation and AVT in language learning, these clusters include descriptive product-oriented analyses of so-called “AVT translation problems” in TTs. Such investigations are driven by comparative models and approaches that are irrelevant to TPR. The next cluster is made up of accessibility studies on the perception and reception of AVT products by audiences both with and without sensory impairments, though with a pronounced emphasis on the former. Experiments conducted in this cluster use tools and methods known to TPR research. The fifth and final AVT cluster embraces translation processes, which is the natural province of TPR models and methods. In line with many other AVT scholars, Gambier and Ramos Pinto (2016, p. 188) rightly state that this is “a largely underdeveloped area which requires further attention”.

This section has outlined the general context of TPR within the framework of AVT research. TPR is primarily located in the under-investigated cluster of process research models identified by Gambier and Ramos Pinto (2016) and Pérez-González (2014). However, the extended models of cognition that have been informing TPR over the last few years suggest that some of the causal models described by Pérez-González (2014) will play an increasing role in the way AVT and TPR intersect in future, particularly in the reception of accessible intralingual and interlingual AVT products.

### 3 History and Theoretical Foundations of TPR in AVT Research

In this section, we briefly review the development and theoretical background of TPR in AVT studies. In doing so, we distinguish between TPR in AVT reception studies and TPR studies directed at the processes of AV translators as they work.

#### 3.1 TPR and AVT Reception Studies

As already indicated, it is in reception studies that TPR approaches, methods and technologies are most visible in AVT research. They have been a steady feature in reception studies of intralingual and interlingual AVT content for audiences both with and without sensory impairments, as de Linde and Kay's (1999, pp. 35–38) early typology of subtitling reception methods serves to illustrate. This they break down into participant surveys (by means of questionnaires and interviews), semi-controlled experiments to elicit specific verbal information about the effect of particular subtitle features from participants, and controlled experiments recording the actual motor behaviour of participants by means of unobtrusive technologies such as eye tracking. Given the inherent limitations of any single method and/or technology, it has become ever more common for AVT researchers, just like their TPR counterparts, to use mixed methods approaches that enable them to triangulate the data they have collected (cf. Alves 2003; Orrego-Carmona 2018). Surveys and other self-report instruments have been the preferred choice for reception studies in AD, though more recently there has been a call for more objective testing of cognitive efficiency such as comprehension testing (Chmiel and Mazur 2016). Subtitling studies, on the other hand, have been increasingly dominated by eye tracking (e.g. Perego 2012; Kruger 2018) since the beginnings of reception studies in the mid-1980s (e.g. d'Ydewalle et al. 1985, 1987). It has often been combined with self-report, though newer methods like EEG (e.g. Kruger et al. 2016) have also been taking hold.

Referring to reception studies in the context of TPR might appear controversial, as the research designs are targeted on the receivers rather than on those actually doing the translating. Yet, as Muñoz Martín (2016a), Ehrenberger-Dow et al. (2017) and Kruger et al. (2016) demonstrate, there has been a progressive broadening of TPR to accommodate models of situated and 4E cognition that encompass not only the primary agents of translation but also audiences, users and other stakeholders. It therefore seems wholly warranted to include those reception studies that share this awareness, such as

Orrego-Carmona (2018, p. 378), who suggests that studies on cognitive effort could beneficially feed back into the practices of the AV translators, or Kruger and Kruger (2017, p. 85), who conclude that closer links between production and reception studies in various modes are needed to “draw together areas of research that have largely proceeded in isolation”.

The theoretical basis for including reception studies within the scope of TPR is founded on the recognition, anchored in theories of situated cognition, extended cognition and cognitive ecology (e.g. Clark and Chalmers 1998; Hutchins 2010), that cognition is “not just an information manipulation process in the brain, it is contextualised action embedded in a body and increasingly mediated by technologies and situated in its socio-cultural environment” (Risku and Windhager 2013, p. 33). From such a perspective, translation is “extended” (Risku and Windhager 2013), a situated, interacting process of mind, body and environment (Risku 2010, 2014) to be studied both experimentally and ethnographically within the sociotechnical environments and the socio-cultural contexts where translations are produced and received. An example from AVT is supplied by Künzli (2017, pp. 20–25). He explicitly orients his research on a communicative process model of subtitling, derived from Kalverkämper’s (2004, p. 28) communication model, in which external circumstances influence the subtitling process. The sender directs a text in a specific communication situation with a specific statement at the receiver. Production and reception are, in turn, embedded in a specific culture (Künzli 2017, p. 25).

As Muñoz Martín (2016a, p. 15) has suggested, experimental reception studies can be regarded as pieces in the larger puzzle that TPR is trying to solve. This includes questions of how translations come about, how and why translators work as they do, and, when the results are applied to practice, how the quality of translators’ work processes and output might be improved.

### 3.2 TPR and AVT Process Studies

It is on the translators themselves, the “primary agents” (Díaz-Cintas 2020, p. 223) of translation, that TPR has focussed in studying non-AVT forms of translation. But they have only rarely been the objects of process research in AVT.

A decade ago, Gambier’s (2008) frequently quoted mapping of the AVT discipline makes no mention at all of TPR, while elsewhere he (Gambier 2009, p. 17) categorically states that “very few systematic studies have examined the production [i.e. the processes of producing] and reception or the cultural and linguistic impact of audiovisual translation (AVT)”. In one of the earliest studies to use TPR to investigate the subtitling processes of

translators as they work, Pagano, Alves and Araújo (2011, pp. 135–136) declare previous research using TPR methodologies to be “virtually nonexistent” and that “research on the subtitling process is in its infancy”. Bogucki’s (2013, p. 59) broad 2013 overview of research areas in AVT refers briefly to the potential of TAPs as a “valuable tool” and predicts that keystroke logging “is going to attract the most attention with respect to process-oriented research” as a means of researching subtitling (Bogucki 2013, p. 214), but in neither case can he cite any specifically AVT-related TPR beyond a growing number of eye tracking studies of subtitle reception (Bogucki 2013, pp. 68–70). More recently still, Gambier and Ramos Pinto (2016, p. 188) identify the “process” as an AVT research cluster but at the same time admit that, despite the development of cognitive approaches, it remains wholly under-researched.

The paucity of interfaces between AVT research and TPR is all the more surprising given the didactic interest of a significant part of both fields. From its inception, one of the primary motivations behind TPR has been didactic (cf. Massey 2017, p. 496). Even where the TPR done has no direct connection to translator training, publications seldom fail to consider the didactic implications of the research. TPR groups have also developed competence models, which their research teams have attempted to validate in a series of experiments. Arguably the best known is the PACTE group’s model (2003), validated over a number of years in a series of TPR experiments (see Hurtado Albir 2017). PACTE’s research has now led to the development of the NACT (e.g. PACTE 2018) translation competence framework, a comprehensive set of performance-level descriptors intended to be applied to translator training and assessment.

Didactic TPR has gone even further, with a number of studies investigating if and how TPR tools and techniques such as TAPs, keystroke logging, eye tracking, screen recording and retrospective verbalisations can themselves be used effectively to develop translation competence (cf. Massey 2017, pp. 506–510). In the past two decades, these tools and techniques have been increasingly deployed in a variety of didactic experiments and settings. For example, Angelone (2013a, b) has investigated how screen recording can improve the efficacy of student problem recognition and error mitigation, while Enríquez Raído (2014) has successfully deployed screen recordings together with written reports to analyse student information research behaviour for diagnostic purposes. Massey and Ehrensberger-Dow (2011, 2013, 2014) have shown that process methods and tools such as screen recording and eye tracking encourage students to reflect on their own task strategies and approaches and to extend their problem-solving repertoires.

AVT research has shown a similar interest in what AVT competence is and how to train audiovisual (AV) translators. Key aspects of AVT didactics in various modes have been covered in detail in numerous books, articles and chapters (e.g. Díaz-Cintas 2008; Cerezo-Merchán 2018). The didactic interest has also extended to competence profiling. Gambier (2000) is an early example, while Cerezo-Merchán (2018, p. 470) puts forward a competence model to guide the competence-based AVT curriculum she strongly advocates. Its six elements synthesise those of existing translation competence models, including the componential PACTE (2003) that TPR has attempted to validate. Similarly, Künzli (2017, pp. 58–63) has aligned key subtitling skills with the 2009 competence profile (EMT Expert Group 2009) developed by the European Master's in Translation (EMT) network, a heuristic competence model that shares central features of the PACTE model. Künzli stresses the need for further empirical research to develop a model that meets the specific demands of subtitling. One avenue is his own large-scale online survey of professional subtitlers, in which professionals provide qualitative data on the skills needed to subtitle, the characteristics of subtitling quality and the factors affecting it (Künzli 2017, pp. 110–120).

Given this common ground, it would seem logical that the AVT classroom can provide a fertile ground for TPR on AVT competence and its development. But while it is true that the few TPR studies in AVT to research the translators' processes do mention the implications for training purposes (e.g. Hvelplund 2018; Orrego-Carmona et al. 2018), we are aware of only two (subtitling) studies exclusively devoted to process-oriented AVT training. These will be outlined in the next section.

## 4 Recent Developments at the Intersection of TPR and AVT Research

The previous sections clearly show that TPR remains more a prospect than an actuality in AVT research. Nevertheless, recent developments in reception and production studies suggest an incipient recognition of TPR's potential in AVT.

### 4.1 AVT Reception Studies and TPR

Reception studies embedded within a situated, interactional socio-cognitive paradigm are scarce, but they do exist. As such, they are directly relevant to the current trajectory of TPR. A recent example is Kruger et al. (2016). The

study considers the immersive impact of subtitles on the processing of AV texts in terms of self-reported engagement. The results show that adding same language subtitles results in statistically significantly higher levels of immersion and enjoyment, lending support to a view that subtitles facilitate embodied cognition. More importantly, however, it presents a methodology, initially validated by the experiment, for investigating the neural processing of subtitles using EEG and subjective psychometrics to investigate the cognitive processing of subtitled film. The authors put this forward as an initial step towards a cognitive audiovisual translatology.

A cognitive study explicitly placed within an interactional model is Künzli's (2017), which forms part of a small body of AVT reception studies that have begun to address audience reception of standard and non-standard interlingual subtitling practices. Within the framework of a broader analysis of subtitling practices from production to reception, Künzli (2017, pp. 168–190) describes the design and results of a reception study previously reported in Künzli and Ehrensberger-Dow (2011). Data were collected using eye tracking and subsequent questionnaires from 27 undergraduate students shown excerpts of a film with standard commercial subtitles, and with the same subtitles supplemented with surtitles containing metalinguistic information to explain such items as puns, connotations and so on. The results of this study with its characteristically mixed methods design showed no significant differences in the accuracy of reception between the two experimental conditions with and without surtitles, suggesting that viewers can process more information than established subtitling norms assume. Such results have the potential to feed back into the translation and translators' processes to enhance quality, impact and efficiency.

The study was partly inspired by Caffrey (2008; Künzli and Ehrensberger-Dow 2011, p. 188), who used a mixed methods design to research the cognitive effort of participants watching Japanese animes subtitled into English with and without pop-up glosses to explain culturally marked elements. In a similar experiment, Orrego-Carmona (2016) deploys eye tracking and self-report data to research how students receive subtitles translated by professionals and non-professional subtitling communities to ascertain differences in audience reception. Although neither Caffrey nor Orrego-Carmona explicitly frame their work in terms of situated or 4E cognitive translatology, they serve to illustrate the strengthening ties between AVT reception research and TPR. While Caffrey's research is a precursor to Künzli's study, Orrego-Carmona has since moved on to conduct a prototypical TPR study on subtitle creation (Orrego-Carmona et al. 2018; see below).

## 4.2 TPR Studies of AV Translator Processes

As in AVT reception research, TPR studies of AV translator processes have mainly concentrated on subtitling. The investigation of other modes is restricted to an isolated study of dubbing translation.

Kovačić's (2000) experimental study of six subtitlers with different degrees of experience appears to be the first TPR contribution to investigate the primary agents of AVT. Providing an early example of a mixed methods approach and data triangulation, it combines TAPs and TT analysis to explore the relationship between subtitlers' self-report of their processes and the products resulting from them. She also uses post-translation interviews to elicit more information from the participants on their translation solutions. Her results showed that the TAPs contained no indicators of conscious decision-making regarding the linguistic categories in the TT that she was primarily interested in, which points to a high degree of automaticity in all the subtitlers' processes. The main findings of her study, however, are methodological and stress the benefits of the triangulated approach she adopts.

A decade later, Pagano et al. (2011) report on a pilot experiment triangulating screen recording, questionnaires and retrospective verbalisations to compare the performance of three professional and three student subtitlers. They base their analysis on the three translation production phases of orientation, drafting and end-revision proposed by Jakobsen's (2002). The results show that, compared to the students, the professionals take less total time to complete tasks, have a longer revision phase because they devote more attention to spotting during the end-revision phase, and are less concerned about condensing the ST to meet character requirements (Pagano et al. 2011, p. 153). Though the researchers regard their methodology as successful, there appears to have been no follow-up study.

The next published TPR research to be focussed on subtitlers' processes is by Beuchert (2017). She uses screen recordings and cue-based retrospective interviews to investigate five professional Danish subtitlers' processes. She combines these with questionnaire responses from 116 participants in a survey on the external contextual factors of subtitling work in order to sketch out a situated socio-cognitive subtitling process model. Reflecting the "complex web of interdependencies" (Beuchert 2017, p. 232) of subtitling, her elaborated model comprises three principal sets of elements: those related to internal cognitive processes, external elements such as workflow and work environment, and intersectional elements like competences, aids and target audiences which serve to link the first two sets.

Finally, Orrego-Carmona et al. (2018) report on two experiments exploring interlingual subtitling processes using eye tracking, screen recording, key-stroke logging, mouse clicking and post-experiment interviews. The first compares the processes of professional subtitlers and subtitling students using the same subtitling software; the second compares two groups of professional subtitlers, each working with a different subtitling tool. The results show that the students followed a more structured process than the professionals, but that both groups achieved similar degrees of text condensation. Although the professionals were faster than the trainees, the difference was only borderline significant. In the second experiment, the processes of the two groups of professionals seemed to be strongly influenced by the software used, but possibly also by their age and experience. Methodologically, the findings appear to confirm the suitability of applying TPR methods to subtitling.

Another AVT mode that has been the subject of experimental TPR is dubbing. Hvelplund's (2018) study of translation students uses an eye tracker to record the translation processes of seven students as they create a target-language dubbing manuscript of an excerpt from an animated television show. Examining their attention allocation, processing flow and cognitive effort, he shows that the TT formed the nexus of their processing activity in terms of attention allocation and shifts. Fixation duration data also suggest that they expended most cognitive effort on the TT. Pupil size measures showed that the most cognitively demanding TT-related task was working with the film material as the TT was emerging, an activity which requires the simultaneous processing of aural, visual and textual information.

Hvelplund ends by suggesting that future research could address differences between learners and professionals in order to model prototypical expert processes for training purposes. The next section considers the little didactic TPR in AVT that has already been done.

### 4.3 Didactic TPR Research in AVT

Despite considerable empirical evidence indicating the added value of students and teachers being able to observe, comment and reflect on the screen recordings and eye tracking data of translation processes, the interest in process-oriented didactics shown by non-AV translator educators is not reflected in AVT didactic research. Massey and Jud's (2015) contribution appears to be the only one published so far in the field.

This “pioneering pilot study” (Díaz-Cintas 2020, p. 223) reports on the use of screen recording and eye tracking to teach subtitling. Students translated

part of an authentic translation assignment, with eye tracking used to identify their allocation of cognitive resources. In the first phase of the translation task, the students used a master template with pre-set subtitles in the source language. In the second phase, they set their own TT subtitles from the film alone. Two days after the recordings, they received individual feedback sessions with two teachers who had previously analysed the translations and processes. The participants then viewed one randomly assigned peer process online and completed an online questionnaire about the processes they had observed. They also answered questions about the usefulness of the peer observations and feedback sessions. We refer readers to Massey and Jud (2015) for details of the study. Here, it suffices to say that the questionnaire-survey results replicate those of previous studies at the authors' institute in non-AVT translation training and diagnostic settings. They suggest positive learning effects from process observation and feedback as a result of increased self-reflection and awareness. This seems especially pronounced when students observe their own processes. One unanticipated finding, however, was that the participants appeared to lack the conceptual terminology for rigorous process-oriented analysis, frequently confusing the process and the product in their responses.

A follow-up study by the present authors took place in April and May 2019 to examine possible collaborative learning effects amongst students attending the same fourth-semester subtitling module as in the Massey and Jud (2015) study. After the positive results of various action research initiatives in process-oriented training at the authors' institute, screen recording and playback techniques had been implemented in second-semester BA translation modules. All 38 participants in the 2019 study had thus been exposed to TPR-based process-oriented training in prior conventional translation courses. They were also familiar with the subtitling tool, having used it in the first part of the semester.

Nine self-organised groups of three to six students worked collaboratively on an authentic project to subtitle a feature-length documentary. They were asked to apply criteria regarding reading speed, split distance, line length, shot changes and other standard conventions to which they had also been exposed earlier in the semester. A key part of the assignment was for one group member each to record a 25–30 minute sequence of his/her subtitling process from any part of the assignment. Four groups did so with eye tracking, while the other five groups used only screen recording software. All other group members were asked to view the process recording and together compose a written analysis of it as part of their assessed work report on the subtitling project.

The preliminary results, taken from the student self-reports and summarised here for the first time, indicate strong positive learning effects. All nine groups remarked on the added didactic value of the project, each providing additional practicable suggestions on how process-oriented sequences could be beneficially integrated into subtitling courses. As is to be expected from the richer visual data that eye tracking provides, the four groups that worked with it commented in detail on attention allocation, enabling them to draw justifiable conclusions about the efficacy of their fellow students' processes. They were able to identify, for example, how quickly the subtitlers switched attention, at what they were looking, and how much comparative attention they devoted to either the audio track or the film images during spotting and translation. Regardless of whether eye tracking was used or not, all nine groups together commented on the insights they had gained about structuring subtitling phases (spotting, translation, revision), overcoming space constraints, segmenting subtitles, using subtitling software more effectively (e.g. with keyboard shortcuts), researching information more quickly and more accurately, and improving contextual awareness beyond the immediate sequence being translated. In line with previous research results, the didactic benefits identified by the students were increased self-reflection, enhanced strategic awareness and efficacious exposure to good and better practices. Looking beyond this particular project, the participants proposed more regular deployment of process viewing, both live and recorded, during short learning sequences dispersed throughout the whole semester, including the observation of experienced professionals at work.

The full results of the study are to be published in the coming months. For the time being, it can be said that the groups' reflections on the processes they had observed indicate a greater ability to distinguish process features, draw appropriate conclusions and express these more adequately than in Massey and Jud (2015). This is quite probably due to their having already worked with translation processes in previous translation courses, further indicating the benefits of sustained exposure to process-oriented training techniques across the curriculum.

## 5 Implications and Future Prospects

The smattering of studies at the intersection of TPR and AVT research holds one incontrovertible implication: there is a huge need for more TPR in all areas and modes of AVT. One obviously fertile and yet wholly uncultivated field is the process of creating accessible AVT products, but there are many

others. The very few subtitling or dubbing experiments to have focussed on translator processes and/or process-oriented didactics are at best isolated pilot studies calling for far wider and deeper research in future to support and extend their initial findings. More progress seems to have been made in AVT reception studies, though these will have to connect more coherently with production studies to become properly relevant to the core interests of TPR.

Nevertheless, the potential and prospects for developing this patently under-researched interface are good. The last few years have seen TPR steadily extending its purview into the sociotechnical and socio-cognitive environment of translation. The 4E models of cognition that are broadening the range of TPR are raising ever new research questions. These, in turn, present methodological challenges that only interdisciplinary approaches can resolve. As TPR begins to embrace experimental reception research, cognitively oriented AVT research is well placed to provide a methodological lead in seeking to establish a cognitive audiovisual translatology (cf. Kruger et al. 2016). To fully realise the new paradigm, production and reception research will have to be much more closely interlinked than has hitherto been the case (Kruger and Kruger 2017). This will become all the more necessary as phenomena such as online non-professional subtitling and dubbing communities progressively blur classic distinctions between AV receivers and producers. Future studies will therefore also have to account for the shifting loci and interactions of computer-mediated AVT production and reception processes by employing new ethnographic approaches such as the “netnography” – a terminological compound of the words internet and ethnography – described by Li (2018).

## 6 Final Remarks

This short chapter has provided an overview of TPR in AVT. It has shown that, despite the obvious benefits of increasing our understanding of how AV translators work, what competences they have and how their practices, processes and competences can be developed, there is still a dearth of studies at what is a potentially fruitful research interface. Nevertheless, some evidence is emerging that AVT researchers are beginning to move from an exclusive focus on AVT products and their reception to one that encompasses the processes of production and the primary agents who actually do the translations. It remains to be seen to what extent the cognitive audiovisual translatology anticipated by Kruger et al. (2016) and framed by Muñoz Martín (2016a, b) can and will be achieved.

## 7 Suggested Reading

Kruger, J.-L., Soto Sanfiel, M. T., Doherty, S., & Ibrahim, R. (2016). Towards a Cognitive Audiovisual Translatology. Subtitles and Embodied Cognition. In R. Muñoz Martín (Ed.), *Reembedding Translation Process Research* (pp. 171–193). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

The authors propose this key reception study as an initial step towards a cognitive audiovisual translatology. It examines the immersive impact of subtitles on the processing of AV texts and presents a methodology for investigating the neural processing of subtitles using EEG to investigate the cognitive processing of subtitled film.

Massey, G., & Jud, P. (2015). Teaching Audiovisual Translation with Products and Processes: Subtitling as a Case in Point. In Ł. Bogucki & M. Deckert (Eds.), *Accessing Audiovisual Translation* (pp. 99–116). Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.

This chapter reports on a rare study concerning AVT didactics from a TPR perspective. The study uses TPR instruments and methods to investigate the potential of deploying complementary product-oriented and process-oriented techniques to teach interlingual subtitling with screen recording and eye tracking. The results indicate positive learning effects on AVT students.

Orrego-Carmona, D., Dutka, Ł., & Szarkowska, A. (2018). Using Translation Process Research to Explore the Creation of Subtitles: An Eye-Tracking Study Comparing Professional and Trainee Subtitlers. *The Journal of Specialised Translation*, 30, 150–180.

This article presents one of the very few studies to adopt TPR methods to explore the production of interlingual subtitles. The authors triangulate data from eye tracking, screen recording, mouse clicking, keystroke logging and interviews in two experiments: one comparing the processes of professional subtitlers and students, the other comparing those of professional translators using different tools. Their findings indicate the suitability of using TPR methods to study subtitle production.

Hvelplund, K. T. (2018). Eye Tracking and the Process of Dubbing Translation. In J. Díaz-Cintas & K. Nikolić (Eds.), *Fast-Forwarding with Audiovisual Translation* (pp. 110–124). Bristol: Multilingual Matters.

This chapter reports on the only known experimental study of dubbing translation in TPR. Focussing on attention allocation, processing flow and cognitive effort, the study investigates the processes of students as they undertake a dubbing translation assignment requiring the simultaneous processing of aural, visual and textual information. Among other things, the results indicate the TT to be nexus of the participants' processing activity.

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# 19

## Corpus Approaches and Audiovisual Translation

Silvia Bruti

### 1 Introduction

This chapter is devoted to an overview of corpus approaches to audiovisual translation. Both corpus studies and audiovisual translation (AVT) research have grown exponentially in recent years, starting from lukewarm beginnings in the 1960s and 1970s of the twentieth century. Even though the two domains nowadays tend to cross each other's paths, they are not necessarily connected, as audiovisual translators and analysts do not always avail themselves of corpus-based approaches.

In what follows corpus-based approaches to the translation of audiovisual texts are explored, providing some definitions and detailing their historical development together with their theoretical foundations, that is, the premises on which they rest. The central part of the chapter focuses on the most influential and interesting research on the topic, showing the many advantages (and a few shortcomings) of this approach. In the last part there are some considerations on the implications for teaching translation classes and suggestions on how the approach could be implemented and expanded in the future.

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## 2 Theoretical Foundations and Definitions

As Corps Pastor and Seghiri maintain (2016: 1), “corpus-based translation and interpreting studies (CTIS) is recognised today as a major paradigm and research methodology that has transformed the analysis within the discipline of translation and interpreting studies and outside those disciplines, too. CTIS is a very promising field with the potential to be very productive; at present, it is an under-researched and yet not fully explored topic” (see also Fantinuoli and Zanettin 2015). CTSI provides a theoretical benchmark but also offers beneficial resources for practical activities, ranging from human (both professional and amateur) to machine-assisted translation. This research methodology owes a lot, if not all, to the development of corpus linguistics, a branch of linguistics that has been defined as “the study of language based on examples of real-life language use” (McEnery and Wilson 2001: 1). Specifically, it provides instruments that make it possible to investigate language in different genres and modes (e.g. written or spoken, general language or specialised, original or translated) by taking into account enormous amounts of naturally occurring data, which, according to the researchers’ needs and interests, can be counted, selected, sorted and matched. Its two main distinctive features are the authentic nature of linguistic data and the recourse to automated means of analysis. It is thanks to the use of computer software that analysts are allowed to make sounder generalisations and to reflect on actually occurring data, thus avoiding some of the objections that are addressed to theoretical studies, in which ‘armchair’ linguists are often accused of supporting their initial hypotheses with *ad hoc*, intuitive examples (Widdowson 2004; Toury 1995).

Most linguists (*inter alia*, Biber et al. 1999; McEnery et al. 2006: 7–8) quite rightly share the idea that corpus linguistics represents a methodology with a vast array of applications rather than a discipline or a theory. Some others, on the contrary, argue that corpus linguistics is a research paradigm in its own right, as it has a “theoretical status” (Tognini-Bonelli 2001: 1). The same theoretical nature is strongly advocated by Mahlberg (2005: 2), who contends that corpus linguistics is “an approach to the description of English with its own theoretical framework”. Undoubtedly, any research carried out by using corpora necessarily entails some preliminary beliefs on the phenomenon under scrutiny and ideas as to how to investigate it.

Another crucial opposition when dealing with corpus linguistics is that between corpus-based and corpus-driven approaches. Corpus-driven studies are guided by what emerges from the observation of corpus data, in terms of regularities or exceptions. As Tognini-Bonelli puts it, this approach “builds up the theory step by step in the presence of the evidence, the observation of

certain patterns leads to a hypothesis, which in turn leads to the generalization in terms of rules of usage and finally finds unification in a theoretical statement” (Tognini-Bonelli 2001: 17). By contrast, in corpus-based approaches, corpus data are used to verify or exemplify theoretical claims and hypotheses (Tognini-Bonelli 2001; Baker 2014). Therefore, if corpus-based studies are deductive in nature, as they start from linguistic information that generates a hypothesis, corpus-driven ones are essentially inductive, because the research is sparked off by the observation of data. Over the past few years, however, the distinction has grown subtler, and some scholars have proposed to conceive the two approaches as two extremes on a scale and not as binary opposites (Baker 2014: 16): in actual facts, many studies merge them, often starting from corpus-driven reflections and moving on to corpus-based investigations.

In the field of AVT, and to a certain extent in the wider domain of translation studies, the large majority of studies are corpus-based: researchers and translators resort to corpus investigation (or even assemble corpora of various natures) in order to tackle the translation of a crucial phenomenon or a set phrase. Far less frequent are the cases in which translation scholars start from corpus-driven considerations. In this case, however, corpus-driven reflections are not completely ‘pure’, in that the approach is not naïve. It is more appropriate to talk about translation-driven corpora (Zanettin 2012), like the Pavia Corpus of Film Dialogue (PCFD), which was designed and compiled to reflect on the language of translated dialogues, and, more specifically, on the translation of various phenomena in film language (Freddi and Pavesi 2009; Pavesi 2014).

The types of corpora that are usually assembled for AVT research are parallel, monolingual comparable and bilingual comparable corpora. Parallel corpora consist of texts in the source language with their translation into the target language. Monolingual comparable corpora contain two different sets of texts, a first one of translated texts in language A, and a second one of texts belonging to the same genre but originally conceived in language B. Bilingual comparable corpora, instead, put together non-translated texts which belong to the same genre, register, domain, and thus share the same textual and stylistic features.

### 3 Historical Views

Corpus linguistics methodology began to be applied in translation studies back in the 1990s following in Baker’s footsteps (1993, 1995, 1996; and then Laviosa 2002; Olohan 2004) in response to a need for a strong empirical basis

that allowed researchers to locate distinctive features and patterns. This experimental back-up enabled researchers to make generalisations, as “computer software makes it possible to detect patterns that would be difficult to identify through manual analysis” (Baños Piñero et al. 2013: 483–484).

In Laviosa’s words (2011: 13), the encounter between translation theory (mainly in the descriptive paradigm put forward by Toury 1995) and corpus linguistics saw “the dawn of a new partnership” that paved the way to a novel way of looking at translation, and consequently, at translating and teaching translation classes. The studies in this tradition qualify as belonging to the descriptive paradigm, owing much to Toury’s polystem theory.

In the 1990s, several works began to investigate universals in translated texts (see *inter alia* Kenny 2001). In this period corpus-based translation studies strongly bonded with many applied linguistics areas of study, such as contrastive analysis, language for specific purposes, language teaching, terminology, lexicography and computational linguistics. Several scholars began to schedule translation classes around corpus construction and analysis to acquire disciplinary, textual and linguistic knowledge (Gavioli 2005; Gavioli and Zanettin 2000; Bowker 1998).

In the new millennium corpus studies, grown exponentially in number and relying on enormous technological opportunities, have pushed forward the investigation into language universals, often on the basis of multilingual settings, but have also covered the interface between language, culture and ideology by addressing several extralinguistic issues that are reflected in texts (e.g. style, identity and cross-cultural variation). It became evident that a descriptive approach could largely benefit from suggestions deriving from interdisciplinary contacts with neighbouring disciplines (Tymoczko 1998; Olohan 2004, among many).

## 4 Research on the Subject

Corpora in AVT research have opened up several opportunities for deepening the understanding of source language features, establishing patterns of mapping between source and target texts, and shedding light on the cognitive processes that typically occur when mediating between languages. Most of them have exploited the typical instruments of corpus linguistic analysis, that is, frequency lists, keyness, n-grams, concordances and also more specialised calculations such as type/token ratio or lexical density, which offer further parameters to account for the exclusive nature of audiovisual dialogues, both original and translated. In what follows the major projects devoted to subtitling, dubbing and audio description are described and commented upon.

## 4.1 Corpus-Based AVT Studies: Subtitling

Despite the popularity of dubbing in Spain, recent studies report on the collection and exploitation of some corpora of subtitles, probably due to ease of compilation, even though some published research makes reference to corpora that scholars have collected and analysed individually, and compared and contrasted them with data from reference corpora of colloquial speech (Romero Fresco 2006 and Baños Piñero et al. 2013 both used a parallel corpus of original and dubbed dialogues from *Friends* and the dialogues from a Spanish sitcom).

The Viega corpus, for instance, is a multimedia corpus of subtitled films, compiled with a view to analysing both “the practice of English intralingual subtitling and English-Galician interlingual subtitling” (Sotelo Dios and Gómez Guinovart 2012: 255; Sotelo Dios 2011, 2015). This project was launched as a multimedia extension of the larger framework of the CLUVI Parallel Corpus, an open collection of parallel text corpora of Galician, comprising over 23 million words and spanning over five specialised domains and five language combinations, compiled at the University of Vigo. Sotelo Dios (2011) argues in favour of multimedia corpora, as it would be somehow controversial to study the language and translation of films by only considering their verbal dimension (see Baldry and Taylor 2004). To this purpose the Viega corpus, consisting of English original audiovisual dialogues, their intralingual English subtitles and the interlingual Galician subtitles, is something between a parallel and a comparable corpus, as Galician subtitles might follow the example in the English subtitles, but are not necessarily and not always a mere translation of them. The corpus is aligned and annotated, with an interesting tagging for translation units: translation strategies, such as omissions, additions and re-orderings, are indicated, together with in-cue and out-cue times and line breaks. By clicking on an icon of a film reel, it is possible to stream the video clip where the result of the query occurs. In 2011 only 10 of the 24 films included in the corpus were available in multimedia format, as the editing work of creating a multimedia corpus is enormous. Despite these recognised limitations, having to do with the size of the corpus and with the heterogenous nature of the translated subtitles, the project offers interesting material for both teaching and professional training.

Another remarkable project is the CORSUBIL (Rica Peromingo et al. 2014), a bilingual corpus of 18 million words collected in 2010–2011 and arranged into two sub-corpora of equal size of English or Spanish subtitles for American films, ranging from the beginning of ‘talkies’ to the 1980s. The subtitles were extracted with *ad hoc* software and fed into the database as text

files. The researchers' purpose was to obtain a list of lexical units in two languages, English and Spanish. They concentrated on polite speech act formulae, for which they selected a repertoire of currently employed phrases and searched the database for occurrences in English and then in Spanish. Methodologically speaking, this might result in missing some expressions of politeness in the original dialogues, as subtitles in English are not (or not always) a specular rendition of what the actors really utter. However, as the researchers state, their purpose is to test the translation from English into Spanish, and, secondly, to account for omissions in the TL, which most typically depend on spatio-temporal constraints or semiotic redundancy.

Bywood et al. (2013), thanks to SUMAT, an EU funded research project, also set out to compile a parallel corpus of subtitles for statistical machine translation. In addition to explaining how they proceeded in collecting, editing and aligning over 6 million subtitles for seven language pairs provided by four different subtitling companies, the authors also clarify how their corpus may be exploited as input for "a subtitle-specific machine translation and a parallel concordancing system" (Baños Piñero et al. 2013: 487).

## 4.2 Corpus-Based AVT Studies: Dubbing

One of the most fully fledged corpora of AVT, originated and developed within a research project, is the PCDF. This parallel and comparable spoken corpus was developed to explore film language in original and dubbed dialogues, identify emerging trends in translation and establish patterns of mapping between translating choices, sociolinguistic and pragmatic features, next to universals of translations such as simplification, explicitation, levelling out and the like. The corpus was planned as bilingual, consisting of original English dialogues (transcribed from films according to a set of precise rules, see Bonsignori 2009) and their translation into Italian, and unidirectional, that is allowing for searches from English into Italian. The parallel Italian component can be used in its own right as an instrument to peruse the language of translated texts, but also in a more source-oriented perspective, to assess the degree of correspondence between source- and target-text or to investigate how specific linguistic phenomena are rendered in translation. Likewise, the Anglophone original dialogues can be analysed independently, for example in order to pinpoint the main features of orality in film language. Multiple comparisons with available general corpora of both English and Italian are possible, for example to assess the much debated 'spoken' nature of audiovisual dialogues, both original and translated. At a later stage, the corpus

was turned into a relational database, which made many more searches possible (e.g. selecting several textual and contextual features and metadata, like screenwriter or translator-dialogue writer), starting from either the original or the translated language (Freddi 2013). A newly developed component of Italian films amounting to 60,000 words (Pavesi 2014: 55) was also added, which allows for comparisons between Italian dubbed and original dialogues. This extension disclosed interesting patterns “that typify dubbese as a third language” (Pavesi 2014: 43), which displays features of its own that have crystallised through use as a kind of distinctive mark of the community of practice of translators/dialogue writers.

Several studies based either on the corpus or the database have been carried out on the following topics: phraseology (Freddi 2009), third person pronouns (Pavesi 2009), compliments and insults (Bruti 2009), codeswitching (Monti 2009), the use of interrogatives (Ghia 2014), lexical simplification (Formentelli 2014), the translation of slanguage (Formentelli and Monti 2014).

Devoted to AVT is also the Forlixt (Valentini 2006, 2008), a multimedia database (see Heiss and Soffritti 2008 for a description of its microstructure) intended as an archive for films and their transcripts, with several translated dialogues in languages other than the original. Valentini (2006, 2008) explains how the various projects leading to the Forlixt were triggered by the need for an empirical basis to be used in translators’ training. The architecture is designed so that a text query allows for access to the related scenes of the film and their translation(s). This is possible in both directions, from source to target text but also vice versa.

### 4.3 Corpus-Based AVT Studies: Audio Description

Among the more recently developed areas of investigation in AVT, audio description has drawn scholarly attention to the point that a special corpus containing the language of different audio described programmes (films and TV programmes)—the TIWO (Television in words) audio description corpus—was assembled (Salway 2007). This project is meant to investigate the language used by audio describers, for example which patterns prevail at the lexical, morphological, syntactic and semantic level and if/how these choices correlate with the specific requirements and functions of this translating modality. Salway (2007) found that audio descriptions are very rich in concrete nouns and verbs that refer to material processes, both of which correspond to either objects or actions that are displayed on screen, or also in verbs describing the manner of doing, which are concise but very

descriptive (e.g. *saunters*, *hurries*, *strolls*). As Arma demonstrated by analysing data for Italian (2012), most of these tendencies are language-specific and only a few features are shared, on account of structural variations across languages and different stylistic traditions.

Given the centrality of accessibility in our society, many more projects have been developed around audio description, among which the TRACCE and PRA2 research projects, both described by Jimenez Hurtado and Soler Gallego (2013) and aimed at identifying the linguistic and nonlinguistic features of audio described scripts (relying on 300 films audio described in Spanish and 50 in German, English and French). The second and more specific objective is to gain insight into the cognitive processes behind the intersemiotic transformation that is at the core of audio description. In other words, multimodal corpus analysis can shed light on how the filmic event is represented by camera movements and shot quality and how this information surfaces in audio described scripts to help blind people ‘visualise’ a scene.

Matamala and Villegas (2016) describe the assembling, tagging (both linguistic and cinematic, by means of the software ELAN) and potentialities of a corpus of audio descriptions developed within a one-year project funded by the Spanish government in 2015–2016 (Visuals Into Words, VIW). VIW’s aim is to provide an open access platform that makes it possible for researchers to compare AD texts, both intralingually and interlingually. As Matamala and Villegas remark (2016: 30) “despite the relevance of [...] projects in AD corpus research, they are not freely available on the Internet, probably due to copyright issues. This is similar to what happens often in other fields of AV translation, where corpora have been created but have faced copyright constraints (Baños Piñero et al. 2013)”.

## 5 Implications for Teaching

Many scholars who started assembling corpora of audiovisual language or multimodal corpora of audiovisual texts have been guided both by research interests and didactic purposes. The best teaching experiences are in fact those where teachers share the findings from their research projects with their students. As Sotelo Dios claims (2011: 4), multimedia corpora can be employed in different pedagogical contexts, “from general language courses dealing with jargon and register to specialised courses on audiovisual translation (AVT) and subtitling”. This is crucial in translation classes, because students and prospective translators need to be trained with authentic material and can thus be offered a sample of ready-made translating solutions (either

extracts from dubbed dialogues or subtitles), where they can take a look at how other translators have solved certain problems. The same opinion is shared by Rica Peromingo et al., who highlight the potential of corpus material to gain “new insights into the shape, meaning, behavior or company words keep [that] can be immediately transported to the teaching field, thus obtaining real input coming from actual instances of language in use” (2014: 21).

## 6 Future Prospects

However, although the recourse to corpus-based material has been by now universally recognised as crucial in offering empirically sound teaching, this area of study is still in its infancy, mainly due to a series of chiefly technical problems (Pavesi 2019). Corpora are often limited in size, as their compilation is a time-consuming activity, even more so when they are multimodal in nature (Soffritti 2019), thus including synchronisation of text and audio, and the acquisition of copyrights (complex and onerous for both dialogues and images). Other weaknesses are the directionality of search, which in most cases is only possible from source to target texts, thus preventing, as Pavesi argues, the exploration of possible explanations for outcomes in translated texts.

One possible expansion is therefore into languages other than English, even though it must be acknowledged that most audiovisual products are initiated in this language, and if not, English is often resorted to as a medium language for translation. Another possible line of development could be to share resources in wide international networks, to create huge multilingual repositories that would allow for quantitatively sound results and significant statistical investigation, a necessary step in order to trace regularities and trends. Collaboration with software developers might be useful to make it possible to run analyses in several languages, and in two directions, that is, from target to source language, and not only from source to target, as is almost always the case. As Pavesi remarked (2019), data gathered along the diachronic dimension might also be further pursued, to investigate the development and change of translating norms and the ultimate emergence of new trends over time.

Finally, even though European studies have so far traditionally focused on subtitling and dubbing, the two main modalities in AVT, with a more recent leaning towards audio description, corpora of texts belonging to other modalities of AVT (e.g. subtitling for the deaf and hard of hearing, voice-over, etc.) might be collected in order to better understand the specific requirements

of these translating modes. Further insight into what is deemed useful and what is liked by these specific audiences could be better assessed with audience reception studies (Di Giovanni and Gambier 2018).

## 7 Final Remarks

As Bruti and Zanotti contend (2018), the interface between corpus linguistics and AVT is one of the applied domains where the gains of cross-fertilisation between linguistics and practice in the real world can be observed. In particular, the use of corpus linguistics methodology in AVT has offered a means for portraying “the distinctive features and patterns of translated texts, because a massive amount of text is made available” (Bywood et al. 2013: 483).

In the last two decades a shift from the verbal to the multimodal has finally acknowledged the other-than-verbal components in audiovisual texts, also enlarging the scope of analysis to include a fully fledged semiotic account of communication. Despite the length of time involved and technical difficulties, multimodal corpora offer researchers and translators an invaluable source of data to be used in teaching, translator training, the practice of translation and research.

However, the relevance of (corpus) linguistic research to practice in the real world has not always been recognised, mainly because of the lack of a continuous contact between academics and practitioners, who, especially in the field of AVT, tend to rely more on apprenticeship and experience shared in a closed community of practice than on linguistics-informed research. The only exception, because of its immediate and consequential impact on society, is audio description, an area where linguistic research and practice have successfully met halfway to make audiovisual products accessible to a visually impaired audience (Bruti and Zanotti 2018: 122). It is therefore in this direction that the enormous potential of corpus linguistics should be exploited in education firstly and in practice thereafter, with a view to granting viewers quality products.

## 8 Suggested Readings

Baños Piñero, R., Bruti, S., & Zanotti, S. (Eds.). (2013). Corpus Linguistics and Audiovisual Translation: In Search of an Integrated Approach. Special Issue. *Perspectives: Studies in Translatology* 21(4). *This special issue of Perspectives: Studies in Translatology aims to investigate corpus-based approaches to AVT that*

address at the same time the multimodal nature of audiovisual texts, their technical and professional requirements and their social repercussions.

Pavesi, M. (2019). Corpus-Based Audiovisual Translation Studies. Ample Room for Development. In L. Pérez-González (Ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of Audiovisual Translation* (pp. 315–333). Abingdon: Routledge. *This is the most recent and up-dated contribution on corpus-based translation studies in AVT. It shows how corpus studies have allowed scholars to identify typical translating strategies and how conversation authenticity has been attained in original and dubbed dialogues.*

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# 20

## Reception Studies and Audiovisual Translation

Elena Di Giovanni

### 1 One, Two, Many Audiences

As Napoli and Voorhees rightly put it, the origins of audience studies are often traced back to the rhetoricians of ancient Greece, although audience studies as a discipline only fully emerged more recently, “alongside the development of commercial mass media in the early twentieth century, as nascent media industries [...] sought to understand who was consuming their products, how and why.” (2017: online).

Although one of the primary focuses of audience research is the audience and its nature, as it changes over time and across space, the forms of interaction between audiences and media are also central, often for reasons which go beyond research and reach out to production development, marketing and even activism.

Media consumption is a cultural experience, with its manifold implications and varieties that ultimately pertain to the individual. Although media audiences are extremely vast, with varying degrees of homogeneity and diversity according to the ways we observe them, media consumption happens, most of the times and increasingly so, on an individual basis. This is what makes

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audience research particularly thorny: unveiling and discussing media consumption is often a daunting task, with the inevitable risk of setting up experiments which make the media experience to some extent unnatural. Another difficulty connected with audience research is its transversal nature, which makes it relevant for, and practiced within, many a disciplinary area: from communication studies to sociology, from anthropology to several branches of psychology.

In audiovisual translation (AVT) studies, audience research has only recently acquired an all-prominent position, although it was indeed long due. In recent publications, scholars engaged in various areas of audiovisual translation research have advocated more, and more systematic, reception studies. Marie Noëlle Guillot (2018: 39), for instance, reflects on the future of AVT research and states as a priority “a better empirical understanding of reception processes”. From a different viewpoint and stance, looking at the past and at how AVT has evolved alongside major audiovisual media, Carol O’Sullivan and Jean François Cornu also advocate a more systematic study of reception as a “crucial” issue to be sought, despite the difficulties of collecting data (2018: 24).

Having moved past its descriptive stage, which has not yet been completely abandoned to date, AVT research can be said to have reached maturity precisely through more systematic analyses of the way in which audiences understand, engage with and appreciate translations, that is, through explorations of the aftermath and afterlife of AVT products, both synchronically and diachronically. The aim of such research approaches is not only to push the discipline beyond descriptivism, but first and foremost to map reception so as to feed it back into research but also into the practice of AVT. This, in turn, can only benefit the growing interdisciplinarity of the field and give it more visibility within other, much better established disciplines (communication studies, etc.). Among the many possible definitions of audience in relation to media and translated texts, researchers make choices according to the very focus of their investigation and line of argument/approach. As a matter of fact, as stated elsewhere (Di Giovanni 2018a), defining audiences leads to adopting one or more viewpoints, always bearing in mind that the possible approaches are, indeed, manifold. Besides more common and tangible classifications of audience in terms of age, education, media and text-type preference—all parameters that can be inferred from audience research *a posteriori*—recent research into media audience reception from an audiovisual translation perspective has focused on audience engagement by resorting to a variety of parameters and definitions, often borrowed from psychological research like immersion (Wilken and Kruger 2016) or presence (Fryer et al. 2013), to mention but two. Another active research strand has, on the other

hand, reflected on audiences for audiovisual translation in terms of participation to content creation (Di Giovanni 2018b; Romero-Fresco 2018b), inspired by film studies, communication studies and disability studies. Looking at AVT receivers from the point of view of engagement, their role as produsers but also prosumers (Di Giovanni 2018a), allows the researcher to reflect on the many facets of today's media landscape consumption, where audiences not only consume media texts individually but they also produse, manipulate, reshape them. Already thirty years ago, at the crossroads of cultural and communication studies, Paul Willis stated that all individuals participate in the creation of cultural content and thus add value to it. His concept of individuals as active cultural producers (1990) has stood the test of time and guided many studies of audience and reception to date.

## 2 Historical Evolution of Audience-Based Research in AVT

When choosing a historical perspective in the study of audience reception of media, as Napoli and Voorhees (2017) suggest, two main strategies can be adopted. One can investigate the audience composition and behaviour over time, or alternatively the focus can be on the evolution of audience *research* over time. Both approaches are revealing of changing social and cultural attitudes, the second implying more of a metadiscourse on the tools, strategies and impact of research, but connected all the same to societal, cultural and also linguistic changes in media consumption.

In relation to audiovisual translation and its reception from a diachronic perspective, two similar pathways can be pursued, namely the observation of changing audiences and their reception of translated texts, and the study of how research has developed over time in this field. In order to trace, define and further enhance audience-based research in AVT, both pathways are worthy of consideration, also as they offer an opportunity to focus on the type and degree of interdisciplinarity that is required, or preferred, to embark on reception studies from an AVT perspective.

### 2.1 Tracing the Evolution of Audiences and Their Reception of Media

The audience response to media texts, both in their original version and in translation, has been of interest to researchers and professionals leading the media production and distribution market for a century. As O'Sullivan (2016)

and Zanotti (2018) recall, the first decades of production of talking films in Hollywood were accompanied by major concerns on the reception of translated versions, while producers and distributors experimented with the most suitable solutions for major national markets.

When trying to map audience reception to media across a century's history, as Zanotti says, a "multi-method approach is needed" (2018: 134). Differently from other areas of AVT enquiry, a historical approach requires specific skills: archival consultation, knowledge of historical research methodologies and, last but not least, awareness of historiography and its applications. The complexity of such skills and the related research strategies are probably among the reasons why, to date, little more than a handful of AVT researchers have delved into this realm, in a quest for proofs of audience engagement and appreciation of translated audiovisual texts in the past. Mainly focusing on cinema—which was undoubtedly the first medium to reach out to large, international masses—scholars who have engaged with the reception of translated versions of films have resorted to such sources as printed press reviews, critical essays published at the time of film release, public statements by the film creators, distributors and protagonists, books published around the time of distribution but also subsequently, especially within the realm of film history. In designing and discussing a methodology for historical research on the reception of AVT, Zanotti warns of the difficulties of properly contextualizing the historical accounts and documents listed above, as well as of the possible (and indeed difficult to verify) mismatches between critical reviews and actual audience response at the time of film release. Moreover, as Zanotti states, "since reviews provide what may be only a partial representation of audience preferences" (2018: 148), a sound methodology should always encompass other sources, including box office figures, to be analysed in a contrastive manner (original film vs. translated film). Such an approach was developed in detail, and with very interesting results, by Petr Szczepanik, who explored the reception of foreign films in Czechoslovakia over a decade (from 1929 to 1939). His approach to the study of reception is worth exposing as it can lend itself to successful replication. As the author says, his complex analysis was based on

a regionally and functionally defined sample consisting of approximately 2,500 films premiered in 20 first-run Prague movie theatres from 1929 to 1939. In the study, the films were classified by the national provenance of their production companies and their popularity was estimated by the number of weeks that they were kept on each theatre's programme. (2013: 167)

Considering the average weeks of screening for national films, as well as the movie theatres seating capacity, Szczepanik was able to draw a thorough and enlightening picture of foreign films appreciation in his country, especially with reference to such a crucial decade for the internationalization of cinema.

Interesting insights into the methods for historical reception research on translated audiovisual texts are also provided by Carol O'Sullivan and Jean François Cornu (2018) in their overview of what historical AVT research has done so far and what it needs to further develop and grow. Widely documenting the first efforts to make cinema travel the world through different language versions, and referring in particular to the interesting phenomenon of multiple language productions of the same films, O'Sullivan and Cornu suggest looking at the experiments led by Nataša Ďurovičová and a team of film history experts on the occasion of the MAGIS Gradisca Spring Summer Schools held in Udine, Italy, for several years (2003–2006). During the summer schools, as Ďurovičová herself reports, different language versions of the same film—just as they had been produced in the 1930s—were screened simultaneously and side by side, for both the school participants and the experts gathered for it in Udine. As Ďurovičová states, “using the hands-on moment of comparison” (2004: 6) provides incredibly useful information for historical research on the phenomenon of multiple language versions of the same film, which has attracted a lot of attention from film studies scholars but hardly ever with a focus on the linguistic and translational features they embed. Especially valuable are the reflections, offered by Ďurovičová and the authors whose contribution are gathered in her edited journal, about the primacy of one language version over the others, with an emphasis on issues of originality and replicability:

One theoretical framework offered here up-front was François Jost's semio-pragmatic account of pertinent categories of identity and difference between two “works.” The point of departure is the concept of replicability: what makes a second work, in an oxy-moron, a “true copy” of the first, i.e. when is it similar enough to be a facsimile (like the prints of a photographic negative) of the first, and consequently also potentially a falsificate? (2004: 7)

As the quote above highlights, historical research on interlingual and intersemiotic translation of films calls into play a host of disciplines and multifarious knowledge: from semiotics to pragmatics, from cultural and identity studies to visual anthropology, to mention but a few.

## 2.2 The Evolution of Audience Research Outside and Within AVT

When trying to map the evolution of research on audience reception in relation to AVT, we come across a rather fragmented landscape. As the recognition of AVT as a full-fledged field of study is, in itself, a recent phenomenon, reception studies in relation to the various areas of AVT practice and research are even more recent, and they have so far largely relied on methodologies and tools borrowed from other disciplines. As media and reception studies are themselves fuzzy areas of academic enquiry, thriving at the intersection of several disciplines, the concepts and methods for their analysis have emerged from communication studies, film and media studies, but also psychology, anthropology, sociology. To build up its own repertoire for experimental audience-based research, AVT has looked at, and borrowed from, several of these fields, especially the first two, occasionally building ‘alliances’ which have led to positive cross-fertilization. One such example is offered by the many references to the work of cinema historian Daniel Biltreyest in studies of audiovisual translation reception, and the latter’s recent contribution to a volume on this topic with Philippe Meers (2018). It is precisely this chapter by Biltreyest and Meers that offers us the opportunity to highlight some of the most prolific strands in the history of reception research over the past decades, which AVT has already benefited from and will probably thrive on also in the future. They are briefly reviewed below and emphasis is laid on the disciplinary fields they have been inspired by and thriving in.

The first strand that is encompassed in Bilstereyst and Meers’s review is related to “exhibition strategies and practices” (2018: 29), in other words to the description and analysis of the physical spaces and institutional contexts in which film consumption has occurred over time. This is indeed a significant strand that has gained substance over several decades and has found a particularly fertile terrain in cinema history and media sociology from the 1980s (see, among others, Gomery 1992). As a second, prolific approach to the research on cinema audiences, Biltreyest and Meers point to “the importance of contextualizing issues of spectatorship and embodied viewers in terms of interrelations between text, intertextual zones and contextual forces” (*ibid.*: 31), as stimulated by literary traditions of reception theory and developed in particular by Staiger (1986, 1992). Literary approaches to reception research have inspired and informed many a study of cinema and television, some of them occasionally recalled within audiovisual translation research on

audiences. These approaches offer, directly or through their valorization in cinema reception studies, great opportunities for further expansion of AVT research focusing on the audience and should indeed be further explored. A third, very popular strand has, according to Bilterezst and Meers, laid emphasis on “going to the movies as a social phenomenon” (*ibid.*), which the authors say to have been a preferred approach by film historians over the decades. Indeed, such an approach has also been practiced and developed by media sociologists, communication theoreticians and occasionally anthropologists.

Another prolific area of investigation which has marked the history of media audience research, with a clear emphasis on cinema, is related to emotional responses to the viewing experience and to the viewers’ engagement with media. Having marked research on media consumption for over 50 years, this is still today a prolific pathway, also widely favoured by AVT scholars. As audience research expert Ian Christie states, when discussing the history of the study of audiences so far it has appeared clear that “the forte of motion pictures is in their emotional effect” and that,

their appeal and their success reside ultimately in the emotional agitation which they induce. To fascinate the observer and draw him into the drama so that he loses himself is the goal of a successful production. (2012: 14)

Agitation, emotion, effect: these and a number of related words and concepts have enlivened the history of media audience research, with a hint at, or a considerable support from, psychological studies of different types.

As we shall see in the following section, it is precisely from psychology, the neurosciences, communication studies and social studies that AVT is today drawing theoretical insights and methodologies to build up and strengthen its audience-based research.

### **3 Methodologies and Tools for Reception Studies in Audiovisual Translation**

Moving to the present and looking at the future of reception studies, let us start off with an axiom: every project aiming to investigate the reception of AVT and media accessibility requires a stance as to (1) what audience(s) is at the core of the study, (2) what aspect(s) of the reception of one or more translated/accessible texts is of interest to the researcher, (3) what timeframe is to

be analysed and (4) what interdisciplinary approach the researcher is aiming to apply and how. In this section, we will bear in mind these four tenets while exploring and commenting on previously conducted experimental studies on AVT reception. We thus aim to highlight opportunities for further audience-centred research, by assessing possible variables for our tenets, pointing to shortcomings, warning of potential hindrances and also emphasizing successful choices and findings (see also the contribution by Massey and Jud in this volume).

As stated earlier, defining audiences is always a tricky issue, even when we narrow our field of observation and spell out our specific research interests. Reflecting on the semantic value of the word ‘audience’, McQuail states that “beyond commonsense usage, there is much room for differences of meaning, misunderstandings and theoretical conflicts. The problems surrounding the concept stem mainly from the fact that a single and simple word is being applied to an increasingly diverse and complex reality.” (1997: 1) One more interesting reflection with regard to the difficulties of taking a stance in audience research is provided by Ian Christie (2012: 11), which points to the need for researchers to define, among other aspects, whether they will be working on audiences as ‘they’ or as ‘we’. Although both approaches offer ample space for exploration in AVT, we can trace instances of both in recent publications and conference presentations. Research using eye tracking and other tools (Orrego Carmona 2016; Doherty and Kruger 2018, etc.) for objectively measuring audience response to AVT can be said to adopt a “they” stance. On the other hand, research focusing on inclusion and participation in the creation and fruition of content (Greco 2016; Di Giovanni 2018b; Romero-Fresco 2018b) emphasize the “we”, that is, the belonging of the researcher to a broad community where no potential viewer is excluded from creation, consumption and the very right to enjoy entertainment.

Having just hinted at some of the trendiest tools currently employed in reception research in AVT, let us also state that no research project on reception should be designed starting from the desired technology, or the tool(s) at hand. Instead, a thorough consideration of the research objectives has to be a priority, and, as recent publications have emphasized (Szarkowska and Wasylczyk 2018; Orero et al. 2018) mixed methods and tools are to be the preferred choices in reception studies.

In the following sections, we will focus on dubbing and interlingual subtitling to review a selection of audience-based studies whose structure, methodology and results can be useful to design new studies and ultimately strengthen this all-important research area within AVT.

### 3.1 Dubbing and Reception Studies

Too long seen as the child of a lesser god in AVT research, dubbing is today finally receiving more attention, also thanks to a recent surge in its practice worldwide for reasons that range from the so-called second screen experience<sup>1</sup> to the wish of streaming service providers to constantly expand their audiences and offer them multiple viewing options.

As happened for other AVT techniques (see Romero-Fresco 2018a), early instances of research into the reception of dubbing, dating from the end of the previous century and the beginning of this new one, were part of PhD projects carried out in Europe and beyond. This is the case, for instance, of the work done by Rosa María Palencia Villa for her PhD thesis on characters' credibility in the Spanish dubbed versions of selected American films, which she tested by means of viewing experiments and questionnaires. Carried out over the turn of the century and completed in 2002, Palencia Villa's work has inspired several others, especially within the Spanish context (Fuentes Luque 2003; Romero-Fresco 2009). Early research on dubbing perception in Italy was also carried out as part of PhD projects conducted at the University of Bologna/Forlì by Rachele Antonini and Chiara Bucaria, initiated and coordinated by Delia Chiaro (2004; Antonini 2005; Chiaro and Bucaria 2007). The Italian team opened up the path to audience investigation in relation to dubbing and have been inspiring further projects internationally for almost 15 years. Soon after these first research endeavours, PhD projects focusing on the impact and reception of dubbing have expanded to other disciplinary areas and, significantly, beyond European borders.

In 2008, German scholar Miika Blinn published an article as part of her PhD research in economics at the Freie Universität in Berlin. Titled “The dubbing standard: its history and efficiency implications for film distributors in the German film market”,<sup>2</sup> the article is centred on the issues of path dependence and habit formation (habituation) as determining for the persistence of dubbing as a preferred AVT modality in Germany. Her empirical research on audience preferences is based on a variety of resources, including “current and historical film-industry statistics and surveys, current and historical consumer survey data, journal archives”. Blinn's research project can certainly be taken as a model for further investigations, and so is the

<sup>1</sup> See, for instance, Blake, James, *Television and the Second Screen: Interactive TV in the Age of Social Participation*, 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Available online at <http://www.dime-eu.org/files/active/0/BlinnPAPER.pdf>.

interdisciplinary approach she used, combining economic theory, statistics, linguistics and film studies.

More recently, research carried out by Saeed Ameri and other young scholars at the Ferdowsi University of Mashad, Iran, has focused on quality in Persian dubbing and its reception by Iranian viewers. The experiments, reported in several articles (see Ameri et al. 2017) relied on mixed methods and tools (focus groups, interviews, questionnaires), to carry out a qualitative analysis on a large and also quantitatively significant sample of viewers (almost 500). Bringing to the fore, but not primarily concentrating on, issues of censorship and manipulation in dubbing, these experiments offer a valuable example of research which can be carried out virtually in every dubbing country, beyond preconceptions and with a flexible array of tools.

To move onto some of the most recent trends in audience-centred dubbing research, we will concentrate on redubbing as a new area of investigation from a reception studies perspective and on the recent application of eye tracking technologies to dubbing.

In the realm of redubbing, as in dubbing research in more general terms, explorations are still rather scanty, at least from an audience perspective. A key contribution has, to date, been provided by Serenella Zanotti, who has recently set the tone for this line of research by offering a methodology for the study of redubbings (2016). Besides exposing and discussing the motives beyond redubbing across cinematic and television genres, Zanotti focuses on the tools and strategies for analysing the reception of two or more dubbed versions by contemporary but also non-contemporary audiences. In line with what was suggested by Ďurovičová and reinstated by Blinn, Zanotti affirms that research involving a diachronic perspective calls for the analysis of original documents published at the time of film release, but she adds that consultation of discussion groups, forums and websites dedicated to dubbing and redubbing offers a great potential for retrieving extra information, details about forgotten authentic sources, while also providing insights into contemporary reception of old films.

As the last AVT technique to be subject to experimental analysis via eye tracking technology, dubbing has finally come to be put under scrutiny with these increasingly sophisticated tools, thus providing new, stimulating insights into dubbing reception. If some hints at the investigation of dubbing via eye tracking were provided by Vilarò and Smith in 2011, a full-fledged application, and the related methodology, are offered by Di Giovanni and Romero-Fresco (2019). Both studies, of a comparative nature, have monitored eye movements and fixations over original and dubbed films matching the resulting data with questionnaires. Moreover, both studies are

centred on the principle of the so-called dubbing effect, whereby viewers of dubbed films are thought to suspend disbelief over speaking characters' mouths as purveyors of realistic information, diverting their visual attention to other elements (characters' eyes instead of mouths, for instance). In his study, Romero-Fresco focuses on the notion of habituation as a theoretical tenet, whereas Di Giovanni and Romero-Fresco lay emphasis on the notions of attentional synchrony and visual momentum to assess visual perception and preferences. A new study combining diachronic and contemporary research on redubbing with eye tracking methodology and questionnaires is currently under way in Italy, with a focus on *Gone with the wind* (Di Giovanni and Zanotti).

### 3.2 Subtitling and Reception Studies

Research on subtitling from a reception studies perspective is relatively well-established within AVT, with several clearly defined pathways. Amongst these is certainly the pathway initiated in the 1980s by psychologists like Geri D'Ydewalle, who have helped shape an area of research that is still flourishing since. As a matter of fact, the association of subtitling research and the realm of psychology, with a focus on cognitivism and, more recently, neuroscience, has indeed become primary and has already yielded significant results. Instead of retracing the evolution of such a research strand, as has been done elsewhere,<sup>3</sup> we will here concentrate on a selection of recently published studies which offer new methodological insights, or which have led to important conclusions and advances in relation to well-established issues in subtitling research.

In a 2016 article, Minako O'Hagan and Ryoko Sasamoto focus on Japanese *telop*, or impact captions, as exemplary subtitles to open up a discussion on the methodologies for experimental subtitling research. After highlighting the merits of eye tracking-based studies for assessing and informing "effective subtitle translation strategies and formats on the basis of viewers' cognitive effort" (2016: 37), and after praising the increasing complexity of eye tracking research on subtitling recorded in the last few years, the authors move on to suggest further disciplinary contaminations. Amongst their recommendations are web-based usability studies and multimodal analysis as further approaches to be applied to the interpretation of eye tracking data. After reviewing a number of previous studies, emphasizing methodological shortcomings and opportunities, the authors report on their own experiment on the reception of

<sup>3</sup> See, for instance, David Orrego Carmona's chapter on audience reception for *The Routledge Handbook of Translation Studies*, 2018.

impact captions, which is presented as a quasi-pilot study due to the limited number of participants (only 12 yielded usable data) and, we should add, due to the exclusive recourse to university students.

Keeping our focus on methodology and innovation in subtitling research, significant contributions have recently been provided in a volume edited by Federico Federici and Callum Walker (2019), where several authors focus on subtitling and eye tracking from different angles. Stephen Doherty, for instance, discusses a series of experiments centred on the creation of subtitles (a process-oriented approach), which are worth recalling as they are based on the solid application of statistical analysis. Revolving around concepts such as factorial design, regression modelling and growth curve modelling, Doherty offers methodological inputs that can be adapted to the analysis of data from eye tracking and other tools in reception research. Potential limitations in the use of these analytical tools and concepts lie in the high level of statistical competences required, which may fail to be found within AVT and may thus imply either awkward applications or a fall outside the discipline.

Another original contribution to the study of subtitling reception, also involving eye tracking, was provided by Wendy Fox (2016). Her experimental setup included the creation of integrated subtitles (i.e. subtitles that are placed individually in an image) and their comparison with regularly created subtitles to evaluate reception. Besides the interesting creative element involved in this experiment, innovation lies also in the “indicators” (2016: 15) the author used for her study, combining typical eye tracking parameters with original ones: reading time, correspondence to undistracted focus, reaction time and aesthetic experience are the elements around which Fox’s analysis revolves, with data gathered from eye tracking and questionnaires with over 40 participants. Her findings are generally positive with regard to the reception of integrated titles. Also, in her conclusions the author states that “integrated titles trigger more efficient reading, as both reading time and wasted time are reduced” (*ibid.*: 24). Both the parameters used by Fox and the focus on integrated titles as an alternative to traditional, post-production subtitles, provide innovative insights for subtitling research, with and without eye tracking.

Interesting and partially unexpected results are also provided by Agnieszka Szarkowska and Olivia Gerber Morón (2018) in a study focusing on the traditional, long-debated issue of reading speed for subtitles. In the wake of a constant increase in reading speed that has been recorded over the past decade for many languages, especially favoured by streaming service providers such as Netflix, the authors set out to investigate viewers’ response to different speeds in reading and understanding subtitles. They tested over 70 individuals with three different mother tongues (English, Spanish and Polish), in the reading

of subtitles that were selected or adapted to feature three different reading speeds. The parameters used for their analysis include comprehension, scene and subtitle recognition, cognitive load, preferences and enjoyment for each subtitled clip/speed. Perhaps surprisingly, data analysis showed that participants seem to have no difficulties in processing fast subtitles without an increase in cognitive load or a significant loss of visual intake. As an unexpected result, the experiment also revealed that cognitive load was generally higher for English-speaking participants, regardless of the subtitle reading speed, and this is probably due to a more limited exposure to subtitling in English-speaking countries. As often happens, experimental research on reception provides findings that were not even hypothesized and this was also the case for an experiment reported by Di Giovanni (2018a), on the reception of subtitled clips from two, different Netflix series, namely *Black Mirror* and *Narcos*. Participants to the experiment were in the 20 to 30 age range and were recruited in a city public library. These 30 individuals were shown randomized clips with the subtitles provided by Netflix and those by an Italian fan-subbing community. The aim of the experiment was to gauge comprehension of verbal and visual inputs and to measure the participants' overall enjoyment by means of questionnaires. Among the unexpected results is the change in self-reported foreign language (English) competence by a significant number of participants. Asked to self-evaluate their EFL competence at the beginning of the experiment, then presented with what generally proved to be too long and complex English subtitles (especially those created by Netflix), 12 out of 30 individuals spontaneously reported that their initial language competence evaluation had been too generous and should to be reviewed. These and other results from empirical research provide food for thought for the scholarly community but also for the professional environment.

#### **4 The Future of Reception Studies: Increasing Hybridization or Systematic Development?**

As a closure to this chapter we could say, in William Gibson's words, that the future is already here when it comes to reception studies in audiovisual translation and media accessibility. Focusing on the more traditional AVT modes, we have here only hinted at media accessibility, where research based on the audience needs and preferences has been increasing steadily over the past ten years, marking the overall development of media accessibility as a field of study within AVT. The future can be said to be already here as, through a host

of references and examples, this chapter has tried to demonstrate that audience-based research in AVT has ample ground on which it can further grow and expand beyond current boundaries, certainly pursuing both diachronic and synchronic perspectives.

Moreover, the increasing availability of technologies and software for data collection and analysis, often in open source formats, cannot but encourage researchers to plan and administer experiments in a variety of contexts and settings, a lot of them unthinkable in a reception studies perspective until a few years ago.

However, as evermore sophisticated tools and methodologies are brought into the realm of experimental AVT research from other disciplines, scholars have to remain aware of the pitfalls of potentially unbalanced interdisciplinarity, which might lead to faulty experiments or to excessively contaminated studies that can hardly find appropriate recognition within translation studies.

Exploring and fostering interdisciplinarity has so far proven a winning approach in AVT, although a well-kept balance between the various disciplinary inputs can only be advantageous for mutual recognition and solid research development. As final recommendations to further support the systematic advancement of reception studies in audiovisual translation, we could suggest a steady move away from student-biased experiments, a more frequent recourse to quantitative analyses and the inception of research methodology and experiment design in translation training courses at undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

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# **Part IV**

## **Audiovisual Translation and Media Accessibility Focus Areas**



# 21

## Audiovisual Translation Norms and Guidelines

Jan Pedersen

### 1 Introduction

This chapter will look at norms in audiovisual translation (AVT) in general and how they are expressed in guidelines in particular. This will be exemplified mainly by norms for subtitling, but the discussion will be generalized, and take norms for other forms of AVT into account as well. The discussion in this chapter will be kept fairly general, with specific norms and guidelines mainly being used as examples. Describing the norms and guidelines of every country and company would be as Herculean a task as it would be a Sisyphus job: norms develop constantly, as do the guidelines that express them.

Most forms of human interaction are arguably norm-governed, as norms embody a socially accepted way of behaving in a specific situation. This means that if a professional produces a translation that is in accordance with the existing norms, s/he will be considered to have behaved in a socially acceptable way, and if not, the results will not be normal (in the sense of not following the established norm), or even abnormal, in one way or another. For most kinds of AVT, current norms are expressed in various forms of guidelines and regulations. If AVT professionals follow these guidelines, they do what is expected of them, and “When translators do what is expected of them, they will be seen to have done well” (Hermans 1999, p. 85). If they do not follow the guidelines, there might be repercussions. What these repercussions may

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be, varies depending on the control that is exerted and how much tolerance there is for deviance, and also according to whom they have been seen to do wrong. It could be anything from not being given any more work by a commissioner, to being asked to correct the translated work, to viewers complaining, to people just grumbling or not even noticing. Interestingly enough, if a sufficient number of AVT professionals break the norms in the same way, this might lead to a new norm taking the place of the old one (Hermans 1999, p. 84). In this chapter, we will look at the sources of AVT norms, particularly as expressed in guidelines; how they develop over time; what controversies exist; and what guidelines can be used for.

## 2 Definitions

So, what are norms? According to Toury's pivotal monograph *Descriptive Translation Studies – and Beyond* (1995, new edition in 2012), norms are:

the translation of general values or ideas shared by a community—as to what is right and wrong, adequate and inadequate—into performance instructions appropriate for and applicable to particular situations, specifying what is prescribed and forbidden as well as what is tolerated and permitted in a certain behavioural dimension [...]. (1995, p. 55)

Hermans further develops this definition in his monograph *Translation in Systems: Descriptive and System-Oriented Approaches Explained* (1999):

[t]he term ‘norm’ refers both to a regularity of behaviour, i.e. a recurring pattern, and to the underlying mechanism which accounts for that behaviour. 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. [...] The norms and conventions of translation guide and facilitate decision-making. The basic premise is that translation, as a communicative act, constitutes a form of social behaviour. For communication to succeed those engaged in the process need to coordinate their actions. (1999, p. 80)

*Norms* thus guide translators in making their communicative acts successful. Norms can be either explicit, as is the case when norms are codified in guidelines and similar prescriptive instruments, or they can be implicit, “unwritten rules” that translators follow, often without even thinking about them, or being instructed to do so. In translation theory, a further line of

distinction is drawn between norms that are based on prescription and that are based on description. Prescriptive norms tend always to be codified and given by some sort of authority, such as a government body, like Ofcom in the UK (cf. e.g. 2015), who are responsible for making sure that the content of public service broadcasters is accessible, or international bodies that produce standards like ISO EN 17100, the quality standard for translation services. Descriptive norms develop out of best practice, and these can be uncovered and described by researchers analysing said practice, and they can then be codified in various ways, for example in research articles, and ultimately also in guidelines. In translation practice, the difference is rarely clear, as both prescriptive and descriptive norms exert prescriptive pressure, and both can be codified in guidelines. The difference is rather in the origin of the norms and how easily they can be changed. In some AVT companies, for instance, the content of the guidelines can fairly easily be updated, if a client demands it, or a sufficient number of the employees think there are good reasons for doing so. If prescriptive rules based on national law or an ISO standard are to be changed, the process is much more complicated.

*Guidelines* can be defined as the document that sets out the norms that govern the behaviour of practitioners in a community, be it a country, a company, or those working for a certain commissioner or client. It used to be the case that if practitioners worked for one company, they followed the guidelines of that company, and over time, these guidelines became internalized for the practitioner. It was simply the way they translated. This still goes for some areas of AVT, but a freelance subtitler may still be given all his or her work from the same company or commissioner, but depending on who the client is, different guidelines may apply.

Guidelines are used to instruct newcomers to the profession, as reference works for practitioners and also as *standards* for quality control, in that the quality of AVT output is often measured against the norms set out in the guidelines. Even though guidelines are often used as standards, there have been attempts to construct standards that are more generalized, perhaps most famously by Karamitroglou (1998), who attempted a set of subtitling standards for Europe. The *Code of Good Subtitling Practice* (Ivarsson and Carroll 1998, pp. 157–159) is also an attempt at creating a general subtitling standard, and lately practitioners have been consolidating their own national standards, for example Bjerre Rosa and Øveraas (2019). For audio description, the ADLAB project has investigated the possibilities for setting up European standards (as described e.g. in Mazur 2017).

More will be said about the potency, scope and categorization of norms under the heading *Theoretical foundations* below.

### 3 Historical Overview

Norms develop over time (as pointed out for AVT by Kovačić 1996), as conditions change, or new ideas or technology develop. Chesterman has described this in his monograph *Memes of Translation*, where he surveys how translation ideals have swung from literal translation to free translation and back in a pendulum motion over the course of translation history (1997, pp. 19–50).

AVT norms and guidelines are as old as AVT practice itself, because AVT, like most human endeavours, is not executed randomly. From early instructions on how intertitles or title cards were translated and inserted to replace the original in silent films (as described by O’Sullivan and Cornu 2018, pp. 15–16), guidelines have been part and parcel of how AVT developed. This development can either take place slowly and barely perceptibly, as those involved gradually settle into new ways, or it can be dramatic, which is typically the case when there is a leap in technology, and new norms have to be established to deal with the new realities.

The introduction of sound films, or talkies, caused norms of AVT mode to be established. The reaction to this monumentally new technology in the late 1920s and early 1930s saw a period of great variation, before new norms were established. Various kinds of AVT coexisted in this tumultuous era. For instance, in Sweden, dubbing, live voice-over and subtitling, as well as more marginal forms of AVT, like translation booklets (Natzén 2019, p. 260) competed, until subtitling became the established norm. The reasons for this result was preference and economic feasibility. Other countries chose other modes of AVT. It is well established how totalitarian rulers in Europe at that time tended to favour monolingualism and thus decreed dubbing (cf. Ivarsson and Carroll 1998, pp. 10–11 or Guardini 1998, p. 91) to be the preferred AVT mode in these countries.

A second leap in norm development was caused by the breakthrough of television in the early 1950s. Once again, various forms of AVT competed to become the established norm in various countries. For instance, Gottlieb and Grigaravičiūtė (1999/2001, p. 76) describe how Danish television used voice-over before subtitling became the norm in that country in 1955, as it still is today in all of Scandinavia. The norm for which mode of AVT is used can vary, not only between countries, but also for medium, as for example the Polish norm is to use subtitles for the cinema, but voice-over for television. Similarly, the Hungarian norm is to use subtitles for cinema, but dubbing for television (Media Consulting Group 2007).

After the norms were settled for AVT mode, norms developed slowly and organically with various minor changes taking place as new developments were made. One such example is the change induced in the 1980s by Jan Ivarsson when he insisted that the standard subtitling practice at the Swedish public service broadcaster should be that the bottom line of a two-line subtitle should be longer than the top one. The norm had been based on standard text production, where you fill one line, and then move on to the next (Ivarsson and Kumlien 1982). Ivarsson could show that the established norm made subtitles more taxing to read, as the eye had to travel further (particularly since SVT subtitles are left adjusted), and after some initial internal resistance, the norm was changed (cf. Ivarsson and Carroll 1998).

The next big leap in norm development was caused by the widespread use of personal computers in the 1980s. Particularly for subtitling, this meant huge advantages, as the electronic time code could be used for spotting subtitles (i.e. deciding when a subtitle should appear and disappear), which had previously been done manually (Pedersen 2011, p. 68). The more precise spotting that pre-programmed spotting, or time-coding, provided, enabled a norm shift that meant shorter exposure times, higher reading speeds and less condensation, giving viewers more subtitled content. As with most norm shifts, there was initial reluctance to adapting to the new technology among more conservative practitioners, and the new norm was established at different times in different places. For instance, I have elsewhere (Pedersen 2007, p. 68) showed that the new norm was established several years earlier in Denmark than in Sweden.

The globalization and deregulation that took place in many countries in the 1990s caused another series of norm shifts. When the market for television was deregulated, the number of TV channels multiplied exponentially. Gambier shows exactly how great the development was: “In the EU (15 countries [at the time]), the number of TV channels has grown from 47 in 1989 to more than 1500 in 2002” (2003, p. 182). Most of these new channels were commercial and multinational, broadcasting the same or similar content in many countries. This meant that the need for AVT increased exponentially as well, and many new international AVT companies were established. This development challenged the old TV norms that had developed and diverged over time in public service companies. For the international stakeholders, it made economic sense to make the norms converge and harmonize, so they could use the same or similar guidelines for all their markets (Pedersen 2007, p. 84). This was particularly true for subtitling, as it meant that templates (time-coded first-generation translations or intralingual subtitles) could be used, so that segmentation and spotting only had to be done once for all

language versions. This resulted in technical guidelines for reading speed, exposure time and line length being standardized, whereas other norms could continue to be local. There is, however, evidence that the harmonized technical norms affected other subtitling norms as well (Pedersen 2007, p. 267). The proliferation of DVDs also enhanced this trend, as they tend to use Genesis files (cf. e.g. Georgakopoulou 2006) produced by the original distributor.

The norm change of the 1990s seemed to be fairly established in the first decade of the new millennium, as AVT practitioners settled into the new mediascape, and most discussions that affected norm development tended to be centred on technology such as CAT tools and machine translation. Machine translation is by now not uncommon in subtitling, not directly for first-generation translations, but for second-generation translations. This can perhaps be seen as a natural development of the use of templates, where a subtitler subtitles a film to one target language, and other (human) subtitlers use that as the base for their translations into other languages. This is not primarily because the second-generation subtitlers do not know the source language, but to avoid the cost of respotting. In fact, it is sometimes the case that the second subtitler knows the original language, which is often English, better than the language of the first translation, which could be any language. In the cases where the language of the first translation is similar to that of the language of the second subtitler, for example Swedish and Norwegian, this can lead to contamination from the first translation (Pedersen 2007, p. 42). Anyway, instead of having a human subtitler carry out the second translation in these cases, it is now becoming common to use machine translation with human postediting instead.

The latter part of the 2010s saw a major new leap in norm development caused by the proliferation of streamed content from video on demand (VoD). The enormous success and popularity of VoD giants such Netflix, Amazon and HBO have challenged the old (semi-)national norms in a way that may be unprecedented. VoD norms for subtitling tend to be based on English-language guidelines for intralingual subtitling, as that is the prevailing kind of subtitling (or captioning, to use the American term) in Anglophone countries. This involves a shift in norm perspective. Whereas the old norms, which were based on public service broadcasting, developed in the target cultures, the new norms develop in the source culture. This development started already in the era of the DVD in the 1990s and 2000s. As DVD (and later Blu-ray) provides the opportunity for including several languages in both dubbed and subtitled form. This meant that subtitling into languages such as Spanish or German, where dubbing had been the sole norm, was now prolific. These languages had no strong pre-existing norms for subtitling, and it was thus

simplest for them to follow the English-language norms that were represented in the DVD Genesis files, rather than look to the norms that had developed in their subtitling neighbours, such as Portugal or The Netherlands. As English-language norms tend to favour substantially higher reading speeds (cf. Pedersen 2018) than norms in traditional subtitling countries, one effect of this was that viewers in traditional dubbing countries, who were not used to reading subtitles, were faced with a more taxing reading experience than viewers who had grown up with subtitles.

The new VoD norms originating above all in the USA are prescriptive and international. As for example Netflix use templates extensively and exist in almost every country on Earth, it makes perfect sense to use the same guidelines across the board. I have shown elsewhere (Pedersen 2018) that this is indeed the case, and also how these norms are slowly being localized through a process where subtitlers may call attention to, and ask for revisions of, Netflix norms, based on local norms and customs. The prescriptive pressure of these very successful norms has led to some new developments that will be discussed in the section on current and future prospects below.

## 4 Theoretical Foundations

Gideon Toury is the obvious central figure in descriptive translation studies (DTS), which is the branch of translation studies (TS) that deals with norms from a descriptive perspective. His monograph *Descriptive Translation Studies – And Beyond* (1995) is arguably what organized empirical research into the norms of translation. There are, however, other theorists who have been very influential for developing descriptive norms research, not least Theo Hermans (particularly 1999), who have been quoted liberally in this chapter already, and Andrew Chesterman, whose expectancy norms (1997, p. 64) have meant that the reader/viewer perspective has been given more focus than before. Generally speaking, the work of these three and others mean that the descriptive approach, based on empirical research, arguably has been the dominant research paradigm for the last two decades. Generally speaking, the approach means that researchers study actual real-life translations and translators to find out what (a part of) the vast phenomenon of translations and translation *is* like (and *why*, as DTS is explanatory as well as descriptive), rather than what it *should be* like (which would be the prescriptive approach). Each study then adds its findings to the knowledge already generated in other studies, and the accumulative results then give rise to solid knowledge about translation norms. Díaz Cintas has convincingly shown that DTS is very

appropriate for research into AVT norms (2004), and Zabalbeascoa used it as early as 1994.

As we have seen already, norms vary a great deal in scope. Some norms affect major factors, such as which AVT mode a country will favour, and then there are those that regulate minute details, such as whether the top or bottom line should be longer in a two-line subtitle or to what degree lip-rounding should be taken into consideration when writing dubbing scripts, and there are norms at all levels between these extremes. Norms are also of different kinds: for instance, some are textual, such as what terms of address to use (cf. Meister 2016), some are technical, such as exposure times for subtitles, and some are ethical, such as those pertaining to fidelity to the source text.

Norms also vary in potency. All norms exert varying pressure, from rules, via norms and conventions to regularities. Unfortunately, there is some terminological confusion here, as some scholars use these terms in different senses. Also, the term ‘norm’ has two senses: one being superordinate, which is the way it has been used in this chapter up to this point, and one being subordinate, where ‘norm’ signifies a middle-ground in potency between ‘rules’ and ‘conventions’. The following is based on the terms used by Toury (1995) and Hermans (1999). *Rules* are very strong norms that are “strongly felt to be appropriate, or backed up by strong sanctions, often spelled out explicitly” (Hermans 1999, p. 82). They can rarely be broken without repercussions. Examples of rules are grammar rules, or limiting the number of lines in a subtitles to two, which is a rule in most contexts (but not all, cf. Szarkowska & Gerber Morón 2018). Less potent than rules are *norms* proper. This is the second, possibly somewhat confusing sense of the term ‘norm’, as rules and conventions are also forms of norms, in the general sense that we have used the term in so far. Norms tell people what constitutes “proper” or “correct” behaviour (Hermans 1999, p. 84). AVT professionals break norms at their peril, as this is “frowned upon” according to Hermans (1991, p. 161). Examples of norms are basically anything that is set out in guidelines, such as instructions for synchronization in dubbing (cf. Chaume Varela 2004) or instructions for what to describe in audio description (cf. Snyder 2014). Weaker norms are called *conventions*. According to Chesterman: “[a]t their weakest, conventions are merely fashions: they embody statistical preferences only” (1997, p. 55); he goes on to say that conventions “represent practices that are ‘weaker’ than norms: breaking a convention is merely ‘unconventional’, and does not provoke generally justified criticism”. All conventions may not be described in guidelines, but may be part of the “unwritten laws” at a certain company. They may, however, be included in guidelines, and there they may be marked as options or recommended behaviour, rather than as

prescribed instructions. Below conventions, we find regularities, which are patterns of behaviour that may not be shared by all practitioners, but rather *idiosyncrasies* of the few. Regularities tend to be individual and they are thus not normally included in guidelines. Some scholars also describe “translation laws”, which can be seen as translation universals, such as Toury’s “law of growing standardization” (1995, p. 267) or his “law of interference” (1995, p. 274). The existence of universal laws of translation is disputed, however. For instance, an effect of Chesterman’s “law of explication” (1997, p. 71) is that translations will be longer than their STs. However, subtitles tend to be shorter (often by about a third, for norms in traditional subtitling countries; cf Pedersen 2007, p. 45) than the original dialogue, so that partly refutes the universality of that law.<sup>1</sup>

As mentioned before, norms are unstable entities. Norms can fall out of fashion and become replaced or lose potency and become conventions and vice versa. Hermans (1999, p. 81) describes how conventions can develop into norms:

Conventions are not norms [...] but [...] conventions can become norms [...] If a convention has served its purpose sufficiently well for long enough, the expectation, on all sides, that a certain course of action will be adopted in a certain type of situation may grow beyond a mere preference and acquire a binding character. At that point we begin to speak of norms.

The typical source of norm research are actual texts; in the case of AVT, that would mean dubbed dialogue lists, subtitles, voice-over scripts, with original dialogues for comparison. However, a great deal of research is also based on what Toury (1995, p. 65) calls extratextual sources. The examples he uses are statements made by translators commenting on their translations in forewords etc. However, in AVT, the most common paratexts are in-house guidelines and the like. These prescribe norms for a subset of AVT practitioners. As mentioned above, their sources can be descriptive, in that they are based on practices that have grown out of consensus at a workplace (or in a country, cf. e.g. Bjerre Rosa and Øveraa 2019) or they can be prescriptive in that some authority have decreed them. Toury warns against overly relying on paratexts for research, as they are secondary to actual texts, and people do not always do what they claim to do. Guidelines are thus to be seen as descriptions of norms, rather than as norms themselves. Researchers should thus always ascertain

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<sup>1</sup> However, since the subtitles are *added* to the polysemiotic source text, it would be reductionist to say that the result of subtitling would be shorter target texts. In fact, a condensed subtitled text can still be loyal to the original.

whether the norms laid out in guidelines are followed in practice. It should be pointed out that just as in other fields of translation, there are academics who propose prescriptive advice for AVT, which goes against descriptions of established norms. Nornes (1999) and his advocacy of abusive subtitles, or McClarty's (2015) advocacy for creative subtitles would be examples of this.

## 5 Research on AVT

Guidelines and text books are the obvious place to look for prescriptive norms. However, in order to uncover the “unwritten rules”, the researcher has to go beyond these codified norms and look at other sources (even though guidelines can still be a part of the source material). This section describes the stages in development in AVT norms research, and surveys the methods, materials and approaches used to uncover norms—and also to challenge them. Examples given here are not meant to be exhaustive, and the descriptions of them are of necessity minimal, but they can possibly be used as a starting-point for further reading.

The earliest research into AVT norms was *experience-based*, which is not uncommon for a field such as ours. This means that practitioners like Titford (1982), Wildblood (2002), Mossop (2000) or Pollard (2002) for subtitling, or Benecke (2004) for audio description, reported on their experience of their work. This phase is very important, as it describes best practices and lays down the foundations of the discipline, using methods such as introspection and reflection. Some of the early writers became very influential and kept on publishing increasingly generalized work on AVT norms, not least Ivarsson, whose work was co-developed with Mary Carroll into what used to be known as the subtitling Bible, *Subtitling* from 1998. Another practitioner who turned academic and who has done much for developing the terminology and structuring of the subdiscipline of subtitling studies is Henrik Gottlieb (e.g. 1997 or 2001).

The next stage in the development of research in this field is the *descriptive* one. At this stage, researchers, who may or may not have started out as practitioners, started describing norms that they observed using empirical research, rather than as the result of introspection and reflection of their own experience and practice. The first step towards building descriptive knowledge is typically to carry out text-based case studies, using one or two films in translation as the material (e.g. De Linde 1995; Díaz Cintas 1998; Guardini 1998; Pelsmaekers and Van Besien 2002; or Remael 2003). The material in case studies is too limited to allow for any generalizations about norms. They are

nevertheless very useful for creating and testing methodology, and their results may also give indications of norms, which can then be tested on more material. Even though case studies continue to be useful for testing methodology (e.g. Hirvonen 2013 or Braun 2016), for valid norms to be uncovered, more material is needed. Consequently, studies soon appeared that were using more material, at least a few films, for example Gottlieb 2004, who used Danish and American films to show that Anglophone subtitling norms were more domesticating than Danish ones, or Chiaro 2008, who used films to show that there was a dubbing norm for standardizing language variation, or Delabastita, 2010, who used several episodes of a TV series to show independently that the same standardizing norm applies to subtitling. There are also studies that use fairly large corpora of films and TV programmes, up to a hundred or so for studying norms of specific phenomena, such as Pedersen 2011 or Ranzato 2016, who found norms for how cultural references are rendered in subtitling and dubbing, respectively, or Schröter 2005 who looked at the translation of wordplay in both subtitling and dubbing (and found no great differences). Beyond that, we have norm studies carried out by corpus linguists, such as Jiménez and Sibel (2012) using the TRACCE audio description corpus, Remael (2003) using the ESIST Comparative subtitling corpus to conclude that norms can be unstable. Similarly, Pavesi (2012) used the Pavia film corpus to show how Italian dubbers decided how to translate English terms of address. This corpus was also used by Freddi (2012), who used it to show how film language is formulaic and that the dubbing norm is to also use formulaic language, so-called *dubbese*, a norm that was also found by Romero-Fresco in 2006 and by Bonsignori et al. (2012). That these studies, using different methods, all confirm the norm of using formulaic language in dubbing, shows that the *dubbese* norm is very strong indeed. Though not a norm study proper, Meister (2016) built on Pavesi's findings to show that Swedish subtitlers use vocatives, visuals and other context to determine terms of address. This is another example of two researchers using different methods to describe the same stable norm.

Trying to settle more *global norms*, descriptive norm studies have also been used to compare and contrast “the eternal dilemma” (Díaz Cintas 1999) of what the advantages and disadvantages of dubbing versus subtitling are—this dilemma has at least been discussed since the 1980s (cf. Kilborn 1989). Bucaria (2010), found a potential norm for dubbing to be less offensive and more manipulative than subtitling. Minutella (2012) found that in Italy, dubbing and subtitling handled multilingual films similarly. Pettit (2009) found dubbing to be more standardizing, while subtitling was more source-oriented. Vermeulen (2012) also found dubbing to be more domesticating than

subtitling. Gottlieb and Grigaravičiūtė (1999) compared subtitling and voice-over, and found the latter to censor more, at least in that language pair.

On the more *local level*, it is very common to find studies of norms for a specific country, a specific mode, or a specific language pair. There are too many such studies to mention, but here are two examples: Nedergaard-Larsen (1993) looked at cultural references in Danish subtitling of French films, and Izwaini (2017), found Arabic subtitles of Anglophone films to be censorial.

Traditionally, there has been a great focus on text-based norms, as described above, but since around 2010 there has been an increasing interest in *process norms*. One example of this is Beuchert 2017, who investigated the work process of subtitlers in Denmark, using mixed methods. The sociological and ethnographic approach is particularly common when it comes to amateur AVT, with fansubbing being the dominant research object. Díaz Cintas & Muñoz Sánchez were arguably the first to describe the norms that guided the workflows in fansubbing communities in 2006. Since then, there have been a great many studies investigating process norms in these communities, like Hsiao (2014), Massidda (2015) or Orrego-Carmona (2015). There have, however, also been studies of textual norms in fansubbing, Like Lepre (2015) or Pedersen (2019). The consensus about norms for fansubbing is that they do exist, but are generally more varied, less reductive, more creative (particularly for *anime* fansubbing), more source text-oriented, and less strictly enforced than professional AVT norms tend to be.

More recently, descriptive norms have been challenged by *experimental cognitive* studies. These studies are not norm studies, nor do they negate the value of descriptive studies, but rather tend to question or confirm the content of norms. In many ways this began with D'Ydewalle's cognitive research group (cf. e.g. D'Ydewalle et al. 1987) who let subjects watch subtitled TV and tracking their gazes. Another early examples of this is De Linde and Kay (1999) who investigated how viewers read intralingual English subtitles, also using eyetracking. Eyetracking is often the favoured technique for assessing the validity of norms and has also been used by for example Lång and Mäkisalo (2013) or Cambra, Penacchio, Silvestre, and Leal (2015). The 2012 publication *Eye Tracking in Audiovisual Translation*, edited by Silvia Bruti, did much to nuance our view of established AVT norms. It was shown, for example, that reading speed is severely affected by word frequency. The eyetracking-based studies carried out by Szarkowska and Gerber-Morón in the SURE project have shown that viewers prefer two line-subtitles to three-line subtitles (2018a) and prefer to have subtitle line breaks at syntactically appropriate places (2018b), which is all in line with established subtitling norms. Their findings also indicate, however, that viewers may be able to keep up with higher reading speeds than the established subtitling norms allows (2018c).

Experimental cognitive studies have also been used to look at the subbing versus dubbing dilemma. Perego, Del Missier and Bottirol's findings (2015) are that both modes appear to be equally enjoyable and effortful, with subtitling aiding the viewers' memory slightly more than dubbing. There are more experimental cognitive methods than eyetracking, however, such as EEG, fMRI and skin conductivity; Kruger (2016) contains a good overview of these methods. As seen from the above, the focus of experimental studies is often on reception. There are reception studies within norms studies proper as well, however, notably Tuominen 2012, who used focus groups to uncover norms in subtitling.

## 6 Implications and Applications

So, why is it important to know about AVT norms, and for whom is it important? AVT norms and guidelines have many implications in many areas. As they are applied by professionals, they influence consumers of audiovisual material everywhere, be they TV viewers, cineasts, gamers, website users etc. AVT norms are prevalent in everyday society and yet unnoticed by most—unless they are broken, which is when consumers start noticing them.

More practically, guidelines are used to train newcomers to the profession, be it in-house or at a seat of learning. For a long time, guidelines were the only sources of instruction in AVT, but by now, there are quite a few (text) books that are used, such as Ivarsson and Carroll (1998), Tveit (2004), Díaz Cíntas and Remael (2007) for subtitling, Pageon (2007) for voice-over, Chaume Varela (2012) for dubbing, or Snyder (2014) for audio description.

Another practical application of AVT norms are standards. As mentioned above, guidelines are often used as standards for quality assessment, but there are also more generalized models for quality assessment, such as the NER model (Romero-Fresco and Martínez 2015), the FAR model (Pedersen 2017), and ISO EN 17100 (see the contribution by Kuo in this volume).

On a more general level, AVT norms can ideally be used for influencing corporate decision-making. For instance, when an audiovisual content provider decides to move into a new area, be it a new geographical area or a new AV area (e.g. when Hollywood film distributors launch TV channels) they may do well to investigate which norms dominate that area and adapt to them. This also goes for AVT companies who branch out into new AVT modes or geographical areas. By doing so, they come a long way towards localizing their products and increasing the chances that they will be well received.

## 7 Future Prospects and Final Remarks

The most striking current trend in AVT norms is the clash between national norms based on description and global norms based on prescription. Global content providers tend to apply the same or slightly adapted norms and guidelines on every market, which makes perfect economic sense for them (cf. Pedersen 2018). However, this clashes with national norms, which are firmly entrenched in some areas. To counter this, traditional norms in these areas are being consolidated by various stakeholders, such as AVT unions, (cf. Bjerre Rosa and Øveraas 2019), who are reluctant to change. This reluctance is arguably not (only) an expression of conservatism and pride in the craft they have helped develop, but also concern for consumers and the reputation of the guild. In this view, when consumers are exposed to norms that are radically different from the ones they are used to, they start noticing the AVT, which arguably interferes with their enjoyment of, and immersion in, AVT content, or make them think that the AVT professional does not know how to do his or her job.

If one looks back on the history of AVT norm development, the trend is towards ever more global norms (Pedersen 2018), and the current situation reflects that development. After every turn in norm development (cf. the historical overview above), the thesis of an established norm and the antithesis of a challenging norm tend to be the synthesis of establishing a new norm. It seems likely that this is what will happen in the future as well. It would be fortuitous if the emergent norm will be based on reception-based cognitive experimental research, as described above. This research, if carried out properly, and in a generalizable way, gives the basis for norms that reflect viewers' true preferences and abilities, rather than norms based on traditions or economics. Then we can look forward to a new "normal".

## 8 Suggested Reading

### (a) Text Books

- Chaume Varela, F. (2012). *Audiovisual Translation: Dubbing*. Manchester: St. Jerome.
- Díaz Cintas, J., & Remael, A. (2019). *Subtitling: Concepts and Practices*. London: Routledge.

- Pageon, D. (2007). *The World of Voice-Over: Writing, Adapting and Translating Scripts, Training the Voice, Building a Studio*. London: Actors World Production.
- Snyder, J. (2014). *The Visual Made Verbal: A Comprehensive Training Manual and Guide to the History and Applications of Audio Description*. Arlington, VA: American Council of the Blind.

(b) Some Major Norm Studies

- Massidda, S. (2015). *Audiovisual Translation in the Digital Age: The Italian Fansubbing Phenomenon*. Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Pedersen, J. (2011). *Subtitling Norms for Television: An Exploration Focusing on Extralinguistic Cultural References*. Amsterdam; Philadelphia: Benjamins.
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# 22

## The Tangled Strings of Parameters and Assessment in Subtitling Quality: An Overview

Arista Szu-Yu Kuo

### 1 Introduction

Quality has long been a central issue in translation studies in general and in its sub-fields. The complexity of assessing quality lies in the relative nature of this concept. The stance of the assessor, the purpose of the translation and the criteria chosen for the assessment all have roles in measuring the quality of the translation product. In other words, context matters. According to Bittner (2011), good quality in translation depends on ‘the perception of a translation as most appropriate within the context in which it functions’ (p. 78). In a similar vein, Pedersen (2017) examined quality issues in translation from the perspective of stance:

[t]o those in translation management, the concept is often associated with process, work flows and deadlines. To professionals, quality is often a balancing act between input and efficiency. To academics, it is often a question of equivalence and language use. (p. 210)

Some fruitful theories and approaches for assessing translation quality have been recently developed in the academic sphere based on the neo-hermeneutic

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(cf. e.g. Stolze 2002), behavioural (cf. e.g. Carroll 1966), linguistically oriented (cf. e.g. Hatim and Mason 1997), functionalist (cf. e.g. Reiß and Vermeer 1984), descriptive (cf. e.g. Snell-Hornby 1995), deconstructionist (cf. e.g. Derrida 1988), interpretative (cf. e.g. Seleskovitch 1962) and functional-pragmatic approaches (cf. e.g. House 1997). However, given that quality has long been a subject of arguments in the academia and that the amount of quality issues in the industry has never stopped increasing, researchers can hardly reach an agreement regarding the definition of translation quality or translation quality assessment (TQA). With the maturation of audiovisual translation in general and subtitling in particular, much attention has been paid to the corpora of audiovisual texts (Baños et al. 2013). However, over the past decade, only few exploratory works have focused on subtitling quality and/or its assessment (e.g. Pedersen 2011; Díaz Cintas and Remael 2014; Romero-Fresco and Martínez 2015; Robert and Remael 2017; Kuo 2017; Romero-Fresco and Pöchhacker 2017). Despite the encouraging growth in the field of subtitling, the literature on the parameters of subtitling quality and the relevant assessment issues remains relatively thin, with the current pioneering works focusing on language- or culture-specific transfers, specific genres of audiovisual productions, certain types of subtitling (e.g. live intra-lingual and interlingual subtitling), management of the subtitling process and technical parameters of subtitling in line with the advancement of technologies. Each of these works can be seen as a piece of an unfinished jigsaw image of subtitling quality. Subtitling quality is no longer an enigmatic concept given the increasing number of studies on poor subtitling quality. However, a holistic perspective is required to address the unsolved yet ever-changing challenges in improving the quality of subtitles in circulation. According to Estopace (2017), ‘an unprecedented growth in digital video consumption’ is expected by the language services industry in the following few years (para. 1). Therefore, the constituents of subtitling quality must be understood not only in theory but also in practice along with the development of official standards and subtitling technologies. This chapter provides an integrated view of subtitling quality by revisiting the parameters of translation quality, analysing those factors that affect subtitling output quality in professional contexts and discussing the development of subtitling quality assessment and the most recent models.

## 2 Parameters of Translation Quality

Before examining subtitling quality, the constituents of translation quality must be understood. Given that the purpose of translation is to transfer meaning across different languages and cultures whilst its process aims to achieve equivalence in meaning between the source and target texts (ST and TT), the fundamental concepts of ‘meaning’ and ‘equivalence’ must be revisited in translation studies. The concept of meaning is generally agreed to be the most significant parameter of translation quality because a good translated text is said to carry the same meaning as the original text (Catford 1965). House (1997) explained meaning from the semantic, pragmatic and textual perspectives. She defined translation as ‘the replacement of a text in the source language by a semantically and pragmatically equivalent text in the target language’ (p. 31), which is in line with Nida and Taber’s (1969/1982) concept of equivalence as a fundamental criterion of translation quality.

Many theorists have discussed the concept of equivalence with different foci. For instance, Vinay and Darbelnet (1995) defined equivalence as a procedure that ‘replicates the same situation as in the original whilst using completely different wording’ (p. 342). However, glossaries and collections of equivalent expressions between language pairs are unlikely to be exhaustive. Therefore, a need to create equivalences has emerged. As Vinay and Darbelnet argued, ‘it is in the situation of the source language text that translators have to look for a solution’ (p. 255). They argued that the use of calques is viewed negatively and is considered a symptom of poor quality. In fact, according to Gottlieb (1997), subtitlers—as compared with literary and dubbing translators—may use fewer clones or calques in their target language because they are forced to reconstruct sentences due to the limited time and space available for each subtitle.

Meanwhile, Jakobson (1959) believed in the notion of ‘equivalence in difference’ and suggested that ‘wherever there is a deficiency, terminology can be qualified and amplified by loanwords or loan translations, by neologisms or semantic shifts, and, finally, by circumlocutions’ (p. 431). Arguably, the attitude of audiences towards the use of loanwords, neologisms and so on may have evolved along with time and their increasing knowledge of other cultures and languages. As a matter of fact, along with the growing popularity of the fantasy genre—among others—of audiovisual productions such as Harry Potter and Game of Thrones, there is also an increasing interest in the use of neologisms in translated subtitles.

Nida and Taber (1969/1982) divided equivalence into formal correspondence and dynamic correspondence, with the former focusing on the linguistic level with respect to grammar, phonetics, lexis and syntax and the latter focusing on the equal response between the receptors of the ST and TT. Given the diagonal nature of subtitling, much of the existing literature on translation strategies in subtitling have borrowed the idea of dynamic equivalence (cf. e.g. Gottlieb 1994), which posits that the audience must quickly grasp the meaning of an audiovisual text. In a similar vein, Catford (1965) termed his dichotomy ‘formal equivalence’ and ‘textual equivalence’.

House’s (1997) stance on equivalence was embedded into two translation types, namely, ‘overt’ translation and ‘covert’ translation. She defined an overt translation as ‘one in which the addressees of the translation text are quite “overtly” not being directly addressed’ (p. 66). Meanwhile, covert translation ‘enjoys the status of an original [ST] in the target culture’ and thus ‘is not particularly tied to the source language and culture’ (p. 69). She added that striving for translation equivalence is difficult in cases of overt translation because there exists a dialectical relationship between preservation and alternation. Despite this limitation, House (1997) emphasised that a similar second-level functional equivalence (i.e. a ‘topicalisation’ of the original function) must be achieved in the TT and ‘may have to be posited as a criterion for adequate translation’ (p. 68). Based on the system of situational dimensions proposed by Crystal and Davy (1969), House (1997) propounded the following refined basic criterion for functional equivalence: ‘a translation text should not only match its [ST] in function, but employ equivalent situational-dimensional means to achieve that function’ (p. 42). This criterion can also serve as an indicator of a good-quality translation, which stands true for subtitling as well.

Newmark’s (1981, 1988) linguistic–textual approach to translation has also been an important and fruitful source of inspiration for other scholars. According to Newmark, to achieve an ‘equivalent effect’ is ‘to produce the same effect (or one as close as possible) on the readership of the translation as was obtained on the readership of the original’ (Newmark 1988, p. 48). This principle is also called ‘equivalence response’, which had been previously labelled by Nida (1964) as ‘dynamic equivalence’. Instead of viewing the equivalent effect as the overriding aim of any translation, Newmark (1988) regarded this effect as the desired result and identified the following conditions under which such result is unlikely to be attained: (1) ‘if the purpose of the source language text is to affect and the target language translation is to inform (or vice versa)’, and (2) ‘if there is a pronounced cultural gap between the source language and the target language text’ (p. 48). In other words,

translators may face greater challenges in achieving good quality if the TT is meant to serve a purpose different from that of the ST and if there is a systematic difference between the source and target culture as in the case of translating between English and Chinese for instance. In such cases, the difficulty in assessing translation quality may be enhanced in the subtitling context due to multimodality concerns and relevant technical constraints. Baker's (1992) seminal coursebook on translation, *In Other Words*, provides a detailed discussion on equivalence by exploring this concept at different levels, namely, at the word level, equivalence above word level, grammatical equivalence, textual equivalence and pragmatic equivalence. This classification offers a set of parameters that can help distinguish several dimensions that can be used for gauging translation quality.

The translation theories concerning the concept of equivalence discussed above can also be applied to subtitling, mostly in relation to content-related quality issues. One cannot build up his/her research on subtitling strategies and the quality of interlingual subtitling without grounding upon solid discussions on meaning and equivalence in translation theories. However, what can be considered an optimal translation solution from a linguistic perspective may not be appropriate as a subtitle when the translated text violates any of the constraints imposed by the medium. Given these spatial and temporal constraints, the translation of subtitles is more akin to creative writing than to literal translation in most occasions. Therefore, quality can be a very complicated issue in subtitling.

### 3 Parameters of Subtitling Quality

According to Luyken et al. (1991), subtitles are

condensed written translation of original dialogue which appear as lines of text, usually positioned towards the foot of the screen. Subtitles appear and disappear to coincide in time with the corresponding portion of the original dialogue and are almost always added to the screen image at a later date as a post-production activity. (p. 31)

Díaz Cintas and Remael (2014) classified subtitles into intralingual, interlingual and bilingual subtitles according to their linguistic features at post-production. By the time these subtitles are available for preparation, they can be classified into pre-prepared (offline subtitling) and live/real-time subtitles (online subtitling). Pre-prepared subtitles are the most commonly used, whilst

live/real-time subtitling is a later development that is most commonly used for the deaf and hard of hearing (SDH). In live intralingual subtitling, subtitles augmented by speech recognition are ‘now mainly produced with speech-to-text software through a live form of rephrasing, and in live interlingual subtitling this live feature is combined with a variant of simultaneous interpreting’ (Robert and Remael 2017, p. 168). Given its limited scope, this chapter focuses on pre-prepared interlingual subtitles that are aimed at the hearing audience. Other types of subtitles are not considered given the many issues they face. For instance, live subtitles require a respeaking procedure (cf. e.g. Remael et al. 2014; Romero-Fresco 2011; see the contribution by Romero-Fresco and Eugeni in this volume), whereas intralingual subtitles are mostly used for SDH (cf. e.g. Neves 2009; see the contribution by Szarkowska in this volume), language learning purposes (cf. e.g. Caimi 2006) and dialects of the same language (cf. e.g. Vandekerckhove et al. 2009).

The ‘Code of Good Subtitling Practice’ (Ivarsson and Carroll 1998) is probably the only code that has been widely accepted by academics and professionals alike. This code was proposed by Jan Ivarsson, the former head of development of Swedish Television, and Mary Carroll, the ex-managing director of Titelbild Subtitling, by using inputs from professionals and academics under the auspices of the European Association for Studies in Screen Translation ([www.esist.org](http://www.esist.org)). This Code is divided into two main parts, with the first part focusing on subtitle spotting and translation and the second part focusing on technical aspects. In other words, subtitling quality assessment involves content- and form-related quality issues. Table 22.1 shows the content- and form-related subtitle quality parameters adapted from the code of Ivarsson and Carroll (1998) and the tables published in Robert and Remael (2016, 2017).

Although many may contend that the Code needs to be revisited and updated, the deliberate vagueness of its contents seems to have extended its applicability, especially since its basic tenets still hold (Pedersen 2017; Robert and Remael 2016). As Robert and Remael (2016) pointed out, the use of correct grammar in subtitles, as the Code promotes, is deemed an important quality parameter by many broadcasters, especially by public broadcasters, as ‘correct grammar, spelling and adequate punctuation contribute to greater legibility and clarity’ (p. 584); the recommendation for taking deaf viewers into consideration in the Code is also supported by many broadcasters today. This code is not only adopted by many companies in the industry but also remains as a solid foundation on which many scholars, including Munday (2008), Pedersen (2011, 2017), Díaz Cintas and Remael (2014) and Robert and Remael (2017), have based their research. The Code provides a general

**Table 22.1** Subtitle quality parameters

Content-related quality parameters	
Content and translation (including accuracy, completeness and logic)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There must be a close correlation between film dialogue and subtitle content.</li> <li>• All important written information in images (e.g. signs and notices) should be translated and incorporated wherever possible.</li> <li>• Given that many TV viewers are hearing impaired, 'superfluous' information, such as names and interjections, should also be subtitled.</li> <li>• Songs must be subtitled where relevant.</li> <li>• Obvious repetition of names and common comprehensible phrases need not always be subtitled.</li> <li>• The language should be (grammatically) correct given that subtitles serve as models for literacy.</li> <li>• As much as possible, each subtitle should be syntactically self-contained.</li> <li>• Where compression of dialogue is necessary, the results must be coherent.</li> </ul>
Grammar, spelling and punctuation	
Readability (ease of comprehension and coherence between individual subtitles)	
Appropriateness (socio-cultural features of the audience)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The translation quality must be as high as possible with due consideration of all idiomatic and cultural nuances.</li> <li>• The language register must be appropriate and correspond with the spoken word.</li> </ul>
Form-related quality parameters	
Formatting (segmentation and layout)	<p>Formatting subtitles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The subtitle text must be distributed line to line and page to page in sense blocks and/or grammatical units.</li> <li>• Language distribution within and over subtitles must consider cuts and sound bridges; the subtitles must also highlight, rather than undermine, the sense of surprise or suspense.</li> <li>• Subtitles should be highly legible with clear lettering and an easily readable font. The characters should have sharp contours and remain stable on the screen.</li> <li>• The position of subtitles should be consistent.</li> <li>• In video applications, character clarity can be enhanced by placing a drop shadow or a semi-transparent or a black box behind the subtitles.</li> <li>• In laser subtitling, sharp contours and removing residual emulsion can be achieved via a precise alignment of laser beam focus and an accurate adjustment of the power output.</li> <li>• In laser subtitling, the baseline must be set accurately according to the aspect ratio of the film.</li> </ul>

(continued)

**Table 22.1** (continued)

Spotting (synchronicity with the spoken text and reading speed)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The subtitler should spot errors in production and translate and write the subtitles in the required (foreign) languages.</li> <li>• The in- and out-times of subtitles must follow the speech rhythm of the film dialogue whilst taking cuts and sound bridges into consideration.</li> <li>• The duration of all subtitles within a production must adhere to a regular viewer reading rhythm.</li> <li>• Spotting must reflect the rhythm of the film.</li> <li>• No subtitle should appear for less than a second or, with the exception of songs, stay on the screen for longer than seven seconds.</li> <li>• A minimum of four frames should be left between subtitles to allow the viewer's eye to register the appearance of a new subtitle.</li> <li>• The number of lines in any subtitle must be limited to two.</li> <li>• The number of characters per line must be compatible with the subtitling system and visible on any screen.</li> <li>• When two lines of subtitles with unequal length are used, the upper line should be shorter than the bottom line to keep the image as free as possible and should be justified to the left in order to reduce unnecessary eye movements.</li> <li>• The source and target languages should be synchronised as much as possible.</li> <li>• Given the different viewer reading times and lengths of lines for TV/video/DVD and film subtitles, these subtitles should be adapted for film application and vice versa.</li> </ul>
Other requirements	
Before/during subtitling	
After subtitling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Subtitlers must always work with a (video, DVD, etc.) copy of the production, a copy of the dialogue list and a glossary of unusual words and special references.</li> <li>• Each production should be edited by a reviser/editor.</li> <li>• The (main) subtitler should be acknowledged at the end of the film or, if the credits are at the beginning, close to the credits for the script writer.</li> <li>• The year of subtitle production and copyright for the version should be displayed at the end of the film.</li> </ul>

picture of quality subtitling even though some slight variations and outdated rules can be observed within the industry.

The rationales behind the aforementioned factors that determine pre-prepared interlingual subtitling quality have been discussed in length in Díaz Cintas and Remael (2014) and Kuo (2017); the former examines the

technical and linguistic considerations of subtitling and issues concerning punctuation and conventions, whereas the latter focuses on temporal, spatial and stylistic parameters that are specific to subtitling in Mandarin. Both of these studies were based on the Code. One thing that needs to be highlighted is that the parameters, especially those concerning time, space and style, may show some differences in certain types of subtitling. For instance, the length of subtitles in video games can range from 50 to 70 characters per line, with the number of lines per subtitle possibly exceeding three as revealed in Mangiron (2013). Díaz Cintas (2018) also observed that commercial advertisements tend to set a high reading speed for subtitles. Each project or client may also set their own requirements for these technical specifications. Thanks to the advancements in translation technologies and subtitling software, many of these parameters can be monitored automatically.

## 4 Factors Affecting Subtitling Quality in Professional Realities

In addition to the subtitling parameters discussed above, other factors can also influence the subtitling output quality. Fawcett (1983) argued that translation is subject to various practical constraints, of which ‘the most important are: poor wages [...]; absurd deadlines [...]; poor originals [...]; and finally, poor training of translators’ (p. 189). Kuo (2015) performed a survey supported by many translators’ and subtitlers’ associations to examine the working conditions of subtitlers and to unveil the working environment of people in this profession across different countries. The survey findings have confirmed Fawcett’s assertion, thereby suggesting that some working conditions under which subtitlers operate have considerable repercussions on the quality of their outputs. These working conditions are examined below from the perspectives of remuneration, deadlines, quality of provided support materials, use of subtitling programmes, quality control procedures, social invisibility of the subtitler and work procedures.

In the survey, nearly 40% of the respondents believed that the quality of their output was ‘very much’ negatively affected when they have a low pay rate, whereas around 30% admitted that they had no intention to spend more time on a project than what they were paid to achieve a high level of quality. Remuneration can sometimes be associated with given deadlines. In practice (not limited to the subtitling industry), tasks with urgent deadlines usually have higher pay than those with generous time allowances. However, no

obvious correlation was identified between the urgency of delivery of a task and the level of pay awarded. In fact, many respondents who often worked with tight deadlines were paid at a relatively low rate. When given tight deadlines, 67.6% of the respondents believed that the overall quality of their subtitling output was negatively affected at least by a ‘moderate’ degree, if not ‘strong’. Meanwhile, the majority of the respondents expressed the view that generous deadlines would help them improve the quality of their output by giving them additional time to search for suitable translation solutions and apply revisions.

Subtitlers are usually given audiovisual programmes, dialogue scripts/lists,<sup>1</sup> templates<sup>2</sup> and consistency sheets along with specific task instructions, although the availability of these materials may vary from one project to another. The provision of these materials and their quality also influence the subtitlers’ output quality as confirmed by Kuo (2015), even though her findings were based on subjective answers to the survey. Overall, more than 50% of the respondents argued that the quality of ‘audiovisual materials’, ‘dialogue scripts/lists’ and ‘templates’ had at least a moderate degree of influence on the quality of their final output. However, some respondents answered that they were not given access to audiovisual materials (e.g. video clips), when translating subtitles. In professional realities, some companies either do not provide video clips or tend to reduce the resolution of these videos to prevent leakage. Such practice endangers subtitling output quality given that the chances of mistranslation are increased if subtitlers perform their subtitling work without taking images into consideration. According to Díaz Cintas and Remael (2014), a good dialogue list ‘is a key document that facilitates the task of the subtitler, helping to dispel potential comprehension mistakes’ (p. 74). The recommendation to homogenise the production of dialogue lists was put forward by the European Broadcasting Union in the 1980s (Ivarsson and Carroll 1998); however, this practice was not widely adopted in the industry for two reasons. On the one hand, producing a dialogue list would increase the total cost of a project. On the other hand, the time allocated to a subtitling project may not be able to accommodate the production of a dialogue list. Therefore, some subtitling companies may choose to skip this procedure or safeguard the

<sup>1</sup>An ideal dialogue list not only provides ‘a verbatim transcription of all the dialogue’ but also ‘extra information on implicit socio-cultural connotations, explains plays on words or possible amphibologies, the meaning of colloquial and dialectal terms, give the correct spelling of all proper names, clarifies implicit as well as explicit allusions, etc.’ (Díaz Cintas and Remael 2014, p. 74).

<sup>2</sup>A ‘template’ is a genesis file also known as a master template or a master list. According to Pedersen (2011, p. 16), a template is an intralingual subtitle file of the source text in which segmentation and spotting have already been conducted.

quality of their final subtitling output by adopting other quality assurance (QA) procedures, such as double proofreading. However, in some situations, important pieces of information, such as dates, time and locations, are omitted from dialogue lists. Therefore, Minchinton (1986) was sceptical about the validity of dialogue lists and urged subtitlers to pay attention to these omissions ‘because dialogue lists compilers usually forget that there are other texts in a picture besides the actors’ dialogue’ (p. 13). The role of templates in ensuring subtitling quality lies in how such tools simplify the technical process of subtitling and reduce the associated costs. According to Georgakopoulou (2009), the economy of scale has introduced the use of templates in the subtitling industry, ‘whereby the greater the number of languages involved in a project, the larger the cost-savings to be made’ (p. 31). When the cost of production is reduced, the satisfaction level of clients who pay for subtitling services presumably increases. However, there are always two sides to every coin. According to Nikolić (2015), templates could be problematic when the source and target languages have very different subtitling conventions and/or involve a great degree of lexical, syntactic and cultural differences, thereby preventing subtitlers from adjusting the timecodes.

Apart from the provision and quality of support materials, the use of subtitling programmes can contribute to the technical and linguistic excellence of the final output. Technological advances facilitate each step of the subtitling process with a particular focus on its technical dimension. However, these advances irremediably have a knock-on effect on the linguistic dimension, including accurate spotting and synchronisation, control of reading speed, verification of the maximum number of characters per line and duration and spell checks. Subtitlers working with subtitling programmes has long been an industry trend as can be seen in Kuo’s (2015) survey results, where 73.7% of the respondents said they had ‘always’ worked with such programmes. In cases when subtitlers must work only on templates, subtitling quality may heavily rely on experienced proofreaders and require intensive communication and correspondence during the subtitling process.

Same as subtitles, subtitlers are only noticed when they commit errors. Although many translators’ and subtitlers’ associations have been established to promote the visibility of translators and subtitlers, giving acknowledgement to subtitlers is not yet a standard practice. In Kuo’s (2015) survey, only 24.7% of the respondents had ‘always’ been credited for their work, 14.7% had ‘never’ been given any credit for their work and 5.1% were unsure whether they were being credited. In terms of subtitlers’ preference for credits, 74.4% of the respondents ‘always’ preferred to be credited for their subtitling work, whereas 19.1% did not want to be credited under certain circumstances, such

as when they do not have enough time to work on their projects, when they personally do not like the programmes they have translated and when they have worked through agencies instead of directly with clients. This finding implies that the subtitlers' preference to be (in)visible is associated to some degree with their level of confidence in the quality of their subtitling output. In this sense, giving credit to subtitlers in an audiovisual programme is not only a good practice as recommended by the Code (Ivarsson and Carroll 1998) but also a means to motivate subtitlers to improve their subtitling quality.

A small percentage of the respondents in Kuo's (2015) survey experienced procedural changes due to budget cuts. For example, some companies decided to skip the usual second proofreading or final editing procedure, some had to ask subtitlers to take care of other tasks that are outside the scope of their responsibilities (e.g. spotting) and other companies have begun hiring cheap, inexperienced subtitlers. These procedural changes all endanger the quality of the subtitling output. In fact, SysMedia's chief executive Lambourne (2011) also observed the declining quality in the output of subtitlers and stated that skilled, professional subtitlers are being laid off due to the cutthroat war amongst subtitling houses and the corresponding downward spiral of contract bidding prices, thereby leading to loss of quality.

Robert and Remael (2016) performed a survey on the industry practice of subtitling quality control and found some deviations from what are regarded as good practices. For instance, around 32% of their freelancer respondents never received explicit translation briefs (TB) or instructions on translation quality parameters such as content, grammar, readability and appropriateness, although the percentage of those respondents who were never explicitly asked to follow the style guide on technical parameters was significantly lower. As Drugan (2013) emphasised the importance of professional pre-translation processes, an agreement should be made between clients and suppliers (i.e. subtitlers in this context) on the process, deadlines and how quality control should be managed before starting a project because the translation strategies adopted by a translator or subtitler are largely determined by their TBs or instructions. However, in professional realities, clients of the subtitling industry tend to focus more on technical or form-related parameters than on translation or content-related parameters when providing instructions.

The aforementioned factors all fall under the large umbrella of quality management, thereby suggesting that even when a comprehensive set of good subtitling practices, such as the Code, is available, the final subtitling output in circulation may still easily fall below standard if quality management is not carried out effectively. Some studies have used quality management, QA and

quality control (QC) interchangeably, whereas some other scholars have distinguished these concepts based on their scope. For example, Robert and Remael (2016) established a hierarchy of these three concepts and regarded ‘quality control to be an aspect of quality assurance, and quality assurance to be part of quality management’ (p. 579). Meanwhile, Mossop (2014) defined QC as a contribution to QA, which is in line with the definition of Robert and Remael. Drugan (2013) defined QA and QC based on their roles from the pre-translation to the post-translation stages, with TQA and quality evaluation coming in at the final stage. The deteriorating quality in translation is a long-standing issue in the translation industry, and much effort has been dedicated to safeguarding translation quality. Several official standards—though not necessarily compulsory—were also published to regulate translation quality, and various metrics and models have been invented and improved for analysing translation products along with the advancement of localisation and machine translation (MT). These developments pave the way for quality assessment in subtitling, which will be discussed in the following section.

## 5 Quality Assessment in Subtitling

In order to regulate quality in translation, official standards at the international, regional and national levels have been developed over the past two decades. For instance, the ISO 17100:2015, which is an internationally recognised standard for the quality management system of translation service providers (TSPs), defined ‘quality’ by specifying a set of requirements for the translation process that has a direct impact on the delivery of a quality translation service.<sup>3</sup> The basis and predecessor of ISO 17100, namely, the European standard for Translation Services EN 15038:2006, shares a similar nature (even though less elaborate than its successor) by providing a set of procedures and requirements for TSPs to meet the market needs.<sup>4</sup> On the other side of the Atlantic, Canada adopted a modified version of the EN 15038 and launched the Canadian Standard for Translation Services CAN CGSB 130.10-2008, which was later superseded by CAN CGSB 130.10-2017.<sup>5</sup> The Standard Guide for Quality Assurance in Translation of the American Society

<sup>3</sup> For further information on ISO 17100, please refer to <https://www.iso.org/obp/ui/#iso:std:iso:17100:ed-1:v1:en>. Note that post-editing the raw machine translation output is not within the scope of ISO 17100.

<sup>4</sup> For further information on EN 15038, please refer to <http://qualitystandard.bs.en-15038.com/>.

<sup>5</sup> For further information on CAN CGSB 130.10-2017, please refer to <https://www.scc.ca/en/standardsdb/standards/28935>.

for Testing and Materials (ASTM F2575-14) also introduced a framework that comprised 21 standardised parameters that need to be considered by TSPs and their customers before a translation project can begin.<sup>6</sup>

In addition to these national and global standards for translation services that tend to be general and less compulsory for compliance, a few models or metrics have also been designed and developed to enhance the standardisation and enhance the quality of outputs in the translation industry in general and in localisation in particular. For instance, the LISA QA model comprises a set of quality assessment metrics that is applied to MT and developed by the Localization Industry Standards Association (LISA) in the 1990s; this model has played a leading role amongst the various metrics available in the industry even after the closure of LISA in 2011 (Lommel 2019). In the LISA QA model, reviewers can rate errors in three severity levels, namely, ‘minor’, ‘major’ or ‘critical’. Whilst this model allows some flexibility for customisation, the fact that many users adapted this model and defined their own quality metrics to meet their own needs (as indicated in the survey carried out by Snow (2015)) may, to some extent, reflect the limitations of the model in satisfying individual needs and justifying the necessity of modifications. The SAE J2450 is another popular translation quality metric and is probably one of the most common error metrics in use according to Doherty and Gaspari (2013). However, this model has attracted lower usage compared with the LISA QA model because of its limited scope of applications. The SAE Standard was initially developed by the Society of Automotive Engineers (SAE), one of the oldest standards-creating organisations in the US, and was meant to be used in the automotive industry to maintain a consistent quality that can be objectively measured.<sup>7</sup> Although its functions are limited to detecting linguistic errors, its simplicity of use and adaptability still make this model popular in other industrial sectors (Doherty and Gaspari 2013). After its launch in 2001, the SAE Standard was revised twice, with the latest version (J2450\_201608) published in 2016. The current version of this model explicitly discourages its application for evaluating materials where style plays a crucial role, although this metric can be expanded to accommodate the style and other requirements of certain new media. Martínez (2014) also highlighted the weakness of SAE J2450 in correcting stylistic and formatting errors. In general, these metrics have two main limitations as pointed out by Lommel (2019, p. 112). On the one hand, different reviewers may disagree

<sup>6</sup>For further information on ASTM F2575-14, please refer to <https://www.astm.org/Standards/F2575.htm>.

<sup>7</sup>For further information on SAE J2450, please refer to <https://www.sae.org/standardsdev/j2450p1.htm>.

upon an error and its severity level, and on the other hand, the standardisation of error types may obstruct the application of metrics across different scenarios or text types. To address these issues, LISA intended to propose a successor which was tentatively called ‘Globalisation Metrics Exchange (GMX)’, which could be divided into GMX-Q for translation ‘quality’, GMX-V for the ‘volume’ of translation and GMX-C for the ‘complexity’ of an ST (Lommel 2019). The work-in-progress GMX-Q, along with other existing error typologies and tools, later became the basis of the Multidimensional Quality Metrics (MQM) after the closure of LISA. MQM is a framework for declaring and describing translation quality metrics that was developed under the EU-funded QTLaunchPad project in an attempt to address an industry issue where most stakeholders tend to use their own metrics or systems for quality assessment (Lommel et al. 2014). Apart from MQM, the TAUS Dynamic Quality Framework (DQF) is a recent major contribution to the field of TQA. The Translation Automation User Society (TAUS) worked with its members and other scholars to improve ‘the static and normative, time-consuming modes of translation quality evaluation’ that were available in the industry at the time and to respond to the dissatisfaction at the ‘one size fits all’ approach that gave little consideration to variables ‘such as content type, communicative function, end user requirements, context, perishability, or mode of translation creation’ (O’Brien 2012). These two models, MQM and DQF, were developed around the same period with different yet complementary features (TAUS 2015). Although MQM and DQF have been developed separately, their developers agreed to work together, modified their frameworks and shared the same underlying structure. This collaborative effort led to the introduction of the newest metric for error-typology-based evaluation, namely, the MQM-DQF harmonised metric, which offers ‘translation professionals a standard and dynamic model that can be used in every context’ according to Görög (2017).

The main challenge in applying these general translation quality assessment models to subtitling, as Pedersen (2017) argued, ‘is that they are difficult to adapt to the special conditions of the medium’ because condensations, omissions and paraphrases can be counted as errors (p. 212). With the standards for translation services gradually moving towards maturity, some advancements in assessing subtitling quality have also been observed. For instance, Romero-Fresco (2011) introduced the NER model for assessing the accuracy of live intralingual subtitles and developed this model further with Martínez (2014). This new model functions by ‘analysing the extent to which errors affect the coherence of the subtitled text or modify its content’, with an emphasis on respoken subtitles (Romero-Fresco and Martínez 2015, p. 29).

This model is also inspired by previous inventions that adopt word error rate, which is often used in speech recognition assessment, and is adapted for respooken intralingual subtitling. The NER model has been proven successful and used in many countries (Romero-Fresco and Martínez 2015). However, by excluding equivalence errors from its main considerations, the NER model is unsuitable for assessing interlingual subtitles. Building upon the NER model, Pedersen (2017) proposed the FAR model, which is a general model for assessing interlingual subtitling quality. Whilst most of the aforementioned metrics and models are product oriented, the FAR model is based on reception studies that use eye-tracking technologies and on the notion of a tacit ‘contract of illusion’<sup>8</sup> between the subtitler and the viewer. The design of this model aims to include all areas of quality that may affect viewer experience and to incorporate different in-house guidelines and subtitling norms (see the contribution by Pedersen in this volume). Whilst the NER model adopts ‘ideas’ as its basic units of assessment, Pedersen (2017) argued that the most suitable natural unit for assessing interlingual prepared subtitles is ‘the (one or two-line) subtitle itself’, even though some translation studies have used other basic units of translation (p. 216). The advantages of this model include the intuition in its use, its conformity with the recommendations of the Code (i.e. the unit is semantically and syntactically self-contained) and its consideration of the fact that any error in a subtitle can influence the viewers’ processing of the entire subtitle according to Ghia’s (2012) eye-tracking study on deflections in subtitling. The FAR model, which is based on error analysis, assesses three types of errors, namely, ‘functional equivalence’, ‘acceptability of the subtitles’ and ‘readability’, which are classified by the NER model as ‘minor’, ‘standard’ and ‘serious’, respectively (Romero-Fresco and Martínez 2015). Pedersen further divided equivalence issues into ‘semantic’ and ‘stylistic’ errors given that the severity of the former is higher than that of the latter. Specifically, semantic errors can lead to misunderstandings or incomprehension, whereas stylistic errors may be subtle. With regard to acceptability, Pedersen specified three aspects, namely, ‘grammar’, ‘spelling’ and ‘idiomaticity’, and emphasised that the idiomaticity errors in this model are not limited to the use of idioms but also to the natural use of language. For readability, the FAR model focuses on ‘segmentation and spotting’, ‘punctuation and graphics’ and ‘reading speed and line length’. These elements of the model design are also discussed earlier and are in line with the recommendations of the

<sup>8</sup>‘Contract of illusion’ is a metaphor that Pedersen (2017, p. 215) used to describe the relationship between the subtitler and viewer, in which ‘the viewers’ side of contract extends even further than pretending that the subtitles are the dialogue’ as they do not even notice the subtitles.

Code as listed in Table 22.1 under both content- and form-related quality parameters. The FAR model applies a penalty score system, where penalty points are given to each error according to their assigned weights in affecting the comprehension and ability of viewers to enjoy the programme. According to Pedersen (2017), the strengths of the FAR model lie in the fact that the individual scores for the three types of errors can facilitate the provision of feedback to subtitlers or students and that this model can work with any guideline or norm selected by the user. By contrast, the weaknesses of this model lie in its lack of consideration for rewarding exceptional performance, the strong fluency bias resulting from its contract-of-illusion-based design and its subjectivity in judging the equivalence, idiomacticity and severity of errors. The FAR model also has two limitations, namely, its support for measuring the quality of intralingual subtitles or SDH and its evaluation of the subtitling process.

Universities also use some evaluation grids that outline different types of quality parameters or errors in interlingual subtitling for didactic purposes. Examples of these parameters include Kruger's subtitling evaluation grid at Northwest University (South Africa) and Macquarie University (Australia) and José Luis Martí Ferriol and Irene de Higes's subtitling scoring system at Jaume I University (Spain) as stated in Romero-Fresco and Pöchhacker (2017). Based on the Code, Robert and Remael (2017)'s recent study on an adapted NER model for live interlingual subtitling and the evaluation grids adopted by the Macquarie University and Jaume I University, Romero-Fresco and Pöchhacker (2017) developed the NTR model that assesses the quality of interlingual live subtitling by using a similar formula and the same error grading system as the NER model and by considering 'both information deviations from source-text content (in terms of omissions, additions and substitutions) and errors of form (correctness, style)' (p. 164). Despite their similarities, live subtitling and pre-prepared subtitling have different considerations, especially in terms of spotting and segmentation. However, some similarities can be observed in the processes of live subtitling and simultaneous interpreting; therefore, the existing literature on assessing the quality of live subtitling, whether intralingual or interlingual, is based on the findings of interpreting studies, such as Gerver (1969), Moser-Mercer (1996), Kurz (2001), Grbić (2008), Zwischenberger (2010) and Russo (2014). As stated in the second section, due to the limited scope of this chapter, live subtitling is not discussed in detail in this chapter.

## 6 Discussion and Final Remarks

Although this chapter provides an overview of subtitling quality and subtitling quality assessment, its comprehensiveness is subject to its limited length. Discussions on the audience perception of quality and viewers' preferences for subtitling strategies are not included in this chapter given that the potential variables involved can be multifarious, such as the viewer's age, language proficiency of the source and target languages, level of target cultural literacy and varying purposes of subtitles. Moreover, an overview of relatively homogeneous findings cannot be easily provided. Another main limitation of this work is that the above discussions focus on professional subtitling and completely ignore non-professional subtitling. According to Díaz Cintas (2018), a glaring discrepancy can be observed between official subtitling conventions and those applied online. The fact that non-professional subtitling itself has many variations further complicates quality issues with both technical and linguistic parameters, thereby making it stand out as a topic of its own (see the contribution by Massidda in this volume).

Whilst subtitling conventions may vary with time and geographic area, the commonly adopted parameters, official standards and individual in-house style guides can serve as preventive measures that help maintain an acceptable level of subtitling quality. According to Kuo (2017), 'a set of guidelines focusing on the main technical and stylistic parameters that regulate the formal presentation of subtitling output' is important because 'such development can provide an objective standard' against which subtitling quality can be measured and in order to ensure the consistency and homogeneity of the subtitling production (p. 429). This argument highlights the tendency of the subtitling industry to rely on technical parameters and style guides in achieving quality subtitling whilst providing minimal or vague instructions to subtitlers on handling content-related issues. Whilst subtitles that fail to satisfy the technical requirements will not be accepted regardless of the brilliance of their translation, their meaning and equivalence—which lie at the essence of translation—should not be overlooked.

Despite the many academic discussions on subtitling quality and subtitling quality assessment, having a good understanding of subtitling quality does not necessarily lead to achieving high-quality subtitling services. The inappropriate practices in subtitling quality management as reflected in the findings of the above surveys certainly have negative effects on subtitling performance. The jigsaw puzzle of subtitling quality includes not only theoretical parameters but also good practices, effective execution and working

conditions in professional realities. However, the current subtitling quality assessment tools, which are also applicable to TQA in general, mostly focus only on the product itself whilst taking the process into consideration. This problem may prompt us to rethink subtitling quality assessment and provide some directions for future research.

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# 23

## Accessibility of Visual Content in Mobile Apps: Insights from Visually Impaired Users

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### 1 Introduction

With the growing ubiquity of audiovisual content in mobile applications—in the form of images, charts, tables and videos—an emergent field of investigation within Audiovisual Translation Studies is accessibility for mobile user interaction. To our knowledge, no study targeting audiovisual translation for accessibility in mobile apps has been yet reported on, while the very few available publications on audiovisual translation and mobile devices focus either on the use of mobile phones for translation services (Jiménez-Crespo 2016) or on the reception of translated audiovisual content in mobile phones (Fernández-Costales 2018).

The challenges to make audiovisual content accessible in mobile technology have to do with the specifics of digital products, which involve, besides audio and visual stimuli, tactile communication essential for users to respond to prompts in an app. In fact, apps require a more active role on the part of the user than, for instance, to press or tap a play button to watch a movie,

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which in a way allows for drawing some analogies between audiovisual translation for apps and translation and localization of video games. In this respect, Suojanen et al. (2015) stress the cooperation needed between translators, engineers and developers to localize digital products and propose focusing on users and usability. In fact, they advocate a “user-centred translation” model, whereby “information about users is gathered iteratively throughout the process and through different methods, and this information is used to create a usable translation” (Suojanen et al. 2015, p. 4). Once a translation is obtained, actual reception by users is assessed and results provide feedback for prospective translation tasks.

The model proposed by Suojanen et al. (2015) is in line with the concept of user-centred design and represents an important step in approaching translation towards usability; however, it still relies on a post-production pipeline, in that there is a source text or product which is the target of translation at a post-production stage. When it comes to accessibility, though, many problems cannot be solved once a product is finished and submitted to translation. An example that clearly illustrates this point is the recurrent complaint by translators about restricted time slots available for audio description to be inserted in a movie audio file. The idea of pre-planning those time slots during the initial stages in the original film production is in line with the proposal of accessible filmmaking advanced by Romero-Fresco (2013, see also the contribution by Romero-Fresco in this volume) for maximizing accessibility through collaboration between filmmakers and translators. The translator as advisor to filmmaking is instrumental in planning time slots for audio description to fit in.

The study herein reported points to shortcomings in accessibility of mobile app audiovisual content and concludes showing how accessible app development demands many more efforts than publication of guidelines by international consortia and mobile operating system companies. Following the concept of Universal Design, app development would greatly benefit from audiovisual translators’ experience to enhance accessibility for sensory impaired users. For the visually as well as the hearing impaired, many app resources—sounds, alerts, colours, movement and a variety of other hearing and visual elements—rather than boost user interaction, end up hindering it, particularly when developers do not take accessibility into account in their initial design or rely exclusively on assistive technology to deal with accessibility issues.

Among neglected audiences, visually impaired users are one of the groups most affected by accessibility shortcomings due to recognition of mobile app

visual controls (buttons, menus, pickers, sliders, switches and others) being essential to initiate actions and navigate. Regrettably, little attention in the field of Audiovisual Translation Studies has been paid to the study of how visually impaired users deal with visual content in mobile devices, and to what extent smartphones' native resources are facilitators of user interaction.

Game apps have had some attention in localization studies (Mangiron and Zhang 2016) and news and sports apps have also been pointed out as two fertile grounds to do research on user reception (Fernández-Costales 2018). Studies on healthcare apps, however, have not, to the best of our knowledge, yet been reported on, despite their strong relevance in mHealth (mobile health) initiatives to foster education and self-care, particularly in the case of chronic disease management.

In an attempt to fill the gap in healthcare app accessibility research, we carried out a study investigating accessibility of mobile app visual content from the perspective of visually impaired users. We examined accessibility barriers in a sample healthcare app through assessment of compliance with accessibility guidelines and effectiveness of native assistive technology to navigate it.

Our study recruited visually impaired volunteers and used interviews and participant-observation for data collection. The study was carried out as one of the activities of the research project Empoder@—Empowerment towards autonomous chronic disease management in primary care—which is currently designing an app pooling the expertise of healthcare professionals, applied linguists, audiovisual translators and computer scientists at the Federal University of Minas Gerais and the Catholic University of Paraná, Brazil. The app aims to support behaviourally designed interventions towards diabetes self-management (blood glucose monitoring, insulin administration, healthy eating and physical activity) and to encourage teenagers' adherence to treatment. All app features are being designed to provide accessibility to visually impaired and hearing impaired users.

This chapter reports on the results of our study and their implications for Audiovisual Translation Studies. It is divided into eight sections. Following this Introduction, Sect. 2 highlights key concepts and the background to our study. Sect. 3 is concerned with the methodology employed, while Sect. 4 presents the results obtained from our analysis. Sect. 5 discusses the main findings in the light of our discussion of accessibility guidelines. Sect. 6 ties together the various findings and includes a discussion of the implications of our findings while Sect. 7 hints at future research into accessible app production. Finally, Sect. 8 presents a brief statement of our final remarks.

## 2 Background and Definitions

We have chosen the concept of Universal Design (see also the contribution by Mazur in this volume) to frame our approach to accessibility of visual content in mobile apps. Universal Design is a concept referring to comprehensive design for products, environments and services, which aims at the highest possible form of inclusion without affecting the quality and integrity of the good offered. Universal Design posits that from the very pre-production stage, products should be developed considering user characteristics, needs, capabilities and preferences.<sup>1</sup> This amounts to saying that, rather than be adapted so that it is more accessible to a broader range of users, a product has to be conceived of as inclusive, drawing on knowledge of all potential users, having users collaborate in their design and incorporating accessibility in its procedures and processes.

The principles of Universal Design were adopted by the UN in 2006, within the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities,<sup>2</sup> “disability” being therein explained as the result of a non-inclusive society failing to meet the needs and expectations of all individuals. Universal Design is meant to foster product design in the most accessible way possible, so that whenever possible assistive technologies can be done away with, thanks to the inclusive architecture of the product itself (UN 2006).

Universal Design not being yet fully incorporated and implemented as a principle underlying product development, post-production adaptations are resorted to in order to compensate existing limitations. This move actually seeks integration rather than user inclusion. This is the case of assistive technology and audiovisual translation resources, two components in society’s framework to deal with barriers to universal access. There is thus an intrinsic connection between accessibility and audiovisual translation, which, as we will see next, has followed its own path in the field of Audiovisual Translation Studies.

### 2.1 Accessible Audiovisual Translation

While the terms ‘audiovisual translation’ and ‘accessible audiovisual translation’ were used to refer to two separate domains in many publications before the 2000s, that distinction no longer seems to hold, particularly in recent

<sup>1</sup> Retrieved from <http://universaldesign.ie/What-is-Universal-Design/>.

<sup>2</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html>.

approaches in which ‘audiovisual translation’ covers a broad scope of modalities, including those traditionally related to accessibility, and even intersects with the so-called ‘media accessibility’.

Already in the mid 2000s, Gambier (2006) advocated subsuming all forms of audiovisual translation within the broad concept of accessibility, understood as universal access to digital information for a diversity of user profiles, in terms of age, socioeconomic background, culture, physical and cognitive capabilities, domain expertise, etc.). Díaz Cíntas and Remael (2007) restate Gambier’s proposal:

Whether the hurdle is a language or a sensorial barrier, the aim of the translation process is exactly the same: to facilitate access to an otherwise hermetic source of information and entertainment. In this way, accessibility becomes a common denominator that underpins these practices. (Díaz Cíntas and Remael 2007, p. 13)

This is further strengthened in more recent publications, which attest to the multidisciplinary, multimodal and multilingual of the field. The last five years, in particular, have seen a series of publications aimed at resourcing audiovisual translators, students and practitioners (Díaz Cíntas and Remael 2007), mentoring researchers (Pérez-González 2014) and updating theories and research production in the field (Baños Piñero and Díaz Cintas 2015; Deckert 2017; Pérez-González 2018). A paper with an overview of the field was recently published (Chaume 2018), which also points to audiovisual translation as a consolidated field within translation studies and media studies.

Interestingly, studies on translation of audiovisual content in mobile apps are very scarce in the cited publications. Mobile apps are mentioned as objects of prospective research, both by Matamala (2017), who suggests investigating usability in apps providing subtitles, audio description and dubbed tracks, and Fernández-Costales (2018), who points out the need for studies addressing the reception of audiovisual content in mobile devices.

Regarding audio description in particular, Mangiron and Zhang (2016) focus on accessibility problems in video games for different platforms, including mobile phones, some of their conclusions closely resembling the ones we got to in the study herein reported. The authors discuss the barriers encountered by visually and hearing impaired gamers and the different solutions the game industry has been exploring, such as designing games for a specific target group (blind users or deaf users). While games specifically designed for a target audience, as is the case of audio games or video-less games for the blind, ensure full accessibility, they likewise segregate other audiences and clearly fail

to promote inclusion. The authors further suggest games should explore technological resources available in smartphones, such as text-to-speech software, audio menus, audio cues and voice control commands. Of particular relevance to our discussion in this chapter, the authors argue for the use of audio description as a resource to enhance game accessibility, both on its own, in order to supply essential visual information to gamers, and coupled with other technological resources, as is text-to-speech technology.

As we will see from the results of our study, healthcare mobile apps have not been much in the spotlight as game apps have and have serious problems of accessibility which cannot be overcome by technological resources. Even though smartphones may have native accessibility features within their operating systems, app design needs to carefully prepare user interface elements so that they can be correctly interpreted when assistive technologies are enabled by the user, such as characterizing and naming app buttons so that they can be read by screen readers and understood as behaving like buttons by users.

Although audio description aims to facilitate visually impaired people's access to visual information, it is still being performed on the assumption of adapting a ready-made product rather than promoting inclusion. This is mainly due to the fact that accessibility is not taken into account in the design of products, thus leading to curtailment of experience, autonomy and understanding for users with visual impairment.

This is the case of healthcare apps, which we briefly introduce in the following section.

## 2.2 Mobile Healthcare Apps

Mobile healthcare apps follow the trend of other types of apps and have been growing exponentially as technology advances ways to support both professional healthcare providers and patients. The former, for instance, can use apps for remote monitoring of patients and diagnosis support; while the latter can benefit from apps features to make appointments; manage acute and chronic health conditions or record daily activities within a self-care plan for health and well-being.

Self-care apps have also been effective in long-term health monitoring. One such example is Clue, an app to track women's menstrual cycle, which allows users to track their menstrual period, identify patterns, predict future periods and record physical symptoms and emotions during the menstrual cycle. Other popular apps encourage users to develop healthy lifestyle habits, such as calorie counting, water drinking and meal planning.

Apps are also essential components in the case of chronic disease management, as is the case of sickle cell disease or diabetes. Unlike apps targeting regular users with no particular health condition, chronic disease management apps demand special care in their design, which usually involves a large multidisciplinary team to provide accurate medical information and support users in a very responsible way.

Our study focused on one such chronic disease management app, in this case diabetes mellitus, with special concern as to accessibility in that app for blind and visually impaired users. According to the National Eye Institute (NEI 2019), part of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in the USA, people with diabetes can be affected by a group of eye conditions, referred to as diabetic eye disease, which can cause severe vision loss and blindness. This led us to the assumption that people with diabetes who might be interested in using a diabetes management app would need accessibility resources to deal with visual content in those apps. That in itself merited researching to what extent available diabetes management apps were accessible to those potential users.

### 3 Methodology

The methodology we adopted for our study is participant-oriented as described by Saldanha and O'Brien (2013) and used semi-structured interviews and participant observation. The first step in our study was to check which native accessibility features were available in the two main mobile operating systems for smartphones, Android (Android Accessibility Overview 2019) and iOS (iPhone 2019), so that these would be considered in-built resources available to app developers and expected to be functional to users if properly activated. Subsequently, we searched for accessibility standards and criteria that could be applied to assess accessibility in mobile phone apps. The guidelines and criteria found were analysed and compared in order to select those that pertained to accessibility for visual impairment and which were not included in the list of Android and iOS built-in assistive technology features for mobile phones. We elaborated a list of guidelines and in order for Participants to understand each guideline, we summarized each of them in simple language in the form of questions, which were asked during our interviews. Whenever necessary, we provided examples for Participants to connect them to their own user experience.

After compiling a list of guidelines to visual impairment accessibility in mobile apps to be used as assessment criteria, the next step was to search for a

sample healthcare app for diabetes management so that we could use to assess it. We searched for diabetes management apps in web app stores and found five apps that could be relevant to our study. The apps were compared in terms of features and the one that offered the largest number of features for diabetes management was chosen.

The following step was to recruit participants to investigate how visually impaired users interacted with the sample app and assessed it using the same criteria we compiled.

Our study initially set out to recruit participants who fulfilled two main criteria (1) being blind or having low vision<sup>3</sup> and (2) having been diagnosed with diabetes and being under treatment. A call was posted in an online social networking website for blind people, inviting volunteers to participate in our study. A similar call was posted in a diabetes care unit in a private hospital. Although seven candidates responded to our call, only two of them agreed to participate, one being in her early 1930s and the other one in her late 1940s. The two volunteers, labelled Participant 1 and Participant 2, took part in our Case Study 1.

The low participant turnout in Case Study 1 prompted us to redefine our criteria so that we could recruit more participants. We then invited volunteers (1) who were blind or had low vision and (2) were teenagers (aged 13 to 19). We assumed visually impaired teenagers would be more familiar with mobile phone apps and feel less inhibited to take part in a study. We contacted institutions dealing with visually impaired young people and announced our call for participants. Participant turnout ended up being low as well and we managed to recruit two participants, labelled Participant 3 and Participant 4 and assigned to our Case Study 2.

All four participants filled out a questionnaire for sociodemographic data and were interviewed regarding their everyday use of mobile technology. In Case Study 1, Participant 1 and Participant 2 were asked to download and install the selected app in their personal mobile phones and to use it daily for one week in order to record diabetes management behaviours. After that, they were interviewed and asked to report on their assessment of the app features in terms of their compliance with our pre-defined accessibility guidelines for the visually impaired.

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<sup>3</sup>We used the World Health Organization's definition for blindness and low vision: 'low vision' is defined as visual acuity of less than 6/18 but equal to or better than 3/60, or a corresponding visual field loss to less than 20°, in the better eye with the best possible correction. 'Blindness' is defined as visual acuity of less than 3/60, or a corresponding visual field loss to less than 10°, in the better eye with the best possible correction. 'Visual impairment' includes both low vision and blindness. Retrieved from [https://www.who.int/blindness/Vision2020\\_report.pdf](https://www.who.int/blindness/Vision2020_report.pdf).

In Case Study 2, since Participant 3 and Participant 4 had no diabetes, we developed a series of tasks for them to perform using the app for diabetes management. These tasks involved manually inputting fake glucose readings; recording their meals; indicating their mood through descriptive icons; checking their progress and getting feedback from the app avatar regarding whether they had taken adequate steps in managing their diabetes based on their input. The tasks were performed in the presence of our researcher, who video-recorded the session and kept a participant observation log of every action carried out by the two teenagers. After that, both were interviewed and asked to report on their assessment of the app features in terms of their compliance with our pre-defined accessibility guidelines for visually impaired people.

Whereas Case Study 1 privileged authentic user experience, in that participants were visually impaired and had diabetes, Case Study 2 focused on app navigability by examining features used by visually impaired users who were younger and assumed to be more mobile savvy than in Case Study 1, but did not have diabetes to qualify for authentic users.

The selected app was assessed by us and by the four participants in terms of its level of compliance with the compiled guidelines. We used 3 levels, namely, Level 1—fully meets guideline; level 2—partially meets guideline; and level 3—does not comply with guideline. N/A, does not apply, was used for guidelines pertaining to a feature not available in the selected app, such as videos embedded in apps or web videos opening from a link in apps. In order for participants to understand each guideline, we verbally paraphrased it in simpler language and provided examples for them to connect them to their own user experience. Assessment was carried out in the form of questions we asked each of them during our interviews.

Case studies were developed within the scope a project fully meeting the requirements to carry out research involving human subjects and its record has been filed at the Committee on Ethics in Research at the Federal University of Minas Gerais under authorization 1.018.006/2015.

## 4 Results

### 4.1 Assistive Technology Available in Mobile Phone Operating Systems

We compared Android Pie and iOS 12 operating systems and found the native accessibility features shown in Table 23.1.

**Table 23.1** Android Pie and iOS 12 Assistive Technology

Features	Android Pie	iOS 12
Screen reader	X	X
Adjustable font and display size	X	X
Screen magnification	X	X
Adjustable contrast and colour options	X	X
Magnifying glass (pointing the mobile camera at objects to see details)		X
Compatibility with braille display	X	X
Personalized labels		X
Identifying images		X
Pronunciation editor		X
Audio description for movies available on the phone		X
Read aloud screen contents without touching the screen (i.e. regardless of screen reader)		X
Dictation	X	X
Accessibility shortcuts (add shortcuts to facilitate the access to the most used applications)		X
Shortcuts to improve screen navigability		X
Virtual assistant responding to voice commands		X

As can be seen in Table 23.1, iOS has more accessibility features than Android. This will inevitably have an impact on user experience, as our study shows for Participants who own an Android mobile phone.

All native features in Table 23.1 are essential for the visually impaired to use smartphones and therefore to access apps functionalities. They are likewise essential to app developers who need to be aware of them and include in app design. Both Google (Android) and Apple (iOS) offer advice to app developers.

## 4.2 Assessment Guidelines Compilation

After verifying assistive technology available in each operating system, we searched for accessibility criteria to assess apps. We found four main sources for guidelines that could be used in our study. These were (1) the Accessibility Scanner app, available for Android app developers, to scan and assess apps (Accessibility Scanner 2019); (2) the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) created by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) advising web content developers on how to make web content more accessible (The W3C 2018); (3) eMAG—Modelo de Acessibilidade em Governo Eletrônico [Brazilian Model for Accessibility in Electronic Governance], a Brazilian adaptation of WCAG (Brazil 2014); and (4) the Checklist for Evaluating the Usability of Applications for Mobile Touchscreen Phones developed by

Federal University of Santa Catarina (Salazar et al. 2013; Match 2019) drawing on general heuristics proposed by Nielsen (1994). We elaborated a list of 28 guidelines to assess our sample healthcare app selected as follows.

### 4.3 Selection of Sample Healthcare App

Our search in app stores yielded five apps for diabetes management. These were mySugr (2018), Glucose Buddy (2018), MyGlicemia (2018), Diabetes Pal (2018) and Glic (2017). All apps were analysed between October and November 2018.

We compared the features offered by each app as Table 23.2 shows.

Considering the number of features, mySugr ranked first and was chosen to investigate user experience in our study. mySugr offers users multiple features for them to enter information on meals, physical activity, glucose levels and mood. It also features an avatar—"a diabetes monster"—which changes colour to signal good, regular and poor diabetes management and welcomes any user entry with a noise.

### 4.4 Participant Recruitment

Table 23.3 shows socio demographic data of the four participants recruited for our two case studies.

As can be seen in Table 23.3, all participants but Participant 1 owned an Android mobile phone, which, as seen in Table 23.1, has fewer accessibility features. This was expected to bear an impact on user experience, as reported later on in this section.

**Table 23.2** Comparison of features in diabetes management apps

	mySugr	Glucose Buddy	MyGlicemia	Diabetes Pal	Glic
Blood glucose record	X	X	X	X	X
Insulin calculation	X	X	X	X	
Meal record	X	X			X
Carbohydrate counting	X	X		X	X
Physical activity record	X	X		X	
Mood record	X				
Avatar	X				
Conversational agent					
Embedded videos					
Multilingual interface	X	X	X	X	

**Table 23.3** Participant profile

	Case study 1		Case study 2	
	Participant 1	Participant 2	Participant 3	Participant 4
Age	33	47	19	15
Sex	Female	Female	Male	Male
Education	College (incomplete degree)	Elementary school	High school	Elementary school (incomplete)
Occupation	Unemployed	Unemployed	Unemployed	Unemployed
Monthly household income	Two minimum wages	One minimum wage	Two minimum wages	Two minimum wages
Visual impairment	Blindness	Blindness	Blindness	Low vision
Diabetes diagnosed	Yes	Yes	No	No
Personal mobile phone operating system	iOS	Android	Android	Android

## 4.5 Accessibility Assessment

We assessed mySugr following our list of 28 guidelines using four levels of compliance and asked participants in the two case studies to do the same. Our assumption was that our own assessment, as sighted users, would be different from their assessment, due to their user experience as visually impaired persons.

Contrary to our expectations, two of the participants did not manage to carry out the assessment. These were Participant 2 in Case Study 1 and Participant 4 in Case Study 2. Both were unable to provide feedback and answer our questions. Participant 2 had difficulty performing very simple tasks in the app and it became clear during our interview that she had been in fact unable to sign up to start using it at all. As a result, she could not navigate the app or make any kind of record about her diabetes management. Neither could Participant 4, who requested his mother's assistance to sign up and, upon her refusal, activated voice dictation on his mobile phone, though to no avail, as voice dictation is not compatible with mySugr, which required Participant 4 to make an additional effort to try to read and write without assistive technology.

Table 23.4 shows the level of compliance of mySugr to each guideline according to our own assessment and that by Participant 1 and 3.

**Table 23.4** mySugr's compliance to each guideline

Guideline	Authors	Participant 1	Participant 3
Are text alternatives provided to non-text contents?	2	2	3
Is audio description provided for pre-recorded video?	N/A	N/A	N/A
Are audio alternatives provided for live media?	N/A	N/A	N/A
Is non-text content that is merely decorative ignored by assistive technologies?	3	3	3
Is logical text sequence determined in the programming code?	2	3	3
Does information provided rely solely on sensory characteristics?	2	2	2
Are texts used instead of images of text?	2	2	3
Are table titles and summaries appropriately used?	3	3	3
Does the app avoid using tables for diagramming?	3	3	3
Are tags associated with their fields?	2	1	2
Is text in images used decoratively only or when the text in image is not essential to the message being conveyed?	3	3	3
Do screens have titles?	1	1	1
Are information areas divided?	1	1	1
Is information about user's location on app available?	3	3	3
Does the app require user's permission to open new screens?	3	3	3
Are links clearly and concisely described?	3	1	2
Do headlines and labels describe topic or purpose?	3	2	2
Are headlines used to organize content?	3	2	2
Is default language determined by programming code?	3	Cannot tell	3
Is language of content identified by programming code?	3	Cannot tell	3
Is there a mechanism to identify the meaning of abbreviations?	3	3	3
Do navigation mechanisms that recur in different screens occur in the same relative order?	3	Cannot tell	Cannot tell
Are components with same functionality identified consistently?	3	3	3
Does change of context take place only upon user request?	3	3	3

(continued)

**Table 23.4** (continued)

Guideline	Authors	Participant 1	Participant 3
Does the user get feedback on what is happening in the app? Is information presented in a clear, concise and appropriate way?	3	3	3
Do interface elements follow standard terminologies?	3	3	2
Does app follow operating system default settings?	1	Cannot tell	2
Are menus logical, distinct and mutually exclusive?	2	1	3

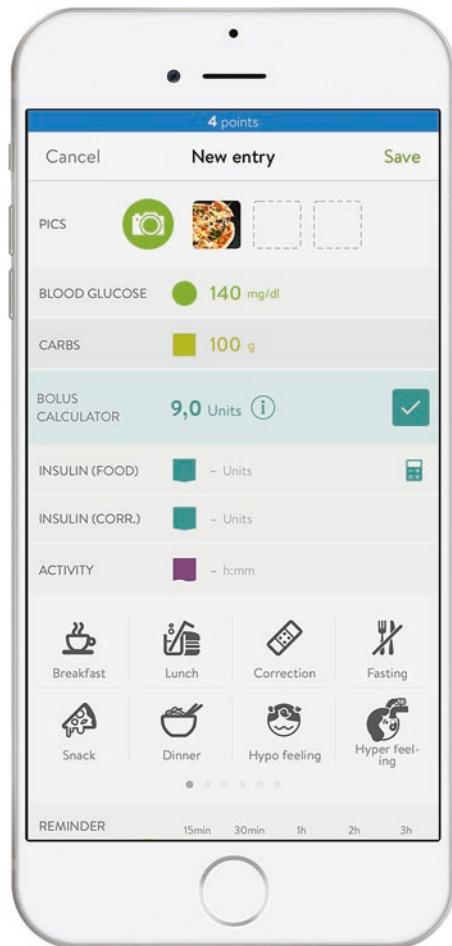
As we can see in shaded rows in Table 23.4, our assignment of compliance level, as sighted users, agrees to some extent to that done by Participants 1 and 3 as visually impaired users (12 out of 28 guidelines). The remaining 16 guidelines show Participants' assessments being different from one another or different from ours.

Participant 1's and Participant 3's reports, as well as Participant 2's and Participant 4's, in our interviews provide some necessary background to better interpret results in Table 23.3, to which we shall come back after discussing comments in our interviews.

## 4.6 Interviews

Participant 1 reported being an avid user of mobile apps and to rely on her mobile phone for most activities in her everyday life. Her statements show she has sufficient digital skills to deal with mobile devices and to use assistive technology in them. Thus, it is clear from her account on her experience with mySugr that the problems she found were mostly related to app design and to the fact that visual content was not sufficiently accessible in mySugr.

For instance, she reported to have realized there was an avatar in the app only when we inquired what she thought about it. Upon learning about it, she ascribed the presence of the avatar to some instances when she heard a noise and there was nothing read by the screen reader. In fact, there is no text describing the avatar or any label that could be read by a screen reader. Likewise, Participant 1 never became aware that for some of the buttons in the dashboard there were functional images together with a text label, in which the image worked as an iconic representation of the label, such as "Hypo Feeling" and "Hyper Feeling" with an icon of dizziness for



**Fig. 23.1** Screenshot of mySugr' insulin calculator. (Source: mySugr GMBH 2018)

hypoglycemia-related feelings and extreme thirst for symptoms of hyperglycemia (see Fig. 23.1).

Participant 1 also complained about nonsensical text being read by the screen reader during her navigation. Upon checking, we concluded this was text within images that the screen reader failed to read properly. Some of these text in images are not relevant to understanding, so lack of description would actually meet the guideline stating that non-text content that is merely decorative should be ignored by assistive technologies. Other instances of text in images, however, which are essential to obtaining information, were not accessible, as the screen reader failed to read them. The same happened with numbers inside images, which Participant 1 had entered and which were not

read by the app. This prevented her from recalling her previous entries and from comparing them. At times, the screen reader was able to read some symbols (e.g. hyphens) inside the images, which did not make any sense to Participant 1.

When a text image is essential, it should have a descriptive text properly readable by a screen reader, which was often not the case. Examples of this are the coloured circles shown in the screenshot in Fig. 23.2:

In Fig. 23.2, we can see three circles with numbers inside, each one showing a numerical result. There is a colour code in mySugr for elements on the dashboard. Colours change in response to the blood glucose levels entered by



**Fig. 23.2** Screenshot of mySugr week analysis log screen. (Source: mySugr GMBH 2018)

the user. The colours of the circles indicate an assessment of the results of blood glucose readings, red meaning glucose is not in target range; green signalling glucose is in target range; and orange indicating glucose is not in target range but still acceptable.

An important issue for accessibility of visually impaired users is ensuring that information conveyed by colour differences is also available in text, which was not the case in mySugr. It is also important to ensure that audio information is also properly explained to visually impaired users, so that they can understand sounds and noises. This is the case, for instance, when the monster avatar reacts to user entries by emitting a sound. As there is neither a text description or label, nor an audio description of the avatar and its reactions, visually impaired users never become aware of its presence on the dashboard; nor do they understand the noises it produces.

Another problem reported by Participant 1 were missing explanations or full forms for abbreviations, short forms, symbols and acronyms used in the app. She complained that mySugr “asks a lot of questions using abbreviations. I had to resort to a sighted person to help me enter my data”. The abbreviations she refers to are measurement units (ml, mg) and short forms (carbs instead of carbohydrates; hypo instead of hypoglycaemia) and her complaint about them recurs throughout her interview. Interestingly, when asked if abbreviations were a major flaw in app accessibility, she replied:

“I wouldn’t say abbreviations are an issue for accessibility, because they may be problematic for sighted users as well.”

Two notions of accessibility are implicated in her speech. Participant 1 uses the word “accessibility” in a narrow sense, meaning a failure in the app to allow a visually impaired user to get information essential to understand text in image; but her comment about abbreviations not being a problem solely for visually impaired users but also for sighted people points to content accessibility in a broad sense of the term.

When asked if she could understand the information on the app’s charts, Participant 1 replied that she could not. She even exclaimed: “I didn’t even know there were charts in the app”.

Abbreviations and charts are barriers that concern linguists and translators, since description of charts is necessary for visually impaired users to understand their contents; lack of explanation or full forms for abbreviations and any other symbols can likewise impact user experience and understanding.

Regarding Participant 2, poor digital skills did not allow her to succeed in using the app. One of the main differences in performance between Participant 1 and Participant 2 can be ascribed to education. Participant 1 concluded high school and even started attending college, even though she did not get a

degree; Participant 2 attended elementary school only. Age and income can also account for their difference in digital skills: Participant 1 is younger, has a higher income than Participant 2 and revealed to be an enthusiastic user of mobile technology. Unlike her, when asked about what she mostly used her mobile phone for, Participant 2 reported using it basically for communication, the only application she is familiar with being WhatsApp.

Unlike Participant 2 but closer to Participant 1, Participant 3 did manage to use mySugr and was able to answer our questions assessing the app's compliance with our guidelines. Participant 3 seems to have a certain amount of digital literacy, since he was able to perform the tasks we requested him to do. His answers regarding mySugr's compliance with the guidelines show that for him only 2 guidelines were fully met, 7 were partially met, 16 were not met at all, and 1 guideline he could not tell.

Upon comparing his assessment to that by Participant 1, it can be concluded that mySugr was less accessible for him. This can be due to the fact that Participant III used mySugr on an Android device and could not get much assistance from Android's screen reader, TalkBack. Some text descriptions in mySugr and even numbers in charts, as those illustrated in the screenshot in Fig. 23.3, were not read by TalkBack. TalkBack produces a sound when something is selected, but cannot be read, which is what Participant 3 heard but could not make what it was.

Like Participant 2, Participant 4 had a very poor performance while trying to use mySugr. His performance can be ascribed to the fact that he has very low vision and has not yet developed strategies to deal with that. During our interview, he proved heavily dependent upon his mother and would resort to her even to reply to our questions. He attempted to read the text and see the images on the dashboard, but, due to the lack of a magnifying resource, was not able to.

His report is very insightful as he drew our attention to some relevant issues. The first one is that mySugr was not compatible with voice dictation, an Android accessibility feature. Secondly, mySugr lacks a resource to allow screen and font enlargement. Although his mother tried to magnify text font as much as possible, text in mySugr remained illegible to Participant 4 due to his severe low vision.

During our interview, Participant 4 also reported not being able to identify iconic images in the dashboard. Although he was able to barely tell colours apart, he was not able to understand what colours were used for in the app. Participant 4 managed to see a green or yellow shape, but did not realize that it was an avatar. When he tapped on the avatar by mistake and heard a noise being produced, Participant 4 claimed not to understand what the noise was.



**Fig. 23.3** Screenshot of mySugr home screen. (Source: mySugr GMBH 2018)

Noticeably, Participant 4 seemed to be quite resistant to some assistive technologies. When inquired about why he did not use a screen reader, he replied he found that a nuisance and a source of distraction, not allowing him to concentrate. Unlike Participant 1, Participant 2 and Participant 3, all of them blind users, Participant 4 had low vision, which made him want to rely on his eyesight, though not successfully deal with visual content. This raises some issues related to blindness and low vision implicating distinct profiles of users and the need to further refine accessibility guidelines to differentiate the needs and preferences of these two types of users. This and other considerations will be expanded on next in our Discussion section.

## 5 Discussion

Apps like mySugr present a number of barriers to accessibility for people with visual impairment. Among them, a major one is the lack of text description or label for images and text in images on the dashboard. This barrier was evidenced in the report by the four Participants, even by those who actually managed to navigate it.

The fact that Participants never got to learn there was an avatar on the dashboard, being caught unprepared with the noise it produced, and the fact that they could not make what other iconic images on the dashboard were are strong indications that they were not able to fully enjoy the app and profit from its many features. This a major hindrance particularly for Participant 1 and Participant 2, who have diabetes and reported not using any app to help manage their chronic condition. Missing explanations for abbreviations and short forms, illegible buttons and tables also curtailed user experience.

Our compiled set of guidelines proved adequate to carry out both our own assessment and that of the users'. A significant finding of our study is that, although there was agreement between our assessment of mySugr as sighted users and theirs, visually impaired users are essential to accessibility checks to enhance accessibility and usability.

Some implications of our study are presented next.

## 6 Implications

Accessibility guidelines are instrumental to the advancement of Universal Design and enhancement of user experience. However, even though guidelines from international consortia are available and companies, too, promote their own accessibility guides to app developers, as is the case of Google's Android and Apple's iOS, app design is far from being inclusive and overall reliance on assistive technologies does not prove very fruitful.

Tapping user experience is hence a key moment in app development and real user's feedback is precious, as our study shows, since visually impaired user experience is dependent on other factors such as age, education, digital literacy and income. User experience is then unique to the visually impaired and cannot be fully predicted from sighted users' perspective. At the same time, user experience is diverse and the more it is tapped, the better insights can be gathered to model an app. Additionally, audiovisual translators' expertise in dealing with accessibility problem solving can be leveraged to query users' needs and preferences and advise app developers and policy makers.

Low digital literacy seems to be one of the toughest barriers for visually impaired people. Further barriers, our study suggests, are low education and low income. In the case of healthcare apps, as one of our Participants suggested, an added source of difficulty, if not the main one, is content accessibility and this impacts both sighted and visually impaired users. In this sense, applied linguists may contribute their experience to develop accessible healthcare content in the broad sense of the term, contributing to promote healthcare literacy and management both for sighted and non-sighted users.

Another aspect to be considered are the different profiles of blind and low vision users, as well as those of users with congenital and acquired visual impairment. Such profiles involve the existence or absence of memories or visual representations, requiring the adoption of different strategies to describe visual content for distinct target users (Mayer 2017).<sup>4</sup> In this regard, audiovisual translators are better prepared to deal with those demands than app developers.

It is our contention that in order for a user with visual impairment to fully enjoy an app, the audiovisual translator should play a major role in all stages of app design, guiding designers and programmers regarding the need to predict accessibility issues, including successful working of assistive technologies.

## 7 Future Prospects

Audiovisual translation has been hitherto oriented towards promoting integration, rather than inclusion, of people with disabilities. Through different modalities and various degrees of human-machine interfaces, audiovisual translation has been operating on a post-production basis, which significantly restricts its potential to allow for overcoming barriers.

Within the broad scope of Universal Design and inclusion, accessible app design is expected to become a standard mode of production and audiovisual translation to expand its potential by showing its impact on various disciplinary fields other than translation studies and leveraging studies within the field of computer science, especially those related to user experience and human-machine interaction. A discussion of the kinds of competencies and skills that audiovisual translator education needs to develop is sure to include Universal Design literacy.

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<sup>4</sup>In order to reach the widest coverage within the spectrum of visually impaired subjects, it is recommended to adopt congenital blindness as default target audience for accessibility actions. This is because, once the needs of these subjects are met by accessibility tools, the needs of other subjects will also be met.

## 8 Final Remarks

The study reported on in this chapter is participant-oriented and involved a very small sample of a largely ignored population of visually impaired people. Its results, however, offer rich insights into distinct aspects of accessibility that need to be considered if we seek to adopt a Universal Design framework as a way to inclusive practices.

Existing guidelines prove useful to assess app accessibility and are expected to be applicable in the context of accessible app design from product conception. New guidelines are certain to emerge out of the collaboration between audiovisual translators and app designers and promote innovative solutions towards a more inclusive user experience.

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# 24

## Decision-Making: Putting AVT and MA into Perspective

Mikołaj Deckert

### 1 Introduction

The translator's decision-making is approached here with a focus on how decisions are arrived at more than what the available decision options (and their implications) are. In other words, the objective is not to examine the decisions in the sense of following different paths with respect to a specific problem, as would be the case with following a set of guidelines and choosing between strategies (e.g. domestication vs. foreignisation) or procedures that could be differently endemic to dubbing, subtitling or audio description. Rather, the chapter reviews selected factors and mechanisms involved in making translation decisions, with a special emphasis on audiovisual translation and media accessibility. The overall objective is to argue that these decisions result from complex processes which are critically shaped by varied interrelated determinants, including cognitive, physical and organisational ones.

The chapter first briefly talks about the theoretical frameworks that have been employed in research to look into the translator's choices. This serves as an introduction to a more general discussion of the empirically-based proposals on how humans make decisions, not limited to translation. I then return to translation and give examples of factors that shape translation choices, as well as studies that empirically explore these factors.

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## 2 Frameworks for Investigating Translation Decisions

The translator's decisions can be examined against different theoretical frameworks, or sets of tenets and objectives, to guide research. When it comes to AVT, a number of such frameworks have been used to accommodate empirical work and its interpretation.

To begin with, one notable framework is Descriptive Translation Studies (DTS). Its applicability to AVT has been discussed quite extensively (Delabastita 1989; Assis Rosa 2018) and demonstrated in the work of Gutiérrez Lanza (2011) looking back at censorship found in foreign productions in Spain, Szarkowska (2013) who looked into forms of address in subtitled, and Ranzato (2016) who investigated the dubbing of cultural references. The motivation behind DTS is to identify norms (Schäffner 1998), or patterns in translation solutions, and then to look for answers as to how/why those patterns come about (Chaume 2018: 46). The actual work that brings together AVT and DTS is succinctly summarised by Chaume (2018: 44–45) who says that the research practice would be to:

compile coherent catalogues of dubbed and subtitled audiovisual texts in their own target languages, and they sought to describe—from an intentionally detached perspective—the macrotextual and microtextual operations that the original text underwent in order to match the target language and culture conventions.

What is more, in support of the framework's applicability, Díaz-Cintas (2004: 31) opines that “to speak of polysystems, norms and patronage locates the academic within a theoretical framework that, if shared with other scholars, facilitates the debate and speeds up an exchange of ideas and information”. One quality of DTS is that it invariably captures a way of thinking of translation in a fairly broad sense. As a way of narrowing down the scope, let us briefly focus on some more linguistically-driven approaches that have been proposed.

Among these, pragmatics (e.g. Huang 2017) is well represented. It has repeatedly been showed to have the potential to account for choices made by translators in the audiovisual context (Pedersen 2008; Guillot 2010, 2012; Remael 2003) with examples from a range of problems like vocatives (Bruti and Perego 2005, 2008), compliments (Bruti 2006; Bączkowska and Kieś 2012) and expletives (Bączkowska 2013). Some pragmatically-based work produced insights of didactic character (Skuggevik 2009).

Another prominent framework, one closely linked to pragmatics, is that of Relevance Theory (Sperber and Wilson 1986/1995). Bogucki (2004) put forward a model of subtitling procedures resting on the relevance-theoretic principles of communication, and the theory has been implemented in the audiovisual context to address translationally the notions of humour (Martínez-Sierra 2010; Pai 2017) and puns (Díaz-Pérez 2014). In turn, Desilla (2012, 2014) draws on Relevance Theory to propose a cognitive-pragmatic account of the problem of implicature comprehension and translation in film.

Another useful set of premises is offered by cognitive linguistics (e.g. Dancygier 2017).

Scholars such as Iranmanesh (2014), Schmidt (2014) and Pedersen (2015, 2017) draw on the cognitive linguistic understanding of metaphor to talk about how different metaphor types are dealt with in subtitling. In turn, Deckert (2013) proposes to see the subtitler's choices in terms of construal reconfigurations and Levshina (2017) gives a cognitively-grounded corpus-based account of T/V forms of address in subtitling.

One more framework to be pointed to is that of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) (Halliday and Matthiessen 2004). Kovačič (1996) uses the lens of SFL to look into what she terms “subtitling strategies” and da Silva (1998) talks about transitivity patterns in subtitling and draws conclusions about the linguistic portrayal of a film character. Espindola (2012) uses SFL to examine the language of subtitling and Matielo et al. (2015) look into reduction in the metafunctional dimension of subtitles.

Clearly, this short review could be extended to at least mention some of the other frameworks that have been showed to yield valuable insights into audio-visual translation and media accessibility. These include narratology (Vandaele 2019), stylistics (McIntyre and Lugea 2015; Hołobut et al. 2017) and Action Research (Bogucki 2010; Neves 2018). In addition to noting that this list is not exhaustive, it should be noted that it will often be hardly feasible to put demarcations between these sets of tenets. Rather, it will be more productive to see them as cross-fertilising. The additional issue could be that in many cases the boundary is fuzzy between what could be called a “theoretical framework”, the construct we have been using in this section, and “methodology”, as remarked by Chaume (2018: 45) with respect to DTS as just one case (see also the discussion on corpus linguistics in Bruti's contribution to this volume).

### 3 Human Judgement

The section talks about decision-making by isolating two broad views that have been proposed. One view of human judgement is that it relies solely on declarative information that is rationally analysed to arrive at decisions. The alternative view is to incorporate into the process of decision-making an array of other types of cues as instrumental—and from a revolutionary perspective more basic and faster (Zajonc 1980).

For instance, the facial feedback hypothesis has it that bodily representation of an emotion such as smiling can influence the affective state. Even given some of the disagreements and methodological doubts (cf. Strack et al. 1988) associated with the facial simulation procedure (cf. e.g. Laird 1974) and the dissimulation/exaggeration paradigm (e.g. Zuckerman et al. 1981), it seems safe to assume at least that “facial feedback has a small but reliable moderating effect on the emotional experience and on the evaluation of emotional stimuli” (Kraut 1982: 861). A number of other effects of what is termed “embodied cognition” (Malter 1996; Barsalou 2008) have been reported. For instance, Hung and Labroo (2011) demonstrated that firming one’s muscles can strengthen willpower and then play a role in withstanding unpleasant experiences or resisting temptation. Broaders et al. (2007) and Goldin-Meadow et al. (2009) showed that gesturing ameliorates mathematical performance. In turn, Schnall et al. (2010) found that higher energetic states after having a glucose-rich drink make one estimate the slant of slopes as smaller, which supports the hypothesis that conceptualisation of space is influenced by bio-energetic considerations. Another domain of experience that has been extensively investigated is temperature. Williams and Bargh (2008) pointed to a relationship between the experience of physical warmth and interpersonal warmth. Zhong and Leonardelli (2008) looked into social exclusion and postulated that it influenced individuals’ estimations of physical coldness, while others (Sanfey et al. 2003; Kang et al. 2010) argued for links between temperature and trust. In that vein, Bargh and Shalev (2012) posit there is an unconscious self-regulatory mechanism whereby social warmth is compensated for with physical warmth, for instance warm showers (cf. Shalev and Bargh 2015). Another kind of physiological-psychological relationship has been found using neuroimaging data indicating that physical pain and pain in the psychological sense, as experienced in contexts of social exclusion, share neural correlates (Eisenberger et al. 2003).

Judgement has also been shown to be swayed by affect (cf. Yeung and Wyer 2004; Schwarz and Clore 1983; Clore et al. 2001). This links to another

source of information—metacognition—in the sense that the experience of thinking itself feeds into the process together with the conceptual content that is thought about (cf. Flavell 1979; Tversky and Kahneman 1973; Schwarz et al. 1991; Alter and Oppenheimer 2009). In that line of work, a notable parameter is that of how easy it subjectively feels to process a stimulus, which is commonly referred to as “processing fluency” (cf. e.g. Reber and Greifeneder 2017). Its effects have been identified in a number of experiential domains. Witherspoon and Allan (1985) discuss evidence indicating that fluency in stimulus processing—resulting from prior presentation of a stimulus— influences duration judgements. In the domain of hearing, Jacoby et al. (1988) found that ease of interpretation of messages presented against noise influenced judgements of noise, while in the visual domain Reber et al. (2004) found that processing fluency has a positive effect on aesthetic pleasure. In yet another experiential domain, Masson et al. (1995) and Jacoby et al. (1989) identified relations between fluency and fame ascription, while Song and Schwartz discussed their findings on processing fluency and risk (Song and Schwarz 2009) as well as processing fluency, difficulty estimation and motivation (Song and Schwarz 2008). Analogous mechanisms have been reported for truthfulness judgements (Begg et al. 1992; Reber and Schwarz 1999; McGlone and Tofaghbakhsh 2000), and in a social perspective processing fluency has also been demonstrated to modulate interpersonal prejudice (Rubin et al. 2010; Lick and Johnson 2013).

As this brief and selective review seeks to signal, the range of non-declarative, or experiential factors (cf. Winkielman et al. 2003) that can guide decision-making is very broad. Given the nature of translation, with AVT and MA as a case in point, it stands to reason that translatorial decisions will be analogously subject to these factors. Indeed, studies of this persuasion have been accumulating. What follows is a review of selected work that more or less explicitly draws on the dual formulation of human judgement presented above by shedding light on some of the factors behind the translator’s choices.

## 4 Ergonomics of Translation

A dynamic subfield of research in translation that should be discussed in some detail here can be termed “ergonomics”. Ehrensberger-Dow (2017: 335) summarises the ergonomic view of translation as one that “requires taking into consideration the factors and actors that can affect translators as they do their work and make their decisions”. The notion of ergonomics subsumes three main types, or “domains of specialisation”, as proposed by the International

Ergonomics Association (<http://www.iea.cc/whats/index.html>): physical, cognitive and organisational.

## 4.1 Physical Ergonomics

The subarea of physical ergonomics deals with how physical activity is influenced by “anatomy, anthropometry, biomechanics, physiology, and the physical environment”.<sup>1</sup> In the case of translation this domain of ergonomics will importantly have to do with the use of computer and the peripheral devices. The prolonged and repetitive use of such devices can lead to health problems. For instance, the use of keyboard and mouse can cause hand and wrist tendonitis, carpal tunnel syndrome and cubital tunnel syndrome (Ehrensberger-Dow 2017; de León 2007; Lavault-Olléon 2011). Other aspects to be taken into account include office layout, room temperature and airflow, visual as well as auditory stimuli (e.g. lighting, noise) and furniture design (cf. Starrett and Cordoza 2016; Salvendy 2012). Research indicates that the design is frequently insufficiently adapted to translator needs (Ehrensberger-Dow and O’Brien 2015; Ehrensberger-Dow et al. 2016). To give one example, questionnaire research (Ehrensberger-Dow et al. 2016: 8) reveals that the height of the screen was in accordance with recommendations (slightly below eye level) only in the case of 39% of respondents, and only 30% used two monitors when translating. Perhaps most strikingly, 19% of translators worked using a screen smaller than 20 cm × 30 cm. At the same time 91% of the respondents stated they found the display size to be sufficient. This is thought-provoking given that translation requires often a few windows to be visually accessible at the same time. While the questionnaire was not directed specifically at audio-visual translators, in the case of AVT the additional factor to consider is access to the video as translation is produced in which case even more space would be taken up on the screen.

## 4.2 Organisational Ergonomics

Moving on, the organisational facet of ergonomics is concerned with problems such as “communication, crew resource management, work design, design of working times, teamwork, participatory design, community ergonomics, cooperative work, new work paradigms, virtual organizations,

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.usabilitybok.org/physical-ergonomics>.

telework, and quality management".<sup>2</sup> With respect to translation, a very relevant differentiation here will be whether one works as a part of a company or as a freelancer. It is pointed out by Ehrensberger-Dow (2017: 338) that "commercial and institutional translators enjoy less self-determination over their workload and workflow" and they may feel greater pressure which is reflected in the fact that they take fewer breaks than freelancers. On the other hand, they get the benefit of "more opportunities to discuss translation problems with colleagues, and better support for their infrastructure and workflow". Other parameters to be taken into account are how much influence the translator has over planning and organising their tasks, and this can range from decisions on which assignment to accept to also some more textual constraints imposed by resources (e.g. style guides, translation memories) and tools preferred by clients (Ehrensberger-Dow and Massey 2014a, b; Massey and Ehrensberger-Dow 2011). Another vital consideration, partly hinted at already above, is how much feedback translators receive on their work, and this can be an issue in the case of freelance translators (Ehrensberger-Dow et al. 2016).

Finally, an aspect of organisation ergonomics that now plays an important role is technology. This is particularly significant in the case of AVT and MA, where software is in common use. It should be noted that while intended to facilitate the translator's work, language technology tools may in fact work conversely, especially when they are not introduced properly or are not properly taking translator needs into account (Doherty and King 2005; Ehrensberger-Dow 2017).

### 4.3 Cognitive Ergonomics

Cognitive ergonomics has to do with the role of "mental processes, such as perception, memory, reasoning, and motor response" in shaping an individual's interactions at work, in a broad sense not limited to interactions with other individuals. As is pointed out by Ehrensberger-Dow (2017: 33), in the case of translation a relevant notion will be the interaction mediated via a range of interfaces and applications such as computer-assisted translation (CAT) tools, grammar and spelling checkers, or terminology tools. While the progressing technologisation of the profession of translation brings benefits, there are some caveats. When it comes to the risk associated with CAT tools and translation memories (Heyn 1998; Bowker 2005; Ehrensberger-Dow and

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.iea.cc/whats/index.html>.

Massey 2014a; Doherty 2016), they can make the translator's decision-making more local whereby mere sentences are treated as units of translation and the broader view of the entire text is not sufficiently considered, which might affect the target text's cohesion. Likewise, the use of translation memories could lead to overreliance on the machine-prompted variants and decrease the translator's vigilance. Another risk is that an overly limited pool of expressions could be intentionally reused by translators to minimise the complexity of their linguistic output and in turn maximise the number of matches found in the translation memory.

Another crucial element subsumed under cognitive ergonomics is work stress which can naturally be conditioned by various factors, many of which will be found in the physical and (likely even more so) organisational facets of ergonomics. To give one example, as pointed out by Ehrensberger-Dow and Hunziker Heeb (2016: 72), a stress-inducing factor could be delays in human-computer interactions (Szameitat et al. 2009). This, by extension, links to another important and largely unexplored component of translator behaviour and cognition—*affect*—which has already received scholarly attention in translation (cf. e.g. Lehr 2014; Hubscher-Davidson 2017; Rojo and Caro 2018) and in audio description (Caro and Rojo 2014; Ramos 2015; Caro 2016)<sup>3</sup> but remains to be further examined with AVT and MA in mind.

Finally, on a more general level, and at a larger timescale, it should be kept in mind that delegating cognitively demanding tasks to computer applications is sure to impinge on human cognitive performance. While we could argue that what is delegated are the more repetitive tasks in order to save human cognitive resources for some more creative tasks, this could still have some downsides, for instance in terms of decreased versatility of human reasoning, and should not be taken for granted.

## 5 Controlling Decisions: From Ergonomics to Automaticity

According to the International Ergonomics Association other examples of problems covered by cognitive ergonomics will be mental effort and skilled performance. Keeping this in mind, a link can be drawn from cognitive ergonomics to a related notion—that of automatic decision-making, or the degree to which the translator's choices result from effortful deliberation, as opposed to quick uncontrolled reactions. Those mechanisms have been examined quite

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<sup>3</sup>The names “Caro” and “Ramos” refer to the same author.

extensively in psychology (e.g. Evans and Frankish 2009), and aspects of automatic processing have been a subject of inquiry in translation studies in different methodological and terminological guises (cf. e.g. Tirkkonen-Condit 2005; Carl and Dragsted 2012; Schaeffer and Carl 2013; Halverson 2015; Hvelplund 2016). Audiovisual translation appears to be a well-suited field when it comes to automaticity additionally because of the multisemiotic nature of meanings constructed. One question would be whether the automatic target variant is going to be used with a lower degree of probability in audiovisual contexts given that the visual and auditory stimuli offer information that might effect a switch to non-automatic processing. The findings reported by Deckert (2015, 2016) indicate that this need not be the case, at least in a context where automated target variants are not optimal, likely because in addition to providing more clues due to its polysemioticity, the audiovisual material also requires extra attentional resources which could otherwise be used to process text and possibly identify elements whose automatic rendition could be suboptimal. Clearly, more work is necessary to grasp the mechanisms of reflexive decision-making in AVT and MA. New work could analyse how these cognitive processes operate in translation or audio description, taking into account the fact that in these types of activity the role of software will often be bigger than in modes of translation that deal primarily with written text. Another facet to be explored with the automatic-deliberative distinction in mind will be reception, that is for instance estimating how deeply (different types of) audiences process the material they are presented with as part of the target product. Such insights into product reception can then naturally inform training and ultimately feed back into the producer's (audio describer's, script translator's, subtitler's, etc.) decision-making.

## 6 Factors Behind Decisions: Audiovisual Contexts

In the context of translation, research guided by the principles discussed above dovetails with the postulates of what can be called the embodiment and situatedness of cognition (cf. Risku 2017), or 4EA cognition (Muñoz Martín 2017) where cognitive processes are understood as embodied, embedded, enactive, extended, as well as affective (cf. Sect. 3 above). While these approaches are appealing and have large potential, they have scarcely been instantiated in research when it comes to AVT and MA even though the

construct of embodiment has been shed light on from the perspective of the viewer (Kruger et al. 2016).

What follows is a selective review of the research that addresses the audio-visual translator's decision-making in line with some of these postulates (see also the contribution by Massey and Jud in this volume). To begin with, empirical work looking into the process and underpinnings of translation production in the context of AVT and MA is scarce. One such study is reported by Hvelplund (2017) who looked into trainees' cognitive processing—evidenced by eye-tracking data—across the source text, target text, dictionary and film, as the trainees created dubbing scripts. The multi-method study by Pagano et al. (2011) dealt with subtitling and among other things analysed the translators' cognitive rhythm, that is, how time-consuming different stages of the subtitling production process were. Importantly, the parameter that this work analysed comparatively was the performance of professional and novice subtitlers. In turn, Kuo (2015) used questionnaires to gain a better understanding of parameters like remuneration, timeframes, software use, quality control, as well as availability and quality of materials provided to the subtitler as part of the assignment. Interestingly, she also looked into the issue of whether subtitlers are credited as authors, and whether they in fact see that as desirable—an issue which has deservedly been more and more recognised also beyond AVT and MA (cf. e.g. Jarniewicz 2018).

In her PhD dissertation Beuchert (2017) reviews a range of matters that make up the process of producing subtitles. She proposes to see the different factors as divided into three categories and creating a nexus of influences. The category labelled “external elements” includes those that can be observed by anyone around including subtitling workflow, subtitling brief, technical preparation and work environment. Then, “intersectional elements” comprise subtitling competences, subtitle layout, translation aids, software, manuscript (i.e. the film transcript) and target viewers. Finally, “internal elements” are those that have to do with the subtitler's mental operations: spatio-temporal considerations, linguistic considerations, doubt, affective factors, knowledge, loyalty to the ST, personal preferences. I bring in the list of elements to show how complex the decision procedure is. While one might argue that the tripartite model is problematic because not all of the factors seem to be at a similar level of granularity (e.g. target viewers vs. subtitle layout), the crucial point is that each of these elements will have components that can then be further subdivided. What is relevant to the point I am making in this contribution is that in addition to being multifaceted, the process of translating has to be thought of as the resultant of factors that have not yet received the scholarly attention they deserve. So of the things to consider for example, as reported

by Beuchert (2017), are that merely 27% of respondents always received the film script when subtitling, and 60% of respondents stated they often received the script. From another angle, 12% of subtitlers stated they received information on the target audience. On yet another level, some of the subtitlers said they worked from home while others typically need to book a desk to work at well in advance. Such findings are very thought-provoking and can serve as good starting points for studies in audiovisual translation and media accessibility.

Another portion of insights into the considerations that to some extent shape decisions in the audiovisual context comes from Orrego-Carmona et al. (2018) who ran experiments examining how different groups of subtitlers (professionals vs. trainees) engage with a single piece of subtitling software, on the one hand, and how a group of professional subtitlers engage with different subtitling programmes, on the other hand. With respect to the latter, they established that the choice of subtitling programme (EdList vs. EZTitles) visibly influenced the process of subtitle production. Differences were found in attention distribution as subjects working with EdList allocated more attention to the subtitles and the video compared to the participants using EZTitles. Notably, the two programmes differently rely on the use of keyboard and mouse as EZTitles makes it possible to use keyboard shortcuts more extensively. This was reflected in the findings as the EZTitles group had significantly more mouse clicks, which clearly links to ergonomics and risks such as repetitive strain injury which can be consequential beyond the physical level since the translator's physical ailment can affect their behaviour on the cognitive level as well. Another interesting inter-group difference was found in the actual translation choices. The subtitles produced by subjects working with EdLists on average had significantly fewer characters than those produced by subtitlers using EZTitles. While the authors point out this result has to be interpreted taking into account variables like changing industry standards or the characteristics of the professionals comprising the respective groups, it poses a very interesting question that is sure to receive scholarly attention. One explanatory hypothesis can be related to attention distribution differences, as mentioned earlier. In that sense the EZTitles group could have considered multiple target variants more carefully—which would be expressed by attending more to the video and the subtitles—explaining the higher degree of text reduction than in the EZTitles group which in turn spent around four times as much time as the EdList participants consulting the internet. The authors postulate these patterns could imply the priorities of the groups are not the same, with the EdList group aiming for text reduction more and the

EZTitles group being more concerned with target text quality and equivalence (Orrego-Carmona et al. 2018: 172).

## 7 Concluding Remarks

After talking about some of the available frameworks for decision-making inquiry and addressing decision-making in a more general fashion, this chapter has attempted to outline the idea that the translator's decisions are not the mere outcome of objective, disembodied and contextless computation and variant weighing. The body of research discussed here indicates that the alternative view, one where decisions are shaped by multifarious forces and parameters, offers a promising avenue for empirically-grounded translation research. It should be emphasised that these forces and parameters can be beyond the translator's control or even awareness, and while they are not always easily traceable, or perhaps because of that, they should not be underappreciated.<sup>4</sup> This point is applicable to researchers attempting to probe translator choices, but also to other agents like translation companies and clients, and most vitally, translators themselves. In other words, irrespective of whether one approaches the translator's decision-making from a research perspective or from a more commercial vantage point it has to be borne in mind that translators, and for that matter individuals working in audiovisual translation and media accessibility, "operate in a dynamic and complex system of societal expectations, information sources, technological aids, economic demands, organizational requirements, and physical constraints" (Ehrensberger-Dow and Massey 2014a: 59). Finally, when it comes to AVT and MA more specifically, it seems natural to expect that with more (types of) stimuli in those mode compared to non-audiovisual translation, and ever-growing degree of reliance on technology, the range of factors shaping translatorial decision will also be wider, which makes the need for a holistic conceptualisation of translatorial decision-making even more evident.

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<sup>4</sup> Highlighting the interrelatedness of factors behind decision-making, another aspect is to what extent some of these factors can be adapted in real life. For example, a piece of software can be suboptimal when it comes to its functionalities—which in turn can have negative implications for an individual's working process and decision-making—but switching to a more optimal variant could be too costly or may be precluded due to other formal or practical reasons.

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# 25

## Technology and Audiovisual Translation

Lindsay Bywood

### 1 Introduction

Audiovisual translation (AVT), by its very nature, has always been associated with technology. Without technology, it could be argued, there would be no AVT, as the source material for the translation in question is generally a piece of audiovisual media of some description, itself technical in nature, and audiovisual translators need technology to enable their translations to be used, that is, broadcast with the source material in some way. Although the earliest beginnings of film subtitling could be viewed as being extremely low in technological content, being ‘intertitles’—pieces of card or paper containing the relevant text that were filmed, with those portions placed between existing action sequences of the film (Ivarsson 2009: 3)—this method soon gave way to other practices that produced subtitles more akin to those we see today, inevitably with increasing amounts of technology support. This chapter will examine technology in both subtitling and dubbing, treating them as separate disciplines for the sake of this exercise, since the technology involved is significantly disparate, but will not look in any depth at the use of technology in accessibility practice, as this is covered in other chapters (see e.g. the contribution by Szarkowska in this volume). There will also be no explicit mention of voice-over, since the translation aspect of this practice does not yield any

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particular technological issues at present, and the recording aspect is covered in the dubbing section.

Inextricably linked as it was and is to the film and television industry, and later to the development of audiovisual content on the internet, AVT has enjoyed a similar exponential rise in the use of technology in all aspects of its delivery. Writing in 2013, Gambier says:

Digital technology has changed and is changing AV production [...], distribution and projection. (Gambier in Millán and Bartrina 2013)

Digital technology is just one of the advances in the media sphere that has had a direct effect on the practice of audiovisual translation. This chapter will consider first the effect of technology on the source and target text, then examine technology and subtitling; machine translation in an AVT context; machine learning and other applications in AVT; technology and dubbing; and finish with a look at workflow software in the AVT industry. Some suggestions for further reading will be offered.

## 2 A Word on the Source Text/Target Text

In contrast with the wider translation industry, the AVT industry has always had to deal with a certain element of technologization, even if purely in terms of the source text (ST), which would initially have been film, and, more recently video, moving from tape to DVD to streamed files (Georgakopoulou and Bywood 2014).

From a historical point of view, while text translators were still working from hard copy paper or faxes, the subtitler or dubbing translator, or rather the subtitling or dubbing company employing the translator, was managing broadcast quality Betacam tapes, film prints viewed in a specialist viewing room, or a VHS copy of the original master (Whitman-Linsen 1992). To be a subtitler required knowledge of how to work with the medium of your source text, at the very least, whatever that might be.

Since the advent of digital media, it could be argued that the ability to work with technology has become more crucial for the AVT translator, who will receive digital media, usually via the internet, whilst the software involved in translation of this nature has made the actual process of translating or, in particular, subtitling, easier to manage for even the most technophobic person.

The subtitle translator has similarly always had to be conversant with a certain amount of technology in terms of the target text for delivery. Whilst a

dubbing translator might, in the early days, have been called upon to deliver nothing more than a typewritten script, the subtitle translator has for many decades had to be attuned to his/her client's needs in terms of delivery of an electronic file of the correct format, with the correct name and possibly zero title,<sup>1</sup> in preparation for laser printing, broadcast, burning in or DVD authoring. The use of differing broadcast hardware and software by TV stations and the changes in cinema technology meant that a subtitler could be required to deliver any number of different file formats and, up until recently, many of these formats were not compatible with one another and required substantial technical expertise to convert from one to another. In contrast with many other branches of the translation industry, the responsibility for the 'production' part of the process, that is, the conversion of the words or text into a usable format for the client, sits usually with the subtitler, or with the subtitling company, and not with the client themselves.

### 3 Subtitling and Technology

#### 3.1 Subtitling Preparation Software

Although the earliest subtitlers were working with paper and pencil, since the advent of the desktop PC, the subtitler has been compelled to engage with technology. Around the same time as the mass introduction of PC hardware in the workplace, specialist software for subtitling was being developed, such as Scantitling,<sup>2</sup> WinCAPs,<sup>3</sup> Poliscript<sup>4</sup> and Swift.<sup>5</sup>

These software programmes enabled subtitling to be carried out more quickly and efficiently. Initially the software was DOS-based, and the workstation comprised a VHS player with jog shuttle—though sometimes without—a TV monitor, a caption generator and a PC with said subtitling software. In the latter half of the 1990s, Windows-type interfaces became ubiquitous, internal caption generators were introduced, and with the widespread adoption of Unicode, subtitling software entered a new phase. Thanks to digitization and internal movie-player software, it was possible to

<sup>1</sup>The zero title is a subtitle inserted before the programme starts with information for the transmission system. Some proprietary software requires such a title, while for some systems it is not necessary. Those systems that require or required a zero title are often intolerant of any errors in said title.

<sup>2</sup>First developed by Å Holm in 1989 and sold by Cavena Image Products AB.

<sup>3</sup>First developed by A Lamourne in 1984 and sold by Sysmedia Ltd.

<sup>4</sup>Developed and sold by Screen Subtitling Systems from 2001.

<sup>5</sup>Developed and sold by Softel Ltd.

eschew external VHS players. As clients began to move to tapeless workflows, the need for hard copy media decreased. Domestic broadband spread rapidly, at least in Europe where subtitling companies were traditionally based, enabling the rapid movement and delivery of both source text assets and target text deliverables. Alongside these developments, international subtitling companies began to develop their own in-house subtitle preparation software, in order to maintain a competitive advantage.

As expounded by Díaz Cintas “As in many other professions, technical advancements have had a profound impact on the subtitling praxis. [...] Would-be subtitlers are expected to demonstrate high technical know-how and familiarity with increasingly more powerful subtitling software” (Díaz-Cintas 2015). It is certainly true that subtitling work demands a certain level of ease with technology and a willingness and ability to adapt to changing working conditions. Once the subtitling workforce was able to be dispersed geographically, and the requirement for subtitlers to work in the subtitling company’s offices was removed, it became the norm for vendor companies to give cut-down versions of proprietary or bespoke software to their freelance subtitlers, enabling them to work at home and produce files in the correct formats. Such software was usually only able to output files in a company-specific format, meaning that they could not use this software to work for any other client. As a consequence, freelance subtitlers often had several different software packages installed on their PCs.

The advent of Web. 2.0, and the increase in open source software and software developers supported the proliferation of different types of subtitling software, from freeware such as Subtitle Workshop or Aegisub to midrange software such as EZtitles and DotSub, adding to the existing top end subtitling software such as listed above. With each development in terms of processing power, connectivity and web capability, the subtitling software developers reacted and new developers joined the group of people working in the field. It was now commonplace for subtitling software at the mid-to-high end of the price scale to incorporate various efficiency tools, including a representation of the video soundwave, to aid timing, and thumbnail representation of the video pictures, to aid timing around shot-changes. From fairly early on in the life of subtitle preparation software, practitioners had the capability to check various technical issues before delivering their files to their client. Initially issues such as overlapping timecodes and reading speed were able to be verified, but such quality assurance tools have become increasingly sophisticated, such that now files can be checked against client profiles for any number of linguistic and technical problems.

The arrival of cloud computing brought with it cloud software and established players moved online (see also the contribution by Bolaños-García-Escribano and Díaz-Cintas in this volume). Players such as Sfera and Oona were among the first to offer subtitling software that was hosted remotely and did not require downloading. Such online software had been used for some time by fansubbing communities and the availability of online portals then supported the possibility of crowdsourcing subtitling, such as happens for Ted Talks, in that case via the popular Amara platform.

The aforementioned efficiency tools incorporated into the more high-end software include automatic speech recognition software to produce a transcript or first pass subtitle file, and automatic speech alignment tools—used to align the transcript or screenplay, or indeed subtitles, with the actual audio from the video—resulting in a roughly timed subtitle file that practitioners can use as a basis for their work. Another interesting and useful utility that is also present in some subtitle preparation packages is a tool for extracting the dialogue text from a screenplay and splitting it into subtitles with speaker labels. This is done using punctuation rules and is of practical use for both same-language subtitling and interlingual subtitling.

It seems likely that the future of subtitling software lies in the cloud, with most of the major operators moving online and almost all of the international subtitling companies providing some sort of cloud-based subtitling solution to their freelance workforce. In terms of efficiency tools, it seems that automation has gone as far as it can currently go with the state-of-the-art in the underlying technology, and the next hurdle to be conquered is efficiency support for the translation process.

### 3.2 Machine Translation

Despite this immersion in technology from the early days of the industry, the AVT branch has been slower than other translation domains in embracing technological efficiency tools for the translation part of the process (Georgakopoulou and Bywood 2014). In the wider translation industry, computer-assisted translation (CAT) tools such as translation memory (TM) have been widely adopted since the late 1990s (Krüger 2016). Despite some efforts on the part of both subtitling companies and software developers, there has not been a significant uptake of such tools in the subtitling domain, although in 2018, Transperfect, the world's largest provider of translations and translation technology launched Media.Next, a cloud-based audiovisual translation platform that is based on TM technology and incorporates

MT ([Transperfect 2018](#)). Providers of TM software such as STAR, memoQ and WordBee are also incorporating video playback technology into their packages. As yet, such software does not seem to be gaining ground within the professional subtitling community but is more often used by mainstream translation companies tasked with small amounts of corporate subtitling that they do not wish to outsource to experienced subtitling companies.

Similarly, with machine translation (MT), it was felt for many years that subtitling, as an open domain, was unsuited to the use of MT, which historically had performed better in closed semantic domains and with restricted language. That said, there are some historical examples of the successful implementation of MT in subtitling workflows.

Popowich et al. ([1997](#)) reports on a rule-based MT system which has been designed to translate closed captions into Spanish, citing findings from human post-editors that two-thirds of the sentences were understandable. There is no evidence, however, that this system was ever intended for or used in commercial subtitle production. It is certainly the case that a phrase-based proprietary system was in use in Scandinavia for documentary content in the early 2000s, before being replaced by a statistical MT system, as described in Volk ([2008](#)), which translated Swedish subtitles into Norwegian and Danish subtitles that were then post-edited. There have been a number of EU-funded projects that have looked at the possibility of incorporating MT into the subtitling workflow from various angles, including MUSA (Multilingual Subtitling of MultimedA content) and e-Title, and the large-scale SUMAT (An online service for SUbtitling by MAchine Translation) project, that was successful in building SMT engines in nine language pairs and evaluating their output using human post-editors ([Etchegoyhen et al. 2014](#)). These promising developments were scuppered by the inability of the project consortium to agree on a future direction for the project once funding was finished, and these engines were not adopted commercially on any large scale. The use of MT to translate subtitles for Massively Open Online Courses (MOOCs) was investigated by the TraMOOC project ([Castilho et al. 2018](#)) which took place from 2015 to 2018 and incorporated the newer paradigm of Neural Machine Translation (NMT) into its activities. There have been several research projects that have built MT systems for subtitles since the advent of NMT, but these studies tend to be small and focus on one aspect of the process, such as reception or automatic metric comparison. A recent study by Matusov, Wilken and Georgakopoulou ([2019](#)) describes the building of an NMT system specifically for the translation of subtitles, incorporating some context recognition and length and duration constraints, resulting in encouraging results against both human and automatic metrics, although only two post-editors were

involved in the evaluation. There is no public information concerning whether any of this research has been commercially adopted in the larger international subtitling companies, but anecdotal evidence suggests that some systems are in use, with others in development.

Georgakopoulou (2019) reports on a system called TranslateTV, offered by the company VoxFrontera, that has been translating closed captions from English into Spanish for TV stations in the United States since 2003. The same company also offers a service called AutoVOX, which provides text to speech translation of English captions into Spanish voice. It is unclear whether this company is still operating as its web presence has not been recently updated.

On the other hand, a company by the name of Omniscien are reporting that their systems are in use across several broadcasters in the Asia-Pacific region, most notably iFlix, an internet TV provider with over 5 million subscribers (figure from 2017) across 25 countries. They state that their software offers “full automation of the process with human quality checks or post-editing” into 22 languages, using both SMT and NMT (Omniscien 2018).

Omniscien advertise their platform—Media Studio—which claims to automatically extract dialogue from screenplays, create timing for the resulting subtitles using the video content, or alternatively to use speech to text to create subtitles in the absence of scripts or storyboards, then use machine translation to produce translated subtitles ready for broadcast. Georgakopoulou (2019) describes a similar system from Apptek, which appears to be mostly used by companies active in the corporate subtitling sector, but is also currently deployed in a broadcaster in the Middle East. As discussed above, all of the processes incorporated in these platforms are currently tested and in use in various applications, with varying results. No data is currently available regarding the quality evaluation or reception of these subtitles. In addition, Omniscien also claim to be able to automate other subtitling-specific factors such as the approach to obscenity, reading speed, line length, and shot-change rules (Omniscien 2017).

Of course, one of the most successful and well-known applications of NMT to subtitling is the YouTube captioning system. Users of the online video hosting platform have the option to upload their own subtitles and have them machine translated into a number of languages, or to have same-language subtitles generated and timed using speech recognition and automatic timing rules. Both types of subtitles can be post-edited by the video owner, however anecdotal reports suggest quality is often poor.

A significant development in this area was the announcement by Netflix, at the Media for All Conference in Stockholm in 2019, that they are trialling the

use of NMT in Latin American Spanish, with a view to rolling it out to other language combinations (Rickard 2019). As Netflix have, in recent history, been the drivers of change in the AVT sector, this information is to be seen as noteworthy.

### 3.3 Other Applications of Machine Learning

There are other functions that are currently being performed by machine learning within the AVT context. As already mentioned, for those projects where no script or transcript is available, speech-to-text software can be used to generate an automatic transcript. One such system is Limecraft, which claims 95% accuracy for its speaker-independent system, supplied as part of a cloud-based subtitling package aimed at video production companies.

A transcript can also be automatically split into subtitles using various rules, often based on punctuation, though systems are now being developed that are based on syntax and semantics (Matusov et al. 2019). The resulting file is then aligned with the video using a text-to-speech aligner as described above to create the basis for a template file to be used in subtitling. The EU-funded Compass project (Hagmann-Schlatterbeck 2019), sought to combine the state-of-the-art with the aim being the production of an end-to-end subtitling system which is as automated as possible. At the time of writing, no evaluations of the system were available.

An innovative use of technology in the subtitling domain, though strictly speaking part of the accessibility space, is represented by Smart Caption Glasses, developed by the National Theatre in the UK in conjunction with academics and industry partners (Accenture 2018). These glasses enable deaf and hard-of-hearing theatre goers to access intralingual subtitles in their field of vision, with customizable fonts and colours, thereby widening accessibility to theatre productions. The subtitles are prepared in advance, but cued automatically by the Open Access Smart Capture Technology, using the audio from the production along with lighting and other cues. This technology has the potential to also deliver translated subtitles in future and must surely have applications in other areas.

## 4 Dubbing and Technology

In contrast to the subtitling industry, the dubbing context demonstrates a substantially delayed adoption of technology for the translator. The source text in video form is naturally the same, and the dubbing source text in the form of the script would have moved to a digital format around the same time as this switch happened for the subtitler, however the difference here lies in the target text. In contrast to subtitling, the dubbing translator is not required to have any technological competence beyond the use of a word processor, as dubbing scripts continue to be mainly delivered in simple text files. As Chaume says when discussing the relative slowness of dubbing practices to homogenize: “This may be due to its consideration as an art form (i.e. unlike subtitling, dubbing professionals would subscribe to the idea that they are taking part in an artistic [...] process)” (2012: Xiii).

The technological challenges for the dubbing process are to be found in the recording studio. Aside from the technology one would expect, such as microphones and recording and mixing consoles, the main focus of technological development in the dubbing industry concerns the process of synchronization.

Since the dubbing actors are required to produce their utterances in such a way as to be synchronized with the lips of the source video actor where the lips are visible—known as lip synchrony (Chaume 2012: 68)—various methods have been developed to support them in this. Here, as in other aspects, the dubbing industry is not homogenous. Voice actors working on the first dubbed films sometimes did not even have the film to work with, but were just given their script with intonation instructions. Sometimes these instructions were projected onto a screen, often with the film behind them for reference (Müller 2003). This put a great deal of pressure on the voice artists’ ability to synchronize their lines with the mouth and kinesic movements of the on-screen actor. As technology developed, tools became available to assist in this process.

In the matter of dubbing synchronization, the French (and Québécois) dubbing industry has historically differed from the rest of the world. In France and French-speaking Canada, synchronization has traditionally been facilitated using *la bande rythmo* or rhythmoband. This is a band that runs along the bottom of the screen showing the source video containing the words to be spoken at the time they are to be spoken. The words are written in such a way as to indicate to the dubbing actor how to speak them, for example if they are elongated, the actor will need to speak them slowly, and if they are written

with very small spaces between them, they need to be fitted into a short space of time. The text scrolls along the bottom of the screen, and when each word hits a particular point, usually a bar, that is the cue for the actor to speak that particular word. Paralinguistic sounds such as sighs. are also written on the band. This provides a precise cue for every word and also detailed information about how the words are to be spoken. Originally this rhythmoband was laboriously hand-written onto the clear piece of celluloid that was played over the original film (Chaume 2012: 30) but there is now software that will produce such a rhythmoband digitally and with very little human intervention, using, for example, automatic speech recognition technology to synchronize the original script with the source material. Usually the rhythmoband is produced in the source language and translation then takes place within the same software used to produce the digital rhythmoband. Examples of such software include VoiceQ and Phonations.

In the rest of the world, software is also used for synchronization, and two main methods are employed. The first is a simple system of beeps, where three beeps tells the actor to prepare for their take, and they are to speak on the fourth, silent beep or beat. Sometimes the beeps are replaced by flashes (Chaume 2012: 30). The other method is using what are termed ‘streamers’ or ‘wipes’, that is, two vertical lines on the screen. One of the lines usually moves towards the other, and when they meet is the signal, or cue, for the actor to speak their lines. It is often the case that dubbing software allows the display of the soundwave of the original source material, providing information to the actors on not only synchronization but also intensity of the particular utterance (*ibid.*: 30).

The dubbing industry is also becoming interested in the possibilities of machine translation with some work having been done by computational linguists on speech to speech automation (see e.g. Anumanchipalli et al. 2012) but this work is in its infancy. Recently, Saboo and Baumann (2019) have attempted to build a machine translation engine that will produce output better suited for lip-synchronization, by virtue of each translated utterance having the same number of syllables as the source text wherever possible. The resulting engine did successfully produce output that matched the source text for syllable count and the researchers intend to extend their work to develop engines that can take account of phonetics, and, additionally, which syllables are stressed in the source text. They also propose the development of software to indicate when close-ups and extreme close-ups are present in the source material, such camera techniques requiring particularly detailed attention to lip synchrony. There is no indication in their study that they have worked directly with any dubbing professionals or academics researching dubbing.

Another interesting development for the dubbing industry is what is known as deepfake technology (Day 2019; The Economist 2019). This software allows videos to be manipulated, through the use of artificial intelligence, to realistically show a particular individual saying words that they did not say. Should this ability be further refined and made commercially available in an affordable form, it would seem obvious that it has applications in the foreign-language dubbing sphere.

## 5 Workflow Software

Another facet of audiovisual translation that is relevant to any discussion on technology is the management of the audiovisual supply chain, from content owner to localization vendor to individual subtitler or dubbing translator, and then back up the chain again to the content owner. In the early days of commercial audiovisual translation, vendor companies relied on modified forms of other standard database software to control their processes, or used packages such as Excel to manage workflow. There was a significant amount of reliance on manual recording, memory, and even pen and paper. What has not changed in this respect is that there is no one single industry-standard software package: each company tends to use bespoke software which is programmed and adapted for its particular needs, however such software is now likely to be highly adapted and cloud-based, therefore accessible for the inevitable staff who work remotely, centralized for the international offices of the company, and designed to act as a portal for both clients, partner vendors, and freelancer suppliers alike to access from wherever they happen to find themselves. These software packages are generally a replacement for multiple discrete systems that would have managed freelance resources, studio space, project workflows, customer relationships, financial information and sales data. Such software is likely to be highly automated, with task reminders, resource management in terms of both vendors and other more tangible assets, and interfaces with other systems and with clients. Some audiovisual translation providers prefer to be secretive about their workflow management software whilst others attempt to monetize their in-house software by marketing it to competitors. One interesting example of this is Deluxe One, an overarching cloud-based content delivery system of which subtitling and dubbing is only a very small part. Such a system would only be of interest to companies similar to Deluxe, that is companies that are managing the entire supply chain from content acquisition to delivery; these would generally be companies on the client side, such as broadcasters and aggregators. Other, more targeted

systems better suited to companies with subtitling as their primary service are offered by companies such as Oona and PBT EU.

A recent development in the use of technology to support audiovisual translation that can be said to fall more into the category of workflow software is the launch of ProDub by SDI Media, a smartphone app that claims to want to create “a living community through a network of dubbing industry professionals,” according to the SDI press release of 2019 (SDI Media 2019). Introduced first in Poland and now operational in Germany, the app connects dubbing voice talent with auditions and directors in their field and area and also disseminates industry news (Rose 2019). No data is currently available on the level of uptake of this service, which is an interesting development for a traditional subtitling and dubbing company such as SDI Media, representing as it does a move into the smartphone app space.

## 6 Final Remarks

As in the wider context, technology is central to many, if not most, areas of AVT, and the widespread integration of technological solutions in the sector looks set to continue apace, with cloud solutions and smartphone apps representing the future directions of such development. Technology has always been an integral part of the domain, starting with the source and target texts in the case of subtitling, and the technology employed by the producers of these source texts has, to a certain extent, driven change in this area. This will continue to be the case as streaming services grow in importance and uptake. Developments in artificial intelligence and machine learning will continue to be incorporated into existing software and will stimulate new and interesting tools and ways of working in the sector. These changes may prove unsettling for some, and some practitioners may choose not to keep pace, but those that are responsive and alert to the future directions of the AVT industry will find themselves part of an exciting journey. The exponential growth in translation demand coupled with the constant striving for sophisticated and relevant tools in AVT should give any professional in the sector a reason to look positively towards the future.

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# 26

## The Cloud Turn in Audiovisual Translation

Alejandro Bolaños-García-Escribano  
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### 1 Introduction

Our understanding of audiovisual translation (AVT) seems to have matured rapidly over the last few decades in which the so-called digital age has taken root. Drawing on the very first conceptualisations of AVT as a type of subordinate translation (Mayoral et al. 1988), the rapid and profound evolution of these practices has led to substantially new scenarios and theoretical assumptions in academic circles (Chaume 2018). The significant expansion of AVT practices (i.e. revoicing and subtitling, including accessibility services) seems to be the result of the many ways in which audiovisual programmes are localised nowadays, which have multiplied thanks to the expansion of new technologies such as cloud computing.

One of the catalysts of such growth has been the advent of cloud-based platforms, which, since the turn of the century, are being progressively incorporated in translators' workbenches by a rising number of agents and stakeholders operating in the translation industry (Díaz-Cintas and Massidda 2019). Translation and localisation workflows and methods are indeed directly affected by this progressive migration of work onto cloud environments. Yet, such changes do not seem to be completely new as cloud-based translation ecosystems have been used by large audiovisual media providers and

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translation companies for decades now, in an attempt to move away from less flexible desktop-based solutions and increase access to translation tools among freelance linguists.

It is our belief that the aforementioned changes rightly point to a crucial turn in the study of translation technologies and AVT—the cloud turn. The translation of popular TV series, films, and all sorts of audiovisual programmes is currently being undertaken with the exploitation of proprietary cloud software that translation agencies and service providers tend to share exclusively with their pool of translators (usually) for free. Several caveats notwithstanding, these cloud tools are supposed to reduce costs, improve security against piracy, increase productivity, and enhance connectivity among professionals by providing clients, vendors and end users with an online solution—usually accessed through a browser—that utilises cloud computing to store the files and process the data that are necessary to undertake revoicing or subtitling projects.

Although cloud-based translation systems are currently being developed mostly by private agents in the translation industry, most recent trends in the translation profession have led to a vast increase in the global workflow handled online and to other technical specificities in this ever-changing landscape (Baños-Piñero and Díaz-Cintas 2015). Large media distributors and broadcasters of audiovisual productions are also creating their own proprietary platforms to ultimately improve the overall productivity and quality of the translation outcome achieved by language vendors. On the other hand, smaller translation companies, also known as language and translation service providers (LSPs/TSPs), are also introducing new virtual platforms to help freelance professionals to carry out translation commissions on a pay-as-you-go basis.

Globalisation has, undoubtedly, altered audiences' viewing habits, promoting greater versatility and autonomy. Today, end users are often granted almost instant access to audiovisual programmes and have greater interaction with the videos they watch. Video-on-demand platforms, video-sharing services and social media platforms are exemplary of how the new modes of consumption of audiovisual products have triggered profound transformations in the last few decades (Chaume 2016). Against this backdrop, we would like to argue that many of these changes, especially the instant availability of on-demand videos on the internet, have been unmistakably underpinned by the recent advancements witnessed in cloud computing.

Yet, little research seems to have been conducted so far to take stock of the use of cloud-based systems in the localisation of audiovisual products. Hence,

in this paper we set out to map out and analyse some of the most significant changes that the cloud has triggered in the localisation of audiovisual productions in recent years.

## 2 Defining Cloud-Based Systems

Starting off in the late 1990s and spreading over the early noughties, cloud computing commenced as a niche market in many business industries. It has now outgrown the scarce early systems, experiencing a vast and quick expansion around the globe. In the age of big data, the exponential growth of cloud systems has led to a major turn in the ways in which we use applications and store information, as illustrated in the works of authors like Antonopoulos and Gillian (2017). It is commonly agreed that cloud computing “has changed how organizations should assess and mitigate information security risks because of the significant changes in how computing resources are technically designed, operated and governed” (BSI 2015: 2).

But what is the cloud? Today, computer users may have gradually become more aware of the many cloud tools that are at their disposal. Storing files in off-site servers, sharing document links and working with colleagues on the same documents simultaneously and remotely are just an illustration of the many tasks that can be commonly accomplished on the cloud nowadays. From an epistemological point of view, however, pinning down the essence of cloud computing seems to be an arduous task to undertake, especially on account of the many, sometimes even competing definitions that are available (Vaquero et al. 2009). According to Birman et al. (2009), the lack of terminological consensus arises from the diverging positioning that scholars can adopt, as they can explore the cloud in a so-called inward way (i.e. as developers and traders), or in an outward manner (i.e. as end users).

The most widely accepted definition of cloud computing seems to be the one drafted by Mell and Grance (2011: 2) for the US National Institute of Standards and Technology, who define cloud computing as:

a model for enabling ubiquitous, convenient, on-demand network access to a shared pool of configurable computing resources (e.g., networks, servers, storage, applications, and services) that can be rapidly provisioned and released with minimal management effort or service provider interaction.

We can also apply a more business-oriented analysis of cloud applications in work environments, following which cloud computing is understood as:

any IT resource, including storage, database, application development, application services, and so on, that exists outside of the firewall that may be leveraged by enterprise IT over the Internet. The core idea behind cloud computing is that it is much cheaper to leverage these resources as services, paying as you go and as you need them, than it is to buy more hardware and software for the data center. (Linthicum 2010: 7)

All things considered, the cloud seems to be an umbrella term on whose definition and characteristics scholars part away (Birman et al. 2009). To apply this branch of knowledge to the social sciences and the digital humanities, cloud systems can be understood as “both the applications delivered as services over the internet and the hardware and systems software in the data centers that provide those services” (Armbrust et al. 2010: 50). For authors like Linthicum (2010), such systems afford service developers and users resources that are typically offered on a subscription basis, which can be expanded or contracted, and which include services dealing with storage, databases, information, testing, and security.

The two main economic benefits of cloud platforms seem to be, on the one hand, the pay-as-you-go system (also known as pay-per-use system), whereby users purchase the exact amount of time they need to use the tools and services offered by the cloud-based providers and, on the other, the absence of up-front capital expense (Armbrust et al. 2010). In this respect, a transition has taken place from a capital expenditure (CAPEX) model, that is, investing in the purchase of tools, to an operating expenditure (OPEX) one, that is, renting a piece of software on a pay-as-you-go basis. However, there seems to be further advantages to cloud-based solutions, including the enhancement of time- and cost-effectiveness in the development and sale of a specific application.

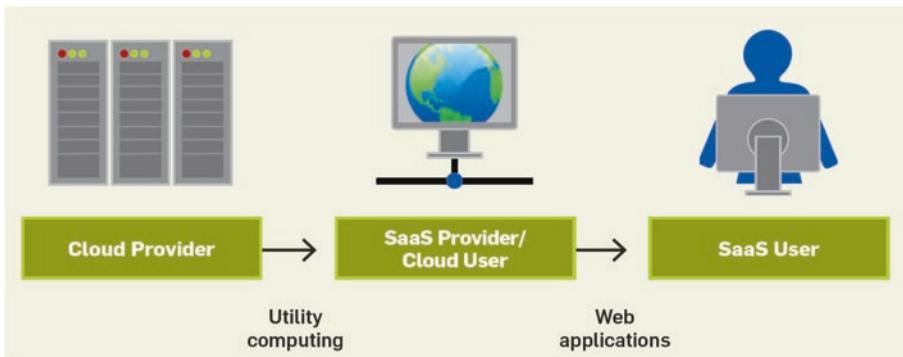
Another main advantage of cloud computing, which has undoubtedly propelled its penetration in everyday computing at end-user level, is the delocalisation of file-based data storage. Storing data on the cloud can reduce the costs of on-site hardware and increase the efficiency of data access significantly by replacing hard drives with public data centres’ hosting services. Furthermore, cloud providers also offer application developers and users a stable environment for on-demand platform instances.

As explained by Sriram and Khajeh-Hosseini (2010), to understand how the cloud works, one needs to understand its integrated characteristics, as well as the deployment and service models that govern it. They are analysed in further depth below:

- Firstly, there are five essential characteristics: (1) clouds are self-services that can be acquired and used with cloud service providers because they are on-demand services; (2) they are accessed over a network from a device; (3) their resources are shared by multiple users by means of multitenancy (also called pooling); (4) they are more quickly acquired by scaling out; and (5) all usage of the services and resources is metered to determine the payment in which users may incur.
- Secondly, there are four different deployment models in which clouds can be marketed: public, private, community and hybrid. The main differences lie on the ownership—and physical location—of the hardware and software necessary for the deployment, running and use of the application instances on the cloud. With the passing of time, some of these systems have also taken the form of computing ecosystems, including cloud management applications and tools for building private clouds.
- Thirdly, there are three main service models depending on the use of resources and the level of abstraction: (1) software as a service (SaaS), which is a finalised application that can be rented and customised on the open internet and is designed to replace information located in data centres; (2) infrastructure as a service (IaaS), which virtually provides servers, storage and network end points through an automated web-based management console and replaces traditional applications so as to access computing resources remotely; and (3) platform as a service (PaaS), which is a complete deployment platform leveraged on demand and is the cloud version of an application that is hosted remotely (Linthicum 2010; Shroff 2010).

In plain terms, a cloud application instance needs several components to run, mainly the data storage and central processing units, which can be either on premise or off premise. Cloud providers supply developers with the infrastructure necessary to operate a specific application and it is up to developers to leverage the technology and resources needed and acquire the cloud services they need—that is, SaaS, IaaS or PaaS—on a pay-as-you-go basis.

Traditionally, there are three major public cloud providers where applications can be hosted: Amazon Web Services (2006-, <https://aws.amazon.com>), Google Cloud (2008-, <https://cloud.google.com>) and Microsoft Azure (2010-, <https://azure.microsoft.com>). Their common point is that they offer an infrastructure as a service (IaaS) cloud, built on an underlying large-scale data centre based on virtualisation (Shroff 2010). It is understood that applications can be initiated on the cloud from scratch; however, analogue or legacy desktop-based software—that is, self-contained systems that store data in local data storage devices and run on the computer's processing power and



**Fig. 26.1** Users and providers of cloud computing (Armbrust et al. 2010: 52)

memory—can, of course, be migrated to the cloud by means of re-configuration, customisation and deployment. Be it as it may, cloud tools are normally services being made available to users in the form of web applications via SaaS provision. Figure 26.1 offers a visual representation of how the cloud works from the provider’s end to the user’s end:

One of the main challenges posed by cloud computing nowadays is, undoubtedly, the security factor. Cloud services usually market their infrastructure by putting an emphasis on the security measures included in their cloud-computing environments, but there are still many threats that remain unknown to both developers and end users (Vaquero et al. 2011). This is why one needs to take extra caution with sensitive data (e.g. copyright material) on account of the multitenancy nature of cloud environments, whereby several users store and share resources.

As technology is constantly evolving, current cloud environments will be inevitably superseded by more innovative systems that will allow users to share information and handle projects more efficiently. It is just a matter of time that the ways in which users operate nowadays in cloud-computing environments will experience yet a new metamorphosis.

### 3 Translation Workstations in the Cloud

As discussed by Cronin (2013), we have recently witnessed profound changes, in the culture of the digital age, that have shaped and re-shaped the variable nature of translation, which in turn resembles very little the interlingual renderings of written text accomplished in the pre-computer era. In the twentieth century, the introduction of basic computerised tools, such as text editors,

led to deep transformations in translation workflows and productivity. In only a matter of decades, translation experienced an exponential, twofold growth: not only did the volume and nature of translations expand (e.g. localisation of audiovisual productions, video games, websites and software) but also the proliferation of translation tools and resources allowed for a significant improvement of translators' efficiency (e.g. higher number of words translated per day and instant job delivery to clients).

The use of cutting-edge language technology, which allows translators to cope with greater volumes of work in shorter spans of time, grew substantially at the turn of the century (Chan 2017). Spearheaded by continued advances of the web, the internetisation and globalisation of language-related work have henceforth accommodated new practices, expectations and experiences in interlingual communication and, consequently, the translation industry (O'Hagan 2016). For scholars like Bowker and Corpas-Pastor (2015: online), this state of affairs has been propitiated:

because companies want to get their products onto the shelves in all corners of the world as quickly as possible, and because electronic documents such as web pages often contain content that needs to be updated frequently, deadlines for completing translation jobs seem to be growing ever shorter. The demands of our fast-paced, globalized knowledge society have left translators struggling to keep pace with the increasing number of requests for high-quality translation into many languages on short deadlines. However, these two demands of high quality and fast turnaround are frequently at odds with one another. Therefore, one way that some translators are trying to balance the need for high quality with the need for increased productivity is by turning to electronic tools and resources for assistance.

In our current age of third-generation internet, big data and artificial intelligence the cloud turn, as previously discussed, is proving to be a harbinger of far-reaching changes in the professional as well as the educational translation landscapes. In the industry, translation stakeholders have progressively migrated many of their job projects onto cloud environments, with the resulting alteration of workflows and working conditions. While in the past translators would set up their workstations by purchasing single-version licenses of specialist software, which represented high up-front costs, today's vendors can provide their workforce with access to complimentary cloud-based private and proprietary software. Long gone are the days when translators would acquire single-version tools in the form of shrink-wrap, desktop-based software with little or no possibility to receive updates for newer versions of the

same software. Today, translators are offered a plethora of ways in which they can use translation technology, some of which are outlined in the next sections.

## 4 Translation Technologies in the Cloud

According to Quah (2006: 93–94), a translation workstation can be defined as an “integrated system that is made up of a number of translation tools and resources such as a translation memory, an alignment tool, a tag filter, electronic dictionaries, terminology databases, a terminology management system and spell and grammar-checkers.” Traditionally, translation workstations have come in the form of a combination of free and paid software (Chan 2014), though, in recent years, it is becoming increasingly more common for translators to be able to enjoy a myriad of proprietary software that vendors and LSPs/TSPs offer to them on a complimentary basis.

Closely related to translation workstations is the notion of computer-assisted (or -aided) translation (CAT) tools, which, in its broadest definition, would include any type of computerised tool that help translators do their job (Bowker 2002). Authors like Kenny (1999) have in the past argued that the tools that aim to eliminate the human element from the translation task (i.e. translation automation) should not be considered under this umbrella; however, with the passing of time, the translation process has progressively incorporated automation tools too, leading some scholars to consider them as an integral part of the CAT tools family (Poirier 2018). Adopting a holistic approach, García (2014: 68) claims that these are “software applications created with the specific purpose of facilitating the speed and consistency of human translators, thus reducing the overall costs of translation projects while maintaining the earnings of the contracted translators and an acceptable level of quality.” All in all, the tools that fall under this umbrella term ought to be translation memory and terminology management systems, term extractors, concordancers, localisation tools and machine translation systems (Bowker and Corpas-Pastor 2015). According to the language technology atlas curated by Nimdzi ([www.nimdzi.com/language-technology-atlas](http://www.nimdzi.com/language-technology-atlas)), there are currently over 400 tools at the linguists’ disposal, ranging from editing, management, machine translation and interpreting tools to market places and LSP/TSP platforms.

Desktop-based software programs seem to remain steady, continue to be supported by developers and are thus reliable; but, on the downside, they tend to lack flexibility as licenses are usually bound to a single version and user or machine. New updates need to be purchased on a regular basis, which may

become an onerous expense for many freelancers and agencies. A closer look at today's industry landscape reveals that cloud-based CAT tools are more dynamic and seem to have better results at satisfying the needs of translators who may not have a fixed working space or cannot afford to invest on periodical updates to secure the latest versions of their software.

As can be gleaned from academic publications on translation technology (Bowker 2002; Chan 2015; Corpas-Pastor and Durán-Muñoz 2018), and despite the vast array of tools available on the market today, most emphasis seems to be placed on two types of CAT tools only, namely translation memory (TM) and machine translation (MT) systems. As argued by Gough (2018), they are credited with having greater impact on translation workflows, as well as with leading to improved productivity and cost-effectiveness thanks to their potential to re-use stored data comprising of existing translations and glossaries. Also important, though, are cloud project management tools, like XTRF ([www.xtrf.eu](http://www.xtrf.eu)), which allow vendors and LSPs/TSPs to rationalise their language-service provision by centralising the management of all their projects in a customisable interface. Experimentation to ascertain the potential of machine learning and artificial intelligence in the field of (audio-visual) translation is bound to feature prominently in future research agendas. Large corporations like SDL are already positioning themselves at the forefront with initiatives like their SDL Language Cloud ([www.sdl.com/contact/language-cloud.html](http://www.sdl.com/contact/language-cloud.html)), a platform that brings together extensive language services, translation management capabilities, TM, and neural machine translation (NMT).

TM systems work on a segment-level basis by suggesting translation options to the translator, which are based on previous translations stored in the tool. TM tools thus necessitate action from human translators to operate, because, as Kenny (1999) explains, they work by suggesting potential solutions that draw on the translator's earlier work, which has been previously stored in a database in the form of aligned segments. Following the same principles, TM cloud platforms are now becoming increasingly popular among freelancers and agencies as they offer pay-per-use services and do not require installation packages. Many also feature MT engines or allow for the use of external MT systems via an application programme interface (API), which is a method used to share content and data between software applications by resorting to unique identifier codes known as API tokens. Some of the most prevalent cloud TM tools on the market are: MateCat ([www.matecat.com](http://www.matecat.com)), memoQ Cloud ([www.memoq.com/cloud](http://www.memoq.com/cloud)), Memsource Cloud (<https://cloud.memsource.com>), SDL Online Editor ([www.sdltrados.com/products/](http://www.sdltrados.com/products/))

language-cloud/online-editor), Transifex ([www.transifex.com](http://www.transifex.com)), Wordfast Anywhere ([www.freetm.com](http://www.freetm.com)) and XTM Cloud ([www.xtm-cloud.com](http://www.xtm-cloud.com)).

MT systems bring greater automation of the translation process by performing instant transfer of large volumes of textual content, from one language to another. Contrary to TM, these systems do aim to replace part of the human's agency in the translation process, often transforming the role of the translator into that of a post-editor (Torrejón and Rico 2012). Developments in MT engineering can be traced back to the mid-twentieth century and have overgrown the rough, early approaches, including first-generation systems that worked on a word-for-word basis with no clear built-in linguistic component, to become much more sophisticated nowadays (Wilks 2009; Koehn 2010). Chronologically, three main approaches to MT can be discerned. Rule-based machine translation (RBMT) has its foundations on written rules and vocabulary lists, a type of architecture popular in the 1970s and 1980s, while statistical machine translation (SMT) is based on statistical probabilities resulting from parallel corpora, and NMT, launched in 2016, is founded on deep learning in neural networks. Many translation scholars and computational linguists have investigated the application of these MT systems to the translation practice, with special emphasis on translation quality (Federico et al. 2014), evaluation metrics (Babych 2014), post-editing effort (O'Brien et al. 2014), potential gains in productivity (Federico et al. 2012), and training of new professionals (Gaspari et al. 2015).

Cloud-based MT engines usually enable a secure environment that can be customised, deployed and evaluated for translation and localisation purposes. Some of the most popular ones currently available are Iconic Translation Machines (<https://iconictranslation.com>), KantanMT ([www.kantanmt.com](http://www.kantanmt.com)), Language Studio (<https://omniscien.com/language-studio/language-studio-2>), Microsoft Translator (<https://translator.microsoft.com>), Pairaphrase ([www.pairaphrase.com](http://www.pairaphrase.com)), SmartMATE ([www.smartmate.co](http://www.smartmate.co)) and SYSTRAN ([www.systransoft.com](http://www.systransoft.com)).

## 5 Audiovisual Translators' Workstations

In the case of AVT, the software included in the translators' typical workstation differs from other translation practices, as discussed by Matamala-Ripoll (2005). The AVT workstation has not been immune to the effects of digitalisation and multiple shifts and transformations have had an impact on its architecture over the last few decades, most of which are shared with other translation practices. Unsurprisingly, the new trends observed in the AVT

industry also point to a progressive and steady migration to the cloud (Díaz-Cintas 2015; Matamala-Ripoll 2017).

Of the various AVT modes, subtitling, both interlingual and intralingual, has been the preferred one when it comes to testing and implementing new technological solutions. Specialist subtitling systems are indeed essential for linguists who want to undertake subtitling projects of any nature, and they have been a constant feature in the industry since the late 1980s. Kuo's (2015) survey on the main professional aspects that characterise the subtitling industry shows that three quarters of the 465 translators surveyed confirmed using subtitling software on a regular basis.

Historically, the first subtitling programs were developed with commercial intent and targeted professional subtitlers. As most of the other translation tools of the day, they were desktop based, thus involving the installation of a setup package within a specific operative system, usually Windows. In the early years, software developers required users to purchase the software as shrink-wrap though more recently other options also exist such as electronic purchase of a license, operated with a dongle, or pay-per-use schemes. Some of the leading manufacturers are EZTitles ([www.eztitles.com](http://www.eztitles.com)), FAB ([www.fab-online.com](http://www.fab-online.com)), Screen Systems ([www.screensystems.tv](http://www.screensystems.tv)), Spot ([www.spot-software.nl](http://www.spot-software.nl)), and TitleVision (<http://titlevision.dk>). On occasions, specialist software is internally developed by translation agencies or vendors and then offered to freelance translators in their pools of linguists as in the case of Deluxe's EddiePlus (<http://bydeluxemedia.com>) and SDI Media's Global Titling System ([www.sdimedia.com](http://www.sdimedia.com)). With the advent of digitisation and contributing to the democratisation of technology, some prosumers have taken it upon themselves to create and distribute on the internet subtitling freeware packages with near-professional functionality, of which some of the more popular ones are Aegisub ([www.aegisub.org](http://www.aegisub.org)), DivXLand Media Subtitler (<https://divxland-media-subtitler.en.uptodown.com/windows>), Subtitle Edit ([www.nikse.dk/SubtitleEdit](http://www.nikse.dk/SubtitleEdit)), and Subtitling Workshop (<http://subworkshop.sourceforge.net/index.php>).

In contrast to the incessant technical developments taking place in the field of subtitling, revoicing practices, like dubbing and voiceover, have been far less affected by the latest technology (Baños-Piñero 2018). Typically, professionals are not required to work with dedicated software and they can fulfil their tasks by using a text editor and a video player. As an exception to this rule, freeware programs like Capella ([www.cappella.tv](http://www.cappella.tv)) allow translators and those in charge of the synchronisation of the target dialogue to create a track that includes the target dialogue together with the necessary symbols for the dubbing actors.

In the case of audio description for the blind and the partially sighted, specialised software packages, which are very similar to subtitling stations, facilitate the production and recording of AD scripts, as is the case of Starfish Technologies ([www.starfish.tv/audio-description-video-description](http://www.starfish.tv/audio-description-video-description)).

Whereas the interaction between MT systems and revoicing has been barely studied, apart from occasional works like the one by Ortiz-Boix (2016) on the role of automation and post-editing in documentary revoicing, interlingual subtitling has been explored by an increasing number of researchers in AVT, who have focused on the challenges of such an approach (Bywood et al. 2017), the quality of the raw output (Popowich et al. 2000; Armstrong et al. 2006; Burchardt et al. 2016), the role of post-editing (De Sousa et al. 2011; Georgakopoulou and Bywood 2014), and the potential gains in productivity for subtitlers using MT as opposed to human translation (Volk 2008; Volk et al. 2010). One of the first projects (2000–2004) to delve into the applicability of MT engines to the task of subtitling was MUSA (MUltilingual Subtitling of multimedIa content, <http://sifnos.ilsp.gr/musa>). Desktop based, it had the rather ambitious objective for the time of creating “a multimedia system that would convert the audio stream of audiovisual programmes into text transcriptions with the help of a speech recognition system” (Díaz-Cintas 2015: 639). Harnessing the power of automatic speech recognition (ASR) and RBMT, combined with TM applications, the ensuing output was to be condensed into subtitles subsequently translated into either English, French or Greek. The disappointing results were mainly due to the low efficiency of the MT system, which was still underdeveloped in those years to attain the project’s goals. Other platforms designed for the automation of subtitling have been created in the cloud, as discussed in the next section.

The usefulness of CAT tools for the translation of audiovisual programmes is still relatively underexplored, as highlighted by Athanasiadi’s (2017) study on current practices in the freelance subtitling industry, where she discovered that subtitlers were very eager to utilise subtitling tools that incorporate any kind of language assistance, especially TM and translation storage, to improve their efficiency. Since then, some developers of TM systems have ventured in this field with the launch of video preview players embedded in their traditional CAT tools so that translators can watch the actual videos while performing their translation and see how their solutions will fit in. Pioneering initiatives in this field have been those led by Star AG ([www.star-uk.co.uk](http://www.star-uk.co.uk)) and their Transit NXT system, by Transifex, by Kilgray, with the launch of their memoQ video preview (<https://help.memoq.com/8-5/en/memoQ-video-preview-tool/memoq-video-preview-tool.html>), and by Wordbee (Gazzolini 2018). A late comer has been SDL, who, in early 2019, unveiled

their Studio Subtitling app designed for professionals to translate subtitles while being able to utilise the quality assurance checks, termbases and TMs within SDL Trados Studio. Notwithstanding the benefits that these developments bring to the AVT industry, the reality is that none of them seems to offer text-timing features, which are quintessential for the technical spotting of subtitles. Instead, they rely on the assumption that translators will be working with pre-produced templates containing the timing of the subtitles, which is a common occurrence in the industry nowadays (Georgakopoulou 2006, 2012; Nikolić 2015).

Research into speech technologies is accelerating, with new applications being developed and having a palpable impact on the profession. ASR tools have become pivotal in the transcription of original speech into written text, which can then be used to produce captions or subtitle templates for translation into multiple languages. Another professional practice making use of ASR is respeaking, whereby a subtitler produces live subtitles by listening to the original utterances of a live programme and dictating the speech, that is, respeaking it, to a microphone connected to a computer, to an ASR app like Dragon NaturallySpeaking and to a subtitling program, which then displays the subtitles on screen (Romero-Fresco 2011). At the other end of the spectrum, text-to-speech technologies are being used to provide synthesised voices of written audio description scripts and they are also widely employed to make foreign subtitled programmes accessible to the visually-impaired communities by creating a service which automatically produces talking subtitles using synthetic speech (Verboom et al. 2002).

The explosion in the production and circulation of audiovisual programmes, with the subsequent need for their translation into other languages, is bound to continue into the future, thus acting as an incentive for software developers looking into new areas of expansion. The launch of similar and new tools, both for offline and online usage, can only be expected to grow in the upcoming years, focusing more on the potential offered by artificial intelligence, blockchain solutions and immersive environments.

## 6 Cloud-based Solutions for AVT Workstations

In the field of subtitling, cloud-based platforms have been exploited for some time now to conduct experiments testing automated solutions. One of the first players to enter the field was YouTube, which, in 2008, launched a caption feature allowing users to add subtitles to their audiovisual content. After a short pilot study, the auto-captioning component was officially integrated in

2010, a technology which relies on Google's Voice Search and that works best with a clearly spoken track. YouTube also provides an auto-translate feature powered by Google Translate, a popular MT system providing real-time translation of video captions by simply clicking on the CC button and selecting the language of the user's choice from a list (Harrenstien 2009).

Funded by the European Union, and after the desktop-based project MUSA, SUMAT (An Online Service for SUbitling by MAchine Translation, [https://cordis.europa.eu/project/rcn/191741\\_en.html](https://cordis.europa.eu/project/rcn/191741_en.html)), which ran from 2011 until 2014, was a cloud-based initiative exploring the automation of subtitling. With SMT at its core, the project embarked on the translation of subtitles in seven bi-directional language pairs, combined with human post-editing in an attempt to optimise the subtitling workflow and the resulting quality (Bywood et al. 2017). Despite the reported positive results, issues relating to the copyright of the subtitles used in the building of the engine impeded the commercialisation of the system. More recently, automated approaches to AVT, including both subtitling and revoicing, have taken off the ground and, of a similar nature, Media Studio (<https://omniscien.com/media-studio>) enables users to increase their productivity and reduce cost by utilising functions to create subtitles from screenplay and media files as well as translating subtitle content using a custom subtitle machine translation workflow. Likewise, MediaWen (<https://mediawen.com>) has developed several customisable platforms to provide automatic dubbing and subtitling online solutions. Integrating artificial intelligence functions, their solutions are designed to produce artificial neural networks and machine learning systems coupled with human-validated data.

As it happens, some of the first subtitling initiatives conducted in cloud-based environments were the fruit of collaborative projects, initiated and powered by specific organisations or teams of volunteers, rather than commercial ones. To avoid having to download and install any specialist programs locally, they rely on online platforms built for the specific purpose of subtitling, that are very easy to learn and use as the contributors are meant to be volunteers with limited subtitling skills rather than professional subtitlers. Amara (<https://amara.org>), Dotsub (<https://dotsub.com>), Khan Academy ([www.khanacademy.org](http://www.khanacademy.org)), or Viki ([www.viki.com](http://www.viki.com)) are prime examples of these environments though, arguably, TED Talks ([www.ted.com](http://www.ted.com)) is the better known of them all, with their videos being regularly subtitled in umpteen languages. In the production of their collaborative, not-for-profit subtitles, participants do not normally tamper with the spotting of the individual subtitles and are instead expected to focus on the linguistic translation of the dialogue. To this end, they are provided with a template, or list of master

subtitles, in which the timecodes have been locked to avoid any problems and, by concentrating on the linguistic transfer, the subtitling process becomes relatively fast and easy to manage.

When it comes to the audiovisual industry, as discussed by Georgakopoulou (2012: 1), one of the challenges is the “ever-increasing demand for audiovisual translation services,” while at the same time being “forced to contend with the reduction of budgets as well as the contraction of timeframes in which these services need to be provided.” To survive under these conditions and to remain commercially competitive and financially viable, LSPs/TSPs need to evolve and, following the steps of the distributors with their streaming online solutions, many have found an ally in the cloud.

The different components and sub-components that are needed to engineer the power of cloud resources are known as the cloud architecture, which comprises five main levels: application, network, processing, data, and storage. In the case of the AVT industry, the challenge arises when having to handle the project materials, including the source texts, as they need to reach translators in a stable, secure and efficient way so that they can then produce subtitles and dubbing scripts, as well as apply quality assurance processes prior to the finalisation and delivery of the localised products. To make sure that the platform operates in an efficient manner, solution developers analyse the requirements as per the aforementioned five levels to design a fully operative cloud tool (Linthicum 2010).

In the early noughties, the first web-based proprietary subtitling system was launched by ZOO Digital (ZOOsubs, [www.zoosubs.com](http://www.zoosubs.com)), back in 2009. Since then, a wide range of cloud-based subtitling tools have been developed, many of which are proprietary and can be used exclusively by company employees, examples of which are Nordisk Undertext’s Plint ([www.undertext.se/plint](http://www.undertext.se/plint)), iMediaTrans ([www.imediatrans.com](http://www.imediatrans.com)), Deluxe one (<https://one.bydeluxe.com>), yelluUmbrella ([www.yellaumbrella.tv](http://www.yellaumbrella.tv)), MediaWen (<http://mediawen.com>), and Netflix, which has developed their Subtitle Originator and QC 2.0 to liaise with their preferred fulfilment partners. Other platforms, such as eCaption ([www.ecaption.eu](http://www.ecaption.eu)) and OOONA’s Online Captions & Subtitles Toolkit (<https://ooona.oonatools.tv>), are available on demand to general users.

What they all have in common is that they try to fulfil end-to-end services for the production and distribution of digital video, and, as they are browser-based systems, translators can access them with any device connected to the internet in order to carry out subtitling and post-production tasks. Some like OOONA’s subtitling solution (see Fig. 26.2) are modular and offer users a wide range of tools to perform the cueing or text timing of interlingual as well



**Fig. 26.2** OOONA's online captions and subtitle toolkit

as intralingual subtitles, to translate from templates, to review and proofread other linguists' translations, to convert files into some of the most widespread subtitle formats, to transcribe the original utterances, and to burn subtitles and images into a single video file, among many other functionalities:

Most of these platforms come with a quality control tool for (semi-)automated checks of the technical and linguistic dimensions of subtitling, cloud encryption to ensure that the content is safely stored online and a fully visible monitoring/managing system which can optimise the company's internal workflow, from a potential entry test to the selection and on-boarding of new freelancers to an automatic invoicing process. Further, they allow users to either upload local video files from a machine's hard drive or to use video files that are hosted in other cloud-storage services (e.g. Google Drive and Dropbox) or video-streaming platforms (e.g. YouTube). Contrary to steadier desktop-based solutions, newer cloud-based subtitling tools also allow users to customise their own hotkeys or shortcuts, which can help solve issues caused, for instance, by the interference of the users' keyboard languages, browser versions and operating systems. Last but not least, these tools also offer the possibility of delivering the final product in different formats with greater ease, facilitate the archiving and reviewing of the audiovisual programmes and enhance versatility with their option to be integrated with other cloud- and desktop-based systems.

Some developers are testing the potential of ASR for the automatic alignment of text with audio to expedite the spotting task, whilst still allowing for subtitle editing, with options on positioning and use of colours in the case of

captioning, as well as various other technical attributes that can be set by the client or the vendor.

In some of these systems, as accounted by Díaz-Cintas and Massidda (2019), the transcription and linguistic transfer processes are assisted by the use of specialist CAT tools. For instance, CaptionHub (<https://captionhub.com>) was initially designed for the creation of closed captions and templates by means of speech recognition and machine learning. Unbabel (<https://unbabel.com/for-video>) also combines MT systems and human post-editing for the transcription and subtitling of audiovisual productions. Finally, SubtitleNext, developed by PBTEU (<https://pbteu.com>), is a hybrid system that relies on desktop software program and communicates with the computerised version of the tool on the web. Among its many functionalities, it includes a project management tool to administer all tasks and allows for working with real-time subtitling as well as online video distribution platforms such as YouTube and Facebook.

Cloud-based systems are credited with being agile and quick to react to change, which is manifest in the way in which they can recover and come up with quick updates whenever bugs or missteps might occur. Of course, any of these alterations only needs to be implemented centrally for all the connected professionals to enjoy the results without having to intervene themselves, thus promoting a more stable and seamless work environment. As many of them are in the constant lookout for new functions and additions that will help them improve the cloud experience, some developers are eager to receive feedback so that they can fine-tune their subtitling solutions and customise them to their clients' needs. These enhancements, nurtured by the hand-in-hand collaboration between the software developers, researchers and end users, help to reshape newer versions of subtitling systems and are exemplary of the fruits that collaboration among stakeholders can yield.

End user's access to these platforms vary. Netflix's Originator, for instance, can only be enjoyed by professionals working directly with the streaming giant whereas initiatives like Plint, which was originally developed as a proprietary tool to be used internally by employees of Nordisk Undertext, has since evolved and customised versions of the platform can now be purchased by other language service providers also interested in the distribution and localisation of audiovisual programmes ([www.plint.com](http://www.plint.com)). Access, however, remains restricted to the companies' assets. A different, novel approach to the usability of cloud-based technology is the one taken by OOONA. These software developers have created a series of applications hosted in the cloud, as shown in Fig. 26.2, for which any user anywhere in the world can create an account and purchase a time-limited plan. This SaaS application stores all the

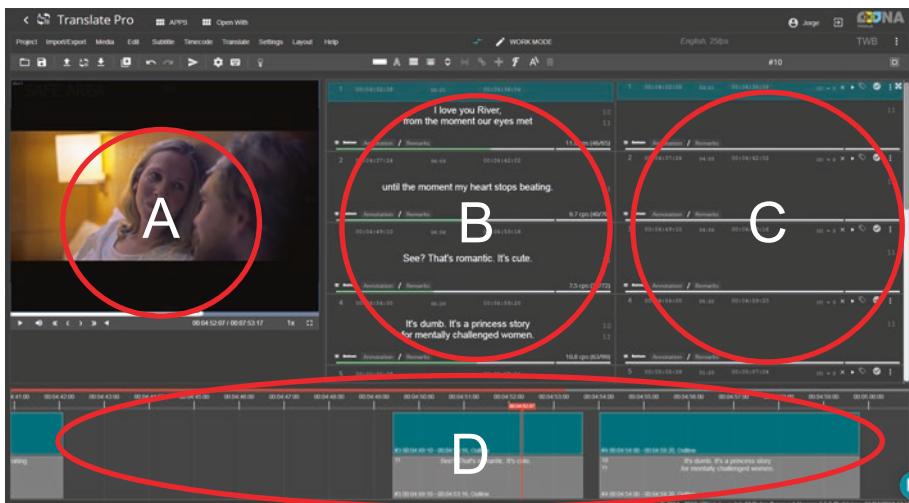
materials that subtitlers need to text time clips and translate templates, and also allows the import of audiovisual resources via cloud storage and links.

From a financial perspective, cloud-based subtitling solutions tend to represent a positive development for translators as they are totally free to use, as in the case of proprietary systems, or can be used on a pay-as-you-go basis, thus avoiding having to invest large amounts of money in purchasing licenses as well as on periodical updates. Some cloud tools offer monthly or yearly subscriptions, a development also mimicked by some desktop specialist software developers, which would work best for those translators who receive subtitling commissions intermittently.

In essence, cloud-based systems aim to replace traditional workstations that usually require the installation of desktop-based software. To do so, their ultimate aim is to replicate at least the same functionality of specialist desktop programs, if not to improve on it. Of all the subtitling tasks that can be performed in the cloud, creating subtitles with the online subtitling editor, as opposed to producing them with the help of a specialist desktop program, is perhaps the most challenging one. As can be expected, the early versions of some of the abovementioned platforms had several drawbacks, such as the lack of reading speed calculators or the absence of language spellcheckers, some of which seem to have now been resolved in their newest upgrades. More importantly, slow internet connections can have a significant impact on the accuracy of the spotting and the generation of help files to show the sound waves and to check the shot changes can be challenging when it is the subtitler who uploads local video files to the platform.

Most cloud-based subtitling tools offer the possibility of working with templates, which, as previously discussed, are commonly used in the professional world to maximise resources and cut costs by sharing the same working file with all translators involved in the same multilingual project. Spearheaded by the DVD industry, and despite the objection of some professional subtitlers and associations, this modus operandi of working with a list of already-timed subtitles, usually in English, is becoming increasingly popular in cloud-based workflows, too, as it poses less technical risks. To appease the disquiet generated by the use of templates, many companies allow their professional subtitlers to tweak the times and the spotting (i.e. merge two subtitles or split one subtitle into two) contained in the master list.

Similarly to desktop-based subtitling solutions, cloud-based tools like OOONA's subtitling solution allow users to upload pre-timed subtitle templates, whose timecodes can be blocked in the project settings to help the linguist focus on the translation of the dialogue. As seen in Fig. 26.3, the source and target text boxes (B and C) are accompanied by the original video



**Fig. 26.3** Interface of OOONA's subtitle template translation tool

(A). The translatable dialogue is provided in the form of pre-timed written text and may contain a verbatim or edited rendering of the original, or even a pivot translation (often in English). In the right-hand column (C), the linguists will introduce their translation. The subtitles are also displayed in the form of coloured boxes that are placed on the timeline displayer at the bottom of the screen (D), which may be of use to adjust the timings for further pinpoint accuracy. The source and target text columns show information that is key to subtitle the dialogue: reading speed, character-per-line count and subtitle duration. Whenever the values of such elements exceed the maximum or do not reach the minimum values that have previously been assigned in the file properties, a series of warning and error alerts will be sparked. Other components that template translators may find of use are the remarks and comments features, which allow to write annotations for the attention of other linguists involved in future phases of the same project (e.g. quality check):

The expansion of social media, in conjunction with cloud systems, has also brought about greater interactivity and connectivity among subtitlers and other specialists involved in translation projects. These initiatives have the potential of permitting translators to work synchronically and help each other, thus creating more ergonomic interfaces and introducing built-in social network connections. Nowadays, a common professional scenario is one in which a substantial number of individuals work together in the localisation of the same audiovisual programme, in different language combinations and in different geographical spaces, at the same time (Díaz-Cintas 2015). In this

ecosystem, teams of various professionals work from end-to-end on the management, multilingual translation, proofreading and delivery of the same subtitle projects simultaneously. This in turn implies greater volumes of data sharing and the need to implement efficient and sustainable collaborative methods, which the migration to the cloud is trying to address.

From the companies' perspective, an attractive benefit of cloud environments is that the entire project can be managed online, with people working from different geographical locations, which reduces the need for physical offices. In this respect, cloud-based platforms become the ultimate virtual workspace. They can reduce the overheads thanks to its leaner, streamlined workflow management, which helps save time and physical space in the editing, post-production and delivery stages of the process. In conjunction with this, the fact that employees, whether freelancers or in-house staff, can access the platform from any device connected to the internet, irrespective of their physical location, also adds flexibility to the workflow that can result in greater levels of satisfaction of the workforce.

In an industry characterised by a frenetic rhythm and stringent deadlines, another upside of operating in an online management ecosystem is that the project manager is at all times able to check the progress of all the subtitlers and quality controllers working on a given multilingual project, and can guesstimate whether deadlines can be met by some of the freelancers or whether some commissions should be divided into micro-tasks and reassigned to other colleagues.

Furthermore, cloud-based systems seem to offer many advantages not only to professionals but also to clients themselves, who, once granted access to the online environment too, can then monitor projects more closely and track how the project is progressing. They can also participate actively in the workflow by placing new orders, uploading relevant working documents and material, resolve queries related to the project or review some of the translations before they are actually finished.

In the novel cloud-based ecosystem, developers have primarily concentrated on subtitling because it was always the preferred translation practice in the cyberspace. More recently, on the back of the many advances taking place on speech technology and the changes instigated by the likes of Netflix, whose "research has shown that dubbed versions of hit shows are more popular than their subtitled equivalents" (Roxborough 2019: online), efforts are being directed to revoicing, both in its dubbing and voiceover manifestations (Green 2018). Launched in 2003 to meet the need for dubbing children's television into the indigenous language of New Zealand, VoiceQ ([www.voiceq.com](http://www.voiceq.com)) is one of the pioneers in the field with their voice synchronisation software.

Their remit has since expanded and, these days, their platform integrates cloud delivery and localisation solutions for dubbing, voiceover, audio description and subtitling. Conversely, having started with the development of cloud solutions for subtitling, ZOO Digital launched in 2017 their ZOO's Cloud Dubbing ([www.zoodigital.com/services/localize/dubbing](http://www.zoodigital.com/services/localize/dubbing)), a cloud-based tool capable of centralising, accelerating and globalising the dubbing process by creating empty dubbing audiotracks, the equivalent of subtitling master templates, of an audiovisual programme. Using these audiotracks, a pool of freelance translators and adapters work on the translation and adaptation of the dialogue into the target language, which is subsequently shared with the voice actors for the actual recording, all connected in real time to the online dubbing tool. In this manner, scripting, auditioning of future voice talents, casting, recording, editing and mixing can all be conducted online, as opposed to the traditional approach of performing these activities locally, in soundproof recording studios.

## 7 Conclusion

Translation practices in the audiovisual industry are activities whose linguistic and technical characteristics constrain the work of professionals, who must avail themselves of specific applications and software to overcome such technical specifications. The ground-breaking changes in data sharing, audiovisual distribution and consumption, and translation workflows triggered by globalisation have brought about additional challenges, such as the immediateness of the commissions with which all stakeholders are nowadays expected to deliver work and the delocalisation of work environments. International communication has been undergoing profound changes for some time now, and translators' greater virtual collaboration is also having a considerable impact in the way in which translation and localisation are managed.

To address this new reality, the industry has rapidly embraced technological advances in cloud computing, which have attested their capability to revitalise workflows and to improve social networking and teamwork, as they allow multiple users to work on the same project simultaneously (Díaz-Cintas and Massidda 2019). Inextricably linked to technology since its beginnings (see the contribution by Bywood in this volume), the AVT industry has been quick to embrace the cloud and to explore the vast array of new possibilities that can help to maximise resources and improve efficiency in the revoicing and subtitling of programmes. Language technologies such as terminology databases, electronic workbenches, including CAT tools, and ASR are also

starting to be widely used in AVT, thus contributing to more efficient workflows and propitiating faster terminological searches and more consistent translations by re-using projects previously accomplished and stored in such tools. Social interconnectedness is also being taking advantage of to promote teamwork in a profession traditionally characterised by individual, solitary work, especially in the case of freelancers. When it comes to the human production of subtitles, the migration to the cloud had to wait until the technology available was mature enough to facilitate it. Since then, and as discussed throughout this paper, newly developed cloud-based subtitling tools have entered the market, leading to a wider use of web-based work environments in which collaboration among people based in different geographical locations is significantly enhanced.

This current state of affairs signals a change of paradigm in the localisation, and subsequent distribution and consumption, of audiovisual products, pointing to a steady and progressive migration from desktop-based to cloud-based work environments, which can only accelerate in the years to come with the improvement of internet connections and the potential unleashed by developments in automation and artificial intelligence. Yet, despite some initial works on the topic (Bolaños-García-Escribano 2018), the ripples provoked by such changes in the AVT industry remain to be duly investigated from a training perspective.

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# 27

## Accessible Filmmaking

Pablo Romero-Fresco

### 1 Introduction

Audiovisual Translation (AVT) is now generally regarded as one of the most thriving research areas within Translation Studies (TS). While ten years ago it was still considered to be young and coming out of age (Díaz Cintas 2008), it is now believed to have achieved an “incipient maturity” (Díaz Cintas and Neves 2015, p. 3) and even to have “outgrown the limits” of TS (*ibid.*: 2). The constant development of technology and the pervasiveness of screens may partly account for this. Another important factor is the role played by media accessibility (MA), which has so far been considered a sub-area within AVT that is mainly concerned with SDH, AD and their sensory-impaired users. Currently a key issue in many countries around the world, MA has increased the potential of AVT to trigger social change through legislation, connection with the users (contacts with user associations and reception studies) and through focusing on quality as a means to develop guidelines and standards.

However, this focus on assessing and improving quality is often constrained by the fact that MA (and AVT) are generally considered as an afterthought, once the audiovisual products have been finalised, and involving zero contact with the creative team. It is in this context that accessible filmmaking (AFM)

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(Romero-Fresco 2013) originates as a proposal to integrate translation and accessibility into the filmmaking process. AFM may be defined as “the consideration of translation and/or accessibility during the production of audiovisual media (normally through the collaboration between the creative team and the translator) in order to provide access to content for people who cannot access or who have difficulty accessing it in its original form” (Romero-Fresco 2019a, pp. 5–6). The aim here is not to compromise the filmmakers’ vision or constrain their freedom, but rather to reveal to them often unknown aspects of how their films are changed in their translated and accessible versions. AFM presents them with different options so that they can make choices that determine the nature of these translated/accessible versions. Until now, these choices were made exclusively by the translator or the distributor. Rather than compromising the filmmakers’ vision, this collaboration will help to preserve it across different audiences.

This chapter includes an overview of AFM, with special attention to its theoretical basis (drawing on both MA/AVT and film studies), the research carried out to date and the main developments as far as professional practices are concerned.

## 2 Theoretical Foundations

From a theoretical point of view, AFM is based on a wide, integrated (or proactive) and user-centric approach to MA that covers both access to content and access to creation and on a translation/MA-oriented view of film studies.

### 2.1 A Wider Notion of MA

As far as MA is concerned, AFM originates in a changing landscape where, as argued by Greco (2018), three shifts are taking place in the area of accessibility: a shift from a particularist account to a universalist account of access, a transition from reactive to proactive models and finally a third shift from a maker-centred to a user-centred approach.

As mentioned in the introduction, from the very first publications on the subject, MA has been regarded as a subunit within AVT that is specifically framed for persons with sensory disabilities and that covers modalities such as SDH and AD. This particularist account has enabled deaf and blind user associations to acquire a leading role in the ongoing battle to increase the amount and quality of access services around the world, but it has also

constrained the potential of MA to appeal to the wider population. A second account expands the scope to both sensory and linguistic barriers, as shown in the reception studies conducted with hearing, hard-of-hearing and deaf participants in projects such as DTV4ALL (Romero-Fresco 2015). Finally, a third universalistic account, supported by Greco, widens the lens, thus covering “access to media products, services, and environments for all persons who cannot, or cannot completely, access them in their original form” (Greco 2016, p. 23). The latter approach is in line with the new EU Audiovisual Media Services Directive and with the latest international standard on subtitling, ISO/IEC DIS 20071–23 (International Organization for Standardization 2018), which includes as its main target users

persons with hearing loss, persons who are deaf or hard of hearing, persons with learning difficulties or cognitive disabilities, persons watching a movie in a non-native language, persons who need the content to be in another language, persons who cannot hear the audio content due to environmental conditions, or circumstances where the sound is not accessible (e.g., noisy surroundings), the sound is not available (e.g., muted, no working speakers), or the sound is not appropriate (e.g., a quiet library).

This wider notion of access (Romero-Fresco 2018b) poses interesting questions to the aim of one of the sections of the present handbook, explained in the original description as follows:

This conceptual section will attempt to position audiovisual translation and media accessibility (with the necessary overlap between the two genres) within the paradigm of Translation Studies as a research area and university discipline.

What exactly is the overlap between AVT and MA? Is MA a subunit within AVT or is it the opposite? Is MA, as seen through the lenses of this wider notion, still included within the paradigm of TS or is it perhaps part of the new area of accessibility studies (Greco 2018)? Answering these questions is beyond the scope of this chapter (see the contribution by Greco and Jankowska in this volume), but suffice it to point out here that AFM is firmly rooted within this wider (or universalist) notion of access, as it is concerned with anybody who cannot access or who has difficulty accessing audiovisual media in their original form.

The second shift identified by Greco (2018) is the transition from reactive to proactive models, which challenge the traditional position of MA and AVT as an added element to already finalised audiovisual products. This has led to

the so-called maker-expert-user gap (Branson 2018), which points to the existence of three different gaps in the current way in which translation and MA are approached: one between those making films and those producing translated and accessible versions (maker-expert gap), another one between those making films and those receiving translated and accessible versions (maker-user gap) and finally one between those producing translated/accessible versions and those receiving them (expert-user gap). By integrating translation and accessibility into the filmmaking process through the collaboration of filmmakers and translators, AFM addresses the first gap, which seems to be part of an overall trend towards a new collaborative form of integrated access that is also being introduced in the theatre (Fryer 2018a, 2018b).

Finally, the third shift mentioned by Greco (2018), the transition between a maker-centred approach to MA to a user-centred one, addresses the second and third gaps, reinforcing the role played by users in MA. Very much along the lines of the famous slogan “nothing about us without us” (Charlton 1998), MA users are increasingly being asked to provide consultancy services and to take part in research, which is in line with the “cognitive and empirical turn” that has placed the focus on the audience’s response to AVT through the use of reception studies (Chaume 2018). Again, AFM illustrates this third shift towards a user-centric model, as the AFM workflow envisages the use of sensory-impaired consultants collaborating with filmmakers and translators and its approach to translation and accessibility is very much based on empirical reception studies (Romero-Fresco 2019a).

However, this is just part of the story, as it only relates to access for everyone to content made by some, mostly the non-disabled. Widening the scope of MA also means going beyond providing access to content and expanding this to access to creation (Dangerfield 2018). Some of the most innovative projects that are adopting the AFM model are using this approach as a platform to enable participants with sensory impairments to take responsibility for the creation of audiovisual products (Dangerfield 2017). In some of these cases, the resulting films are both innovative and unique.

## 2.2 A Translation/Accessibility-Oriented Notion of Film Studies

Although translation is the main means of access to foreign cinema (Flynn 2016, p. 1) and plays a fundamental role in mediating the foreign (Nornes 2007, p. 4), it has traditionally received very little attention in film studies. This may be explained by at least three different factors.

Firstly, despite the film-as-language metaphor often used in this area (Nornes 2007, p. 18), Dwyer (Longo 2017) notes that there is still a “primacy of the visual”, which may be linked to an ocularcentric view of film and a “misguided notion of film as Esperanto”. In other words, this is the (questionable) belief that what really (or only) matters in film is the image, since it is what made film a universal language in the silent era, before the introduction of sound.

A second reason explaining the invisibility of translation within film studies is precisely translation’s long-standing vocation for invisibility; that is, the traditional notion that the translation of a film is good when it is not noticed. Nornes (2007, p. 155) criticises the cultural appropriation involved in what he considers a corrupt and colonial approach that “domesticates all otherness while it pretends to bring the audience to an experience of the foreign”. As an alternative to this “corrupt subtitling” that separates spectators from “the beauty of the original” (*ibid.*, p. 19), Nornes (1999, p. 32) introduces the notion of “abusive subtitling”:

Just as the spectator approaches films from faraway places to enjoy an experience of the foreign, the abusive translator attempts to locate his or her subtitles in the place of the other. Rather than smothering the film under the regulations of the corrupt subtitle, rather than smoothing the rough edges of foreignness, rather than converting everything into easily consumable meaning, the abusive subtitles always direct spectators back to the original text.

Nornes’ stance is very useful to denounce the cultural and political implications of “invisible” approaches to translation and to highlight the creative potential of subtitles. However, the aim of AFM is to increase the visibility of translation in film studies and in the film industry by making it part of film discourse and the production process, respectively. Whether or not actual translations are more or less domesticating or foreignising (or corrupt or abusive) will be determined by the newly established collaboration between filmmakers and translators. At any rate, there is little doubt that the invisibility of translation (and accessibility) within film studies is a reflection of the place it occupies in the industry as an afterthought or necessary evil (Serban 2012, p. 49) that is “added post-filmically and without aesthetic intention” (Flynn 2016, p. 22). In this industrialised model, translators are “relegated to a sub-species below the tea assistant within the filmmaking hierarchy” (Fozooni 2006, p. 194) and, as is the case with football referees, they are normally never praised, and only noticed when an error occurs. As pointed out by Crow (2005), this results in AVT and MA being shoe-horned into existing

templates that bear no relation to the film, which may undermine not only its aesthetics but also the vision that the filmmaker has worked so hard to create and communicate. This makes the absence of literature on translation within film studies more glaring and the few contributions available all the more compelling.

Finally, the third reason to explain the invisibility of translation within film studies is related to the apparatus theory. This was a dominant school of thought within cinema studies during the 1970s that was based on the denial of difference (Baudry and Williams 1974), and difference is precisely what translation provides to film. Foreign audiences may have a very different experience to that of the original audience or even to that of foreign audiences from other countries depending on whether a film is shown with different types of subtitles, dubbed or with a voice-over narration. Eleftheriotis (2010, p. 187) notes, for example, that subtitles must have been an integral part of the filmic experience of the French theorists who analysed this apparatus so thoroughly. Yet, they never acknowledged (let alone analysed) the presence of subtitles, which would have posed a threat to the perceived objectivity and universality of their claims. For Eleftheriotis (*ibid.*, p. 187), this has two implications:

The first is a logical extension of the apparatus theory rationale and suggests that films operate by constructing universal positions that transcend difference, in other words, that the cinematic apparatus and its effects are universal and immune to national/cultural variations. The second is the apparatus theorists' inability to acknowledge the specificity of their own position as one of necessarily partial and limited understanding rather than perfect mastery over the "foreign" text. Ultimately, such a position resides in the realm of a politically suspect fantasy and typifies modern sensibilities [...] that value the possibility and desirability of universal knowledge that transcends national and cultural specificity. It is profoundly elitist as it elevates the theorist to a level of immense cultural and epistemological power.

AFM goes in the opposite direction. The intention here is to tackle head on (and even embrace) the difference brought about by translation, which includes (1) acknowledging the difference between original and translated/accessible film versions, (2) identifying the effect it may have on the viewers' experience, (3) promoting a notion of film studies that can account for this difference in the analysis of film and especially (4) introducing a new collaborative filmmaking model that can consider translation early in the process in an attempt to bridge the gap between the experience of the different audiences.

This line of thought enables Eleftheriotis (*ibid.*, p. 188) to put forward a consideration of subtitling (and, by extension, film translation) that may be regarded as the theoretical film studies equivalent of the notion of AFM presented in this chapter:

An embracement of incompleteness, imperfection, limits and limitations, but not of impossibility in the encounter between spectators and “foreign” texts. This position is marked by awareness of one’s own relation to the foreign text/culture and of the limitations and imperfect understandings that it entails. It is also characterised by an active reading both of the subtitles and of the formal codes of the film and by a constant oscillation between familiar and strange that cuts across the domestic/foreign binary. It is a form of engagement that accepts gaps and lacunae in the experience while at the same time strives to overcome cultural and linguistic barriers by a semiotic reading of the filmic text alongside the literal reading of the subtitles. A cross-cultural critical practice that corresponds to such model would be one of modest and limited claims, acute awareness of the position from which the critic analyses and speaks, openness to the possibility of errors and misunderstandings, painstaking attention to textual and contextual detail but also a determination in the pursuit and acknowledgement of the value of such partial knowledge.

Just as AFM requires filmmakers to consider from inception (and in collaboration with translators) the impact that translation and accessibility may have on the nature and reception of their films, it also requires film scholars, film analysts and film reviewers to acknowledge the specificities involved in watching the foreign version of a film as opposed to the original version.

To sum up, from a theoretical point of view, AFM is based, first of all, on a wide, integrated and user-centric approach to MA that covers both access to content and access to creation. Secondly, when it comes to film studies, AFM proposes to identify, analyse and, if possible, minimise the difference between original and translated versions. This requires scholars and critics analysing these versions to acknowledge the specificity of their position and filmmakers to take responsibility for the foreign and accessible versions of their films in order to preserve their coherence. By not doing so, most filmmakers seem to be abdicating responsibility on translators who are neither trained nor paid to make decisions that are bound to change the nature and reception of the films they are working on, thus unnecessarily widening the gap between original and translated versions.

### 3 Research on AFM

Since the first article on AFM (Romero-Fresco 2013), which has been translated into Spanish, Portuguese and Italian, AFM has gained visibility as an emerging area within AVT and film. It is now included in panels and presentations at international conferences such as Media for All or Languages and the Media, and it has been the subject of full chapters in books and anthologies on AVT (Di Giovanni and Gambier 2018; Pérez-González 2018) and in the inaugural issue of the Journal of Audiovisual Translation. AFM is or has been the subject for 16 Master of Arts theses, 4 PhD dissertations and several academic articles on AFM and documentaries (Cerezo Merchán et al. 2017; Romero-Fresco 2017), AFM and eye tracking (Fox 2018; Romero-Fresco 2018a) and AFM and creative subtitles (Fox 2017). In its attempt to bridge the gap between film studies and AVT, AFM has also been the subject of two chapters included in the recent anthology on film and eye tracking *Seeing into Screens: Eye Tracking and the Moving Image* (Dwyer et al. 2018). AFM is also the key topic at the centre of some ongoing research projects exploring aspects such as AFM and minority languages (EU-VOS, led by Universidade de Santiago de Compostela), AFM in news programmes (ITACA, led by Jaume I University) or the production of AFM guides for the industry (led by Universidade de Vigo) (Romero-Fresco and Fryer 2018).

An important line of research in AFM is the analysis of the reception of creative or integrated subtitles. Instead of abiding by a restrictive set of norms, creative/integrated subtitles—which are in line with Nornes' notion of abusive subtitling (Nornes 2007)—fulfil both a linguistic and an aesthetic function, responding to the specific qualities of an individual film and giving the creative subtitler more freedom to create an aesthetic that matches that of the source text without being bound by standard font types, sizes and positions (McClarty 2012). Often produced with the collaboration of directors and editors to interact with the mise en scène in the original film, they are thus an example of AFM. Fox (2016) analysed the reception of three versions of the film *Joining the Dots* (Romero-Fresco 2012): its original version with no subtitles, its translation with interlingual subtitles produced as an afterthought and finally its translation with integrated subtitles created in collaboration with the filmmaker as part of the production process. The findings of the experiment show that while viewers take a little more time to find creative or integrated titles than standard subtitles, the overall reading time is reduced. The viewers preferred the integrated titles over the standard ones, since the former allowed them to have more time to watch and explore the images.



Fig. 27.1 Viewers' eye movements watching an original shot from *Joining the Dots*



Fig. 27.2 Viewers' eye movements watching the same shot with standard, bottom-placed subtitles

Interestingly, these new subtitles triggered in the participants very similar eye-movement patterns to those of the viewers of the original film with no subtitles (Figs. 27.1, 27.2, and 27.3):

In a further experiment on the use of standard and integrated titles for *Sherlock: A Game of Shadows* (Ritchie 2012), Wendy Fox found that in scenes such as the one shown in Fig. 27.4, the viewers watching the film with



**Fig. 27.3** Viewers' eye movements watching the same shot with creative subtitles from *Joining the Dots*



**Fig. 27.4** Viewers' eye movements watching a scene from *Sherlock: A Game of Shadows* with standard, bottom-placed subtitles

standard subtitles only had the chance to focus on the subtitles at the bottom of the screen and at central points of the image where Sherlock and Watson were.

In contrast, the viewers watching the integrated titles managed to spot the two characters walking behind them (see the circle in Fig. 27.5), who happen to be crucial from a narrative point of view. These findings suggest that integrated titles and AFM may bring about a degree of similarity in the way in which original and translated/accessible films are received that is not normally found in films that are translated or made accessible at the distribution stage. In other words, the use of creative/integrated titles within AFM can go a long



**Fig. 27.5** Viewers' eye movements watching a scene from *Sherlock* with creative subtitles

way towards bridging the gap between film and translation, or between the experience of the original viewers and of the foreign/deaf viewers, while providing an opportunity of collaboration and innovation for filmmakers and translators.

Finally, another promising avenue of research that has only recently begun to be explored is that of the history of AFM, or rather the history of those pioneering filmmakers who decided (often inadvertently or unsystematically) to integrate translation and/or accessibility into the filmmaking process. This is closely linked to the history of AVT, a topic that has experienced a recent resurgence since the early 2010s but is still very much work in progress (O'Sullivan and Cornu 2018, p. 15). The history of cinema includes several interesting examples of films where translation was integrated into the production process, such as silent films, where intertitles were translated in post-production (Izard 2001, p. 190), and ethnographic documentaries, where subtitles were regarded as an integral part of the creative process, “influencing the pacing and rhythm of the film as well as its intellectual and emotional content” (MacDougall 1998, p. 168). There are also several examples of filmmakers who produced their own subtitles, such as Eric Rohmer and the filmmaking duo Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet (Eisenschitz 2013), or who supervised them, such as Alfred Hitchcock, Federico Fellini, Martin Scorsese and Stanley Kubrick (Nornes 2007). As illustrated by the archival research conducted by Zanotti (2018a) on Stanley Kubrick’s approach to translation, the renown British filmmaker seemed to devise his own AFM model for dubbing and subtitling based on close collaboration with the translation team. This allowed him “to remain in control of the filmic text and to ensure that his vision was adequately represented in translation” (*ibid.*, p. 2).

Kubrick used assistant editors or personal assistants to help him supervise the translators' work (LoBrutto 1997), a rough equivalent of the director of accessibility and translation (DAT) mentioned in Sect. 4. He phoned translators to discuss their approach before they started translating and provided them with annotations not only to warn them about potential pitfalls but also to guide their translation, be it for dubbing or subtitling. Again, this is not dissimilar to the meetings and the accessibility and translation guide referred to in Sect. 4. As shown by his letter to Jack Weiner, head of European production for Columbia Pictures during the release of *Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* (Kubrick 1964), he had a "Brain Trust", that is, a group of target-language consultants with whom he would discuss issues such as the translation of the title of Dr. Strangelove.

As noted by Alain Riou for *Le Nouvel Observateur*, Kubrick looked after the dubbed versions of his films "like a father with his children" (Riou 1987, pp. 53–54). For Kubrick, dubbing was "like making another movie", that is, a process where two things can go wrong: "first of all they can be very badly translated, then they can be very badly acted" (Heymann 2005, p. 46). In order to avoid some of these issues, Kubrick made a point of hiring film directors instead of dubbing directors, writers or literary translators instead of audiovisual translators and professional actors instead of dubbing actors (Zanotti 2018b). He also demanded control of the final sound mix, as he regarded the studio-recorded sound often used for dubbed films too rich and clean, devoid of the authenticity of outdoor sound. Kubrick's approach to dubbing was very much in line with the principles of AFM. Apart from collaborating with the translation team and resorting to language consultants for films such as *Barry Lyndon* (Kubrick 1975) and *Dr. Strangelove* (Kubrick 1964), he shot with foreign versions in mind, filming text inserts in different languages in order to ensure that viewers in dubbing countries could watch the film without having to read a subtitle translating the insert. Furthermore, he was acutely aware of how language variation and multilingualism can impact on the nature and reception of dubbed films.

For subtitling, he would often supervise and comment on the register of the subtitles and he insisted on having back-translations done for all subtitles, so as to ensure that no important features were missing from the foreign versions. His letter to Jack Weiner on 3 January 1964 provides telling evidence of his approach to translation, the reasons behind it and how close it was to what we understand today as AFM; in his case, a particularly authorial approach to AFM:

Dear Jack,

Regarding your cable on December 26th, 1963, I consider the translation and dubbing of the film an intrinsic part of the artistic side of the production of the film. While I am quite sure your people are the most able in the country, I am nevertheless the director and writer of the film and absolutely do not accept the principle that I must accept anyone else's opinion in regard to artistic matters over my own. My request to have a copy of the dubbing script for Germany, France and Italy in sufficient time to check them and make whatever revisions I think required is reasonable and consistent with the principle of my artistic control spelled out in my deal with Columbia. (Typescript SK/11/9/120 retrieved from the Stanley Kubrick Archive by Zanotti 2018b)

In Zanotti's view (2018b, p. 1), Kubrick's example is an unorthodox practice within the film industry, "offering an alternative model in which film translation is integrated within the creative process of filmmaking through the film director's active participation in the translation process". As an inadvertent accessible filmmaker, Kubrick is certainly not the norm in the film industry, but his approach to translation is not dissimilar to that of many other filmmakers who are taking an interest and engaging with translation because they are making multilingual films involving translation in the original version, they are in need of creative approaches to translation or they are simply aware of the impact that translation can have on their film. Some of these filmmakers are producing the translated version themselves. Others seem to be implementing some of the steps envisaged as part of the AFM model, such as the production of an accessibility and translation guide and the collaboration with on-site interpreters, translators and language consultants. This shows that, despite being unorthodox in the current industrialised translation and accessibility landscape, the AFM model is largely based on common sense and is made up of the logical steps that would be followed by any filmmaker who decides to consider their foreign and/or sensory-impaired viewers. However, it also highlights the importance of adopting a more systematic approach to the implementation of this model, as is the case with the filmmakers included in Sect. 4, in order to ensure that their efforts to consider translation/accessibility are not wasted and that their vision is truly maintained when it reaches foreign and sensory-impaired viewers.

## 4 Professional Practice

In recent years, partly due to the emergence of multilingual films, more and more filmmakers are beginning to engage with translation from the production process and/or to collaborate with translators, as is the case of Jim

Jarmusch (*Mystery Train* 1989; *Night on Earth* 1991), John Sayles (*Lone Star* 1996; *Men with Guns* 1997), Charlie Kaufman (*Synecdoche, New York* 2008), Danny Boyle (*Slumdog Millionaire* 2008), James Cameron (*Avatar* 2009), Wim Wenders (*The Salt of the Earth* 2014) and, more notoriously, Quentin Tarantino (*Inglourious Basterds* 2009) and Alejandro González Iñárritu (*Babel* 2009; *The Revenant* 2015), both of whom issued translation guidelines to their distributors in order to ensure that their vision for their films was maintained in the translated versions (Sanz Ortega 2015). However, given the inflexible nature of industrial subtitling, where distributors have the power to decide against the translation wishes of recognised filmmakers such as Ken Loach and Quentin Tarantino (*ibid.*), independent filmmaking offers an ideal platform for AFM to be developed. This is shown by recent films that have incorporated translation before the distribution process, such as Michael Chanan's *Secret City* (2012), Enrica Colusso's *Home Sweet Home* (2012), Elisa Fuksas' *Nina* (2012), Deben Van Dam's *De weg van alle vlees* (2013), Álvaro Longoria's *Hijos de las Nubes* (2012) or the award-winning Spanish films *Matria* (Gago 2017) and *Estiu 1993* (Simón 2017).<sup>1</sup>

Whereas most of these films have (often unwittingly) applied elements of AFM in an attempt to maintain the filmmaker's vision across language versions, others have applied the model more systematically, including the presence of a director of accessibility and translation (DAT) (Romero-Fresco 2019a).

The DAT advises on and manages the production of a film's accessible and translated versions, thus ensuring that these versions are coherent with one another, that they inform and complement one another and that the creative vision of the filmmakers is preserved for viewers across the different versions. The extent to which this figure is involved in this process depends on the film's distribution. For films that are widely distributed internationally, the DAT may closely coordinate the production of the accessible versions and subsequently act as a consultant and as a liaison between filmmakers, distributors and translators for any foreign-language version. An important aspect of their work in this case concerns the production of an accessibility and translation guide to be used by translators and media accessibility professionals.

Finally, as noted by Branson (2018), another interesting role for AFM is that of sensory-impaired media accessibility consultants, who can provide an

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<sup>1</sup> Interestingly, AFM can also be regarded as part of a wider movement aiming to integrate translation and accessibility as part of the artistic creation process. The theatre is proving particularly active in this regard, with examples such as *The Gift*, a play produced by the professional Northern Irish children's touring theatre company Cahoots NI in 2015 (Maguire 2015). With the help of the researcher Tom Maguire, the production of the play included aspects of universal design early on in the process and in collaboration with the creative team in order to ensure that spectators with visual impairment were as integrated in the play as sighted spectators.

informed opinion about how the film may be received by deaf and hard-of-hearing viewers and/or blind and partially sighted spectators. These professionals could provide a similar service to that of the standard viewers used for test screenings in many big-budget productions. They might also be included earlier on in the process if the filmmakers are intending to employ innovative accessibility strategies and they require initial testing of concepts.

Some of these new figures have already been used in films such as *Joining the Dots* (Romero-Fresco 2012), which has been used by Netflix and the United Nation's ITU Focus Group on Media Accessibility as an example of good practice, *The Progression of Love* (Rodgers 2010) and *Acquario* (Puntoni 2018), which have been the subject of an MA dissertation and a PhD (Branson 2017). In Uruguay, the company Puerto USB: Uruguay Sin Barreras has been offering AFM services since 2015. They have been involved in films such as *El candidato* (Daniel Hendler, 2016), *Mi Mundial* (Carlos Morelli, 2017), *Locura al aire* (Alicia Cano y Leticia Cuba, 2018) and *Mirador* (Antón Terni, 2018), where they have worked collaboratively with filmmakers using DATs and sensory-impaired consultants. Finally, perhaps the most noteworthy example is Archer's Mark, the UK-based production company behind the Emmy award-winning *Notes on Blindness* (Spinney 2016). This company developed, with the contribution of the BFI, an international impact campaign on the need to adopt an AFM approach in modern filmmaking. Reflecting on this experience, Jo-Jo Ellison (Archer's Mark) gives a producer's point of view regarding the benefits and challenges involved in applying the AFM model:

Translations are more often than not taken into the distributors' budget, where the process is even further removed. If there are any reservations coming from producers it will all come down to cost and scheduling. Funders will often question anything but minimal spend on AD or subs, simply because they are not aware of the financial and creative benefits derived from accessible filmmaking. As the accessibility campaign that ran alongside *Notes On Blindness* continues to win awards and reach a wider audience, the necessity and appeal of accessible filmmaking builds traction. As a company, Archer's Mark are already applying the AFM model across all of their films and integrating it into their commercial work. (2018, personal communication)

Ellison's words are a reminder of the importance of raising awareness amongst producers about the benefits brought about by AFM, not least when it comes to reaching new audiences, which is currently one of their key priorities. As for the creative implications of using this model, it may be a good idea to give the floor to filmmakers Pete Middleton and James Spinney, whose

experience during the production of *Notes on Blindness* serves as an apt ending to the case for a new and more inclusive approach to filmmaking made in this chapter:

*Notes on Blindness* was our first experience with accessible filmmaking. The possibilities (and equally, the challenges) of accessibility felt crucial to a filmic treatment of John Hull's account of blindness. John stated the purpose of his writing as 'an attempt to bridge the abyss that separates different worlds of experience'. In this sense, the aim of his work is closely aligned with the ambitions of accessible filmmaking.

Accessibility is so far from being embedded within the familiar production model that we really had no idea where to begin. It's strange to think that a process that is so crucial to the experience of a film, for so much of its audience, is often an afterthought, produced without the involvement of the filmmakers, who are so creatively involved in every other element in the film.

Adopting an integrated approach to the accessibility on *Notes on Blindness* was an extremely creative and collaborative process. For us, the attention and thought given by the accessibility team meant that the process transcended basic considerations of clarity, comprehension, plot and was able to encompass aesthetic concerns, such as viewpoint, ambiguity, tension, tone, etc. Working in this way allowed the accessible versions to be an extension of the wider creative approach of the film. This is exemplified by the creative subtitles: rather than being detached from the image, they're embedded within the frame, in balance with the shot composition and tonal palette, subtly suggestive of the emotion being conveyed. They are at one with the image.

Integrating the accessibility process into the production / post-production schedule stops it from being a rushed after-thought, allows for re-drafting and re-working which is, of course, so essential to any creative process.

Filmmakers may be daunted by the prospect of the additional involvement. This perhaps stems from a couple of things. Firstly, a lack of awareness of the difference the process makes to how the film is experienced by so much of its audience. And secondly, a lack of understanding of the sheer creative possibilities, which allow the same level of authorship as every other element in the film. If the obsessive impulse that drives filmmakers can be awoken in the area of accessibility, directors and producers will quickly become as fascinated and concerned with it as they would with any other department.

We're already making plans to try to bring an integrated approach to accessibility to our next project, which will bring new challenges and creative possibilities! (2018, personal communication)

## 5 Conclusions and Way Forward

As a fairly new development in the field, AFM may be seen as illustrative of a changing landscape where the boundaries between AVT and MA are increasingly blurred. Based on a wide, integrated and user-centric approach to MA and on a translation/accessibility-oriented notion of film studies, AFM puts forward a new model that integrates translation and accessibility into the filmmaking process in a bid to increase the quality of translated and accessible films.

When it was first proposed, AFM faced reservations both from the AVT and the film industry. AVT professionals regarded it as unrealistic and questioned the feasibility of finding filmmakers who are willing to collaborate with translators. In turn, some filmmakers and film producers feared that this process would be too time-consuming and expensive. Eight years later, most of these reservations have disappeared, as there is an increasing number of filmmakers who are adopting this approach according to a precise and straightforward workflow (Romero-Fresco and Fryer 2018) and for a cost that amounts to 0.1% of a relatively low-budget film and 0.01% of a major studio film (Simonton 2011). Research is beginning to show that this approach has the potential to not only improve the experience of the majority of viewers but also help filmmakers to see their films through different eyes (Romero-Fresco 2019a). Interestingly, virtually every filmmaker who has been approached to apply this model has agreed to take it on board. The challenge is now to spread the word amongst a majority of filmmakers who are not aware of the impact that translation/accessibility can have on the nature and reception of their films and who do not know that a different approach is possible.

Following from this, the second challenge involves training. Ad hoc courses and workshops on AFM have been delivered in different countries but more formal and consistent training is needed. This is the aim of the first online course on AFM, which, drawing on the proposal outlined in Romero-Fresco (2019b), brings together the British Film Institute, the online education platform FutureLearn and Universidade de Vigo and which caters for both filmmakers and translators/MA experts who wish to be trained in this new area.

Needless to say, the industrialised model that relegates accessibility and translation to the distribution process is not going to be replaced overnight, but AFM presents an alternative approach to those accessible filmmakers who are willing to bear in mind not only the viewers of the original version, but also those of the accessible and translated versions of their films.

## 6 Suggested Reading

Romero-Fresco, P. (2019). *Accessible Filmmaking: Integrating translation and accessibility into the filmmaking process*, London/NY: Routledge.

*This is the first monograph on accessible filmmaking, covering all aspects related to research, training and practice in this area.*

MacDougall, D. (1998). ‘Subtitling Ethnographic Films’, in D. MacDougall *Transcultural Cinema*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 165–178.

*This is a seminal chapter covering the notion of translation (and, more specifically, subtitling) from the point of view of ethnographic filmmaking.*

Crow, L. (2005c). ‘Nectar: A New Approach to Film Accessibility’. Available online: <http://www.roaring-girl.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/Film-Accessibility.pdf> [last access 20 December 2017].

*This is the first set of guidelines and recommendations on accessible filmmaking, published online by the filmmaker and artist Liz Crow and covering audio description, subtitling for the deaf and hard of hearing and sign language interpreting.*

Romero-Fresco, P. (2019). “Training in Accessible Filmmaking”. *Linguistica Antverpiensia*, New Series: Themes in Translation Studies, 14, Special issue: Media Accessibility Training.

*Following an overview of the training currently available in AVT/MA and film(making) and of the first pioneering attempts to provide AFM training, this article puts forward a proposal for two different courses designed to equip accessible filmmakers and translators/media access experts with the required skills to apply the AFM model.*

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# 28

## The Didactic Value of AVT in Foreign Language Education

Noa Talaván

### 1 Introduction

The application of audiovisual translation (AVT) to foreign language (L2) education dates back to the 1980s, when some scholars started to use subtitles as a support within language laboratories to improve a series of L2 skills (Holobow et al. 1984; Vanderplank 1988). A lot has changed since then, both in terms of the methodological implementation of AVT as a didactic resource in this context, and in the audiovisual world, as technology has vertiginously advanced in the last decades.

The present chapter describes the didactic value of AVT in L2 education, by defining the practice and presenting the main AVT modes that may be applied to the pedagogical context, explaining what should be understood by their pedagogical applications and offering a series of guidelines for practitioners. To complement this description, a state of the art of this subarea of research in AVT will be provided, so as to allow the reader to have access to the main work carried out in this field. Finally, the conclusions of the chapter will include social implications and future prospects.

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## 2 Main Modes of Application of AVT to L2 Practice

Most AVT modes can be applied as didactic resources in the L2 context, and many of them have already been put into practice by teachers and researchers in the course of the last ten years, as it will be reviewed in Sect. 3. Two of them, subtitling and dubbing, have received closer attention, since they are the main AVT modes worldwide, as well as easily accessible and familiar for teachers and learners alike. In this section, the main AVT modes will be presented from a didactic stance, ranging from the most effective and familiar ones to the modes that have received less attention and still need further research and practice to be thoroughly described and categorized in pedagogical terms: subtitling, dubbing, audio description (AD), subtitles for the deaf and hard of hearing (SDH), voice-over, and narration. For organizational purposes, they have been divided into didactic subtitling and didactic revoicing.

### 2.1 Didactic Subtitling

Subtitling will be understood here as the creation of subtitles by the students themselves with the help of a specific subtitle editor. The use of subtitles as a support will not be considered for the purposes of this chapter, since this perspective implies a different methodological approach to AVT, given that the resource is used in a more passive manner, that is, subtitles as a support and not subtitling as an active tool. As important and useful as subtitles as a support may have been (Ghia 2012; Vanderplank 2016), and still are (Bolaños-García-Escribano 2017; Frumuselu et al. 2015; Łabendowicz 2018), their basic functioning and theoretical foundations differ from the active didactic approach to AVT that is to be presented herein.

Students can perform subtitling in diverse directions, and combining various possibilities, as it can be appreciated in Table 28.1, where the learners' mother tongue is considered L1 and the foreign language students learn L2. All combinations are equally effective and can be used to develop any L2 skill (except for speaking production) and applied to different age groups and proficiencies, but each one is commonly perceived as more useful for certain groups of students or to develop a particular L2 skill more than others.

As derived from Table 28.1, subtitling offers a world of possibilities to both teachers and learners to formulate tasks for either face-to-face (F2F) or online environments. However, having a complete activity with the subtitling task as

**Table 28.1** Possibilities of using subtitling as a didactic resource in L2

Combination	Directions	Better for...
Interlingual standard	L2 audio - L1 subtitles	A1 to B2 levels Listening comprehension
Interlingual reverse	L1 audio - L2 subtitles	A1 to B2 levels Writing production
Intralingual	L2 audio - L2 subtitles	B2 to C2 levels Listening comprehension and writing production
Subtitles for the deaf and hard of hearing (SDH)	L2 audio - L1 subtitles L1 audio - L2 subtitles	B1 to C2 levels Lexical acquisition and writing production
Keyword captions	L2 audio - L1 (key) subtitles L2 audio - L2 (key) subtitles	A1 to B1 levels Vocabulary and spelling
Creative subtitling (fakesubbing or funsubbing)	L2 audio - L1 subtitles L2 audio - L2 subtitles	B1 to C2 levels Creativity and cultural awareness

its nucleus would be necessary so as to really profit the benefits of this didactic application of AVT. Hence, once the appropriate combination is decided upon according to the students' group and to the focus of the lesson, and the video selected accordingly, the design of the activity could follow the prototypical proposal suggested in Table 28.2, that can be applied to regular courses and to online environments alike. This didactic construct to use subtitling in the L2 context is just a general proposal that can be adapted in various ways according to the specific pedagogical context and group of learners. The timing is calculated for 60 minutes lessons in F2F environments and one-week lessons for online contexts, but it can easily be modified to suit different didactic settings.

The subtitling task is supposed to imitate real subtitling (i.e. the one made by professionals), so a series of basic guidelines are necessary for the students to grasp the key rules to follow: length and duration of subtitles, synchrony, and condensation and segmentation tips. How detailed these guidelines are prepared will depend on the students' L2 proficiency level and their familiarity with the AVT task. It is important not to be too rigid with subtitling conventions in this context, since they could be a hindrance for L2 advancement if they become more important than the linguistic practice itself. Here follows an example of basic guidelines that could be suitable for a group of

**Table 28.2** Sample task structure for didactic subtitling

Phase	Description	Objective
Pre-viewing activities (F2F: 10 minutes) (online: 1 day)	Discussing or introducing the plot. Presenting new vocabulary, structures, or cultural information. Anticipating the video content, characters, events, etc.	To gather the necessary background knowledge to face the viewing and subtitling phases
Video viewing (F2F: 10 minutes) (online: 1 day)	The video to be subtitled is to be watched at least twice, with or without subtitles (be it interlingual or intralingual)	To understand the messages to be subtitled next and to get familiar with the key linguistic content
Subtitling practice (F2F: 30 minutes) (online: 2 days)	Students subtitle the video on their own or in pairs using a pre-selected subtitle editor	To develop the particular L2 skill selected and any other related skill or skills in an integrated manner
Post-subtitling activities (F2F: 10–15 minutes) (online: 1 day)	Oral discussions on relevant topics related to the video. Role-plays to practice linguistic elements present in the video. Related writing tasks	To make the most of the linguistic content of the video and to complement the previous L2 skills practice

learners who face didactic subtitling for the first time; then, the teacher should monitor the degree in which they are respected, complement them if necessary, and/or remind learners of basic points whenever needed:

- **Subtitle length.** Subtitles lines cannot be excessively long because long lines can make reading difficult for the audience; it is always better to have two shorter lines (segmenting a line into two) than one long line. Pay attention to the maximum number of characters per line recommended in your subtitle editor and try to respect them. Subtitles should be made up of one or two lines only.
- **Subtitle duration.** Subtitles cannot stay too long on screen but the audience need to have time to read them and pay attention to the accompanying images at the same time during the seconds they are visible; the minimum presence time is usually one–two seconds and six seconds is typically the maximum duration per subtitle. Pay attention to the maximum number of characters per second (cps) recommended in your subtitle editor and try to respect this.
- **Synchrony.** Subtitles must appear synchronized with the corresponding dialogues (not appearing before, not staying longer) and they should never stay on screen when a change of shot takes place.
- **Condensation.** Information reduction is a key aspect of subtitling: the information contained in the dialogues needs to be condensed whenever necessary to

**Table 28.3** Sample assessment rubric for didactic subtitling

	Poor (5%)	Adequate (10%)	Good (15%)	Excellent (20%)	Total
Accuracy and appropriateness of the translated text					
Subtitle length and duration					
Condensation strategies					
Appropriate segmentation					
Synchrony					

*fit subtitle length and duration. You will often need to rephrase or look for synonyms and other ways of expressing the same message so that it fits the subtitle length and duration, and it is appropriately synchronized.*

- **Segmentation.** When you break a long line into two, there is an important aspect to be considered: the break should not slow or hinder the reading. Hence, try not to break important syntactic (or logical) units, that is, do not separate the auxiliary from the verb, the article from the noun, the preposition from the complement, etc. when you break a subtitle into two lines.

The previous general guidelines can be adapted to each group's needs and proficiency levels. A good means to make students more aware of the importance of applying the aforementioned subtitling tips is to assess or self-assess the final subtitles produced with an ad hoc rubric (be it for self-assessment, peer assessment, or teacher assessment), similar to the one that is reproduced in Table 28.3.

### Didactic Creation of Subtitles for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (SDH)

Didactic SDH must be understood as the production of SDH by the students; it obviously shares many didactic features with the standard didactic subtitling mode outlined above. In fact, it was one of the combinations mentioned in Table 28.1. It has been considered necessary to separate it from the rest, though, given its particular nature, since both form and content differ from the other combinations. As aforementioned, they are particularly useful to develop lexical and writing skills (as well as listening comprehension when the L2-L2 direction is used), since they require a precise description of the sounds and other paralinguistic elements to portray tone, mood, music, etc. with the necessary accuracy, as required by the target audience.

Although didactic SDH may follow a similar activity design (see Table 28.2), the guidelines and the assessment rubric would have to be slightly adapted. Apart from the general didactic subtitling guidelines specified above, the specific SDH tips related to the identification of characters, and descriptions of sound, mood, tone, and other paralinguistic elements should also be added:

- **Character identification.** *A person with hearing challenges needs to know who is saying what if more than one person is speaking in the same subtitle. There are various ways of signaling character identification in SDH: the use of dashes, colors (one per character throughout the whole clip), and name tags in front of each character's intervention; the former is the most practical choice, since no technical adjustments are needed in the subtitle editor.*
- **Sound effects.** *They should be described in between brackets and it is advisable to nominalize them whenever possible (e.g. (Cough) instead of (He coughs)). The description must include the sound only, and not its reception (e.g. \*(A shot is heard) would be wrong). Sounds are usually placed on the top right corner of the screen; if that were not possible, they could go alone as a subtitle or within a subtitle, occupying one of the two lines.*
- **Paralinguistic information.** *Information related to mood, tone of voice, pitch, etc. is included in between brackets, in capital letters, preferably nominalized and right in front of the corresponding text that is affected by the feature being described (e.g. (WHISPER) I miss you).*
- **Music.** *If music is relevant for the plot, it should be included in the subtitles. The description of the type of music follows the guidelines indicated for sound effects (top right corner if possible), for example (Classical music). If the subtitles include the lyrics of a song or need to signal that a character is singing, a musical note or a hashtag (#) should be placed in the subtitles at the beginning and at the end of every subtitle including the song.*

As to the rubric, it should be borne in mind that, when using didactic SDH, there are specific objectives related to the development of lexical precision and richness, and to the acquisition of certain audiovisual accessibility awareness, and so these elements will need to be assessed, as the sample rubric contained in Table 28.4 clearly shows.

## 2.2 Didactic Revoicing

Within revoicing, there are four main AVT modes where a new audio track is added to the original audiovisual product so as to make it accessible in another

**Table 28.4** Sample assessment rubric for didactic SDH

	Poor (5%)	Adequate (10%)	Good (15%)	Excellent (20%)	Total
Accuracy and appropriateness of the translated text					
Subtitle length, duration, and synchrony					
Condensation and segmentation strategies					
Correct description of sound effects and music					
Paralinguistic information and character identification					

**Table 28.5** Possibilities of using dubbing as a didactic resource in L2

Combination	Directions	Better for...
Interlingual reverse	L1 audio - L2 dubbing	A2 to B2 levels Speaking production
Intralingual	L2 audio - L2 dubbing	B2 to C2 levels Listening comprehension and speaking production
Creative dubbing (fun dubbing or bad lip reading)	L1 audio - L2 dubbing L2 audio - L2 dubbing	B1 to C2 levels Creativity, cultural awareness, fluency, and naturalness

language or to a specific type of audience, and they will be considered here from a didactic perspective: dubbing, audio description, voice-over, and narration.

## Didactic Dubbing

Dubbing is the best known, more familiar, and more frequently tested didactic revoicing mode in the context of the pedagogical applications of AVT to L2 up to date. It is understood as the recording of a new audio track for a particular video on the part of the students. This new track is supposed to imitate real dubbing by audiovisual translators and actors in the real world but it actually is a mere recording of the students' voices synchronized with the characters' mouths as closely as possible; in other words, it does not attempt to look like real dubbing at a professional standard.

Dubbing can be performed by students in diverse directions and combining various possibilities, as it can be appreciated in Table 28.5. As it happened

with subtitling, all combinations are equally effective and can be used to develop any L2 skill, and applied to different age groups and proficiencies, but they are often perceived as more useful for certain groups or to develop a particular L2 skill more than others.

As derived from the previous Table 28.5, didactic dubbing offers various possibilities for either face-to-face (F2F) or online environments. The perfect scenario for didactic dubbing would imply to have a complete activity with the dubbing task at its center. Thus, if the appropriate combination is selected according to the students' group and to the specific emphasis of the lesson, and the corresponding video selected, a suitable activity can be efficiently designed; the sample presented in Table 28.2 above for didactic subtitling could be adapted to didactic dubbing, substituting subtitling by dubbing.

Since this type of revoicing task is thought to imitate (at least in general terms) real dubbing made by professionals, some basic guidelines are necessary for the students to grasp a series of key aspects to bear in mind so as to accomplish successful dubbing in the L2 context, especially in terms of lip synchrony, fluency and speed of speech, naturalness, and characterization. Here follows an example of useful recommendations for this type of tasks:

- **Lip synchrony.** Remember your recording should be synchronized with the characters' mouth movements, as if your words came out of their mouths.
- **Fluency and speed of speech.** Your speech needs to be fluent and fast enough to fit the characters' mouth movements.
- **Naturalness.** In order to be as natural as possible when you produce your new audio tracks, try to focus on using a correct pronunciation and intonation in the foreign language; you could try to exaggerate difficult sounds so as to achieve a greater degree of naturalness.
- **Dramatization.** Although you are not professional actors, you should try to make an effort to make your new audio tracks as realistic as possible, trying to believe what you are saying.

In order to assess or self-assess the final dubbing outcome produced by students, an ad hoc rubric can be useful as a guideline for students' performance and assessment. Table 28.6 contains a sample rubric that can be adapted to various pedagogical contexts.

**Table 28.6** Sample assessment rubric for didactic dubbing

	Poor (5%)	Adequate (10%)	Good (15%)	Excellent (20%)	Total
Linguistic accuracy (pronunciation and intonation)					
Lip synchrony					
Fluency and speed of speech (naturalness)					
Technical quality					
Dramatization					

## Didactic Audio Description (AD)

Audio Description (AD) is an audiovisual accessibility mode that can be used in the L2 didactic realm to make learners aware of the relevance of audiovisual accessibility in today's society. In this context, didactic AD is understood as the creation of an AD script for a particular video and the recording of the corresponding audio track on the part of the students; this new text contains the intersemiotic translation of the information provided by the images of the audiovisual product. It is supposed to imitate real AD, so that learners may perceive the importance of transferring the information contained in the images as accurately as possible, as if they were really making the corresponding audiovisual content accessible for a person with visual challenges. Thus, the students should be shown samples and receive the appropriate guidelines to learn how AD is supposed to be scripted and narrated. However, once again, teachers should not be too strict with the professional quality of the output, since this is just didactic AD to improve L2 skills, and it does not attempt to teach students to become audio describers.

Didactic AD can be performed only in one direction, from the images to the L2 (the video being in L2 or without dialogues), and the skills that can benefit the most from this practice are writing and speaking production, from both writing the script first and recording the voices naturally reading it next. Also, lexical acquisition, functional and grammatical content, and cultural awareness can be enhanced, as well as listening comprehension when the video contains dialogues. All L2 proficiency levels can benefit from this activity provided there is some flexibility in how the teacher asks learners to describe the information contained in the images, that is, short sentences with simple descriptions for beginners and complete AD scripts for more advanced learners.

**Table 28.7** Sample task structure for didactic AD

Phase	Description	Objective
Pre-viewing activities (F2F: 10 minutes) (online: 1 day)	Introducing the video and the new linguistic content (when needed) and presenting audiovisual accessibility needs, for example, showing brief AD sample(s)	To gather background knowledge to face the viewing phase and to make learners familiar with AD
Video viewing (F2F: 10 minutes) (online: 1 day)	The video to be audio described is to be watched at least twice, paying attention to the information contained in the images	To understand the visual information to be described next as well as possible
AD practice (F2F: 30 minutes) (online: 2 days)	Students create the script for the video on their own or in pairs and then record it	To develop writing and speaking production skills as well as relevant lexical and grammatical content related to descriptions
Post-AD activities (F2F: 10–15 minutes) (online: 1 day)	Watching the results of various classmates and discussing differences and possible improvements	To reflect upon one's work and peer-assessment, so as to improve the practice for subsequent AD tasks

The ideal didactic context would include a complete activity with the AD task at its core. The sample lesson provided in Table 28.7 slightly differs from the one used for subtitling and dubbing before, given the audiovisual accessibility nature of the task, on the one hand, and the different type of translation (intersemiotic) that is performed, on the other.

Once again, this sample activity can be adapted in various ways according to the length of the video selected or to the organizational possibilities of the group (e.g. a particular AD task can be performed in the course of three F2F lessons to turn it into a more complete project). Be it as it may, in this scenario, a series of basic guidelines (especially in terms of lexical accuracy and richness, grammatical precision and reduction, as well as creativity) are necessary for students to understand how AD is carried out, especially because it is an AVT mode which is typically less familiar than subtitling or dubbing for most learners. Here follows a proposal of useful tips for learners performing this type of tasks:

- **Lexical accuracy and richness.** You need to be accurate in your descriptions and look for the most precise words that can reflect the corresponding images on the mind of the audience, through short descriptions that do not interfere with the dialogues. Some examples of accurate verbs indicating locomotion would be:

**Table 28.8** Sample assessment rubric for didactic AD

	Poor (5%)	Adequate (10%)	Good (15%)	Excellent (20%)	Total
Lexical accuracy and richness					
Grammatical precision and reduction					
Creativity					
Fluency and speed of speech					
Synchrony					

*walk, step, run, turn, linger, stomp, follow, enter, advance, retreat, struggle, shake, lean, stumble, etc.*

- **Grammatical precision and reduction.** You need to express actions and describe situations using the most precise functions and syntactic structures; do not provide unnecessary information that may be heard, avoid being redundant, never anticipate content or actions, etc. Just stick to the specific image and describe what the audience cannot see in it as briefly and precisely as possible.
- **Creativity.** Try to be creative with your intersemiotic translation solutions. To this end, you need to understand the images well first, look for accurate and precise words and structures, and visualize the images your descriptions create in the mind of a person who has no access to the original visual source. If the new images do not reproduce what you intended to, look for more creative solutions.

It is important, once again, for learners to be able to assess or self-assess their final AD product, and an ad hoc rubric can be provided to help them in this evaluation task, like the one presented in Table 28.8.

## Didactic Voice-Over and Didactic Narration

These two last revoicing techniques, voice-over and narration, are somehow parallel to dubbing (and narration partly parallel to AD as well) and so only the main differences between them will be signaled in this subsection.

Didactic voice-over is to be understood as the students recording of a new audio track, repeating or translating the dialogues but leaving the original audio track present on the final product, at a lower volume, while synchronizing the revoicing with a slight delay, imitating real voice-over. The possible combinations coincide with the ones presented in Table 28.5 for dubbing

(reverse, intralingual, and creative), and the sample lesson would need to coincide with the one presented in Table 28.2 for didactic subtitling, that was also suitable for dubbing, but this time subtitling would be substituted by voice-over. As to the guidelines for voice-over, the ones for dubbing would do except for lip synchrony, that would have to be omitted here. For the same reason, in the rubric for didactic dubbing contained in Table 28.6, everything would be equally valid for voice-over, except for lip-synchrony, that would need to be modified into ‘appropriate synchrony’, meaning that the right delay with the original is kept in the final product. The benefit of voice-over when compared to dubbing resides, first of all, in the lack of lip synchrony, something that makes the recording and the translation (when students work with the L1-L2 direction) less challenging for students. Also, the use of a more neutral tone of voice makes the dramatization requirement less demanding, and this is supposed to make the activity as a whole less challenging (in terms of the stress synchrony and dramatization may imply for an L2 learner) and more suitable for the educational context.

Didactic narration, on the other hand, refers to a relatively free AVT mode where students would narrate documentaries (or related input), relating what takes place on screen with the help of the script but with freedom to create a new personal version of the original narration. In this case, the possible combinations coincide with the ones presented in Table 28.5 for dubbing (reverse, intralingual, and creative), while the sample lesson would coincide with the one offered for AD in Table 28.7 (substituting AD by narration), given that narration is not something students are very familiar with, and that they need to narrate what is going on screen, that is, more attention is to be placed on the images than on the original script, if any. As to the guidelines for narration, they would need to combine tips for dubbing and AD, as it can be appreciated in the proposal included below:

- **Naturalness.** *In order to be as natural as possible when you produce your new audio tracks, try to focus on using a natural pronunciation and intonation in the foreign language; you could try to exaggerate difficult sounds so as to achieve a greater degree of naturalness.*
- **Dramatization.** *Although you are not professional actors, you should try to make an effort to make your new audio tracks as realistic as possible, trying to believe what you are saying.*
- **Lexico-syntactic accuracy and richness.** *You need to be accurate in your narration and look for the most precise words, functions, and syntactic structures, which can describe the corresponding actions and images contained in the video.*

- **Creativity.** Try to be creative with your narration. To this end, you need to grasp what is being told well first, understand the original script and images, and then look for accurate and precise words and structures to create your own narration.

In the case of the rubric for didactic narration, the sample offered in Table 28.8, for didactic AD assessment, could be perfectly valid.

### 3 State of the Art

Although already suggested by Díaz Cintas (1995) more than 20 years ago now, the first study that researched the potential of active AVT cannot be traced until the beginning of the twenty-first century, when Williams and Thorne (2000) introduced the use of subtitling to improve integrated skills in learners of Welsh. For dubbing, the literature had to wait ten more years, with Danan (2010), for the first measurable results to appear on the potential of using this revoicing mode, in this case to improve Dari, Pashto, and Farsi in a year L2 course for military personnel. The remaining AVT modes have waited even more to receive scholarly attention, especially SDH or voice-over, with just one publication to date each, or narration, that has not even been studied yet. This review of the state of the art will divide the main AVT modes applied to L2 education as they were divided in the previous section, as didactic subtitling and didactic revoicing.

#### 3.1 Research on Didactic Subtitling

As it was mentioned above, the potential of subtitling was commented upon before it started to be thoroughly studied. Apart from Díaz Cintas (1995, 1997, 2012), other authors (such as Talaván 2006a, 2007; Wagener 2006; or Gómez Pérez and Roales Ruiz 2011, among others) have suggested the potential possibilities of the use of active subtitling (especially in its interlingual standard combination) in the L2 context.

In terms of actual research, we may divide the state of the art according to the skills that have been studied in each case and the combinations analyzed. The combination that has received the greatest attention is interlingual standard subtitling, with authors such as Lertola (2012), focusing on the potential of active subtitling to improve vocabulary acquisition (bilingual receptive recall and bilingual productive recall) or Talaván (2010, 2011) and Talaván

and Rodríguez-Arancón (2014), assessing its possibilities to develop listening comprehension. Pragmatic awareness, as well as vocabulary retention and syntax (Incalcaterra McLoughlin 2009; Incalcaterra McLoughlin and Lertola 2016; Lopriore and Ceruti 2015) have also been the focus of research, as well as intercultural awareness (Borguetti 2011; Borguetti and Lertola 2014). Furthermore, other authors have studied this combination from a more theoretical perspective, where they have tried to provide a methodological framework for the use of didactic subtitled (Incalcaterra McLoughlin and Lertola 2011; Lertola 2015; Talaván 2013) and its integration in the L2 curriculum (Incalcaterra McLoughlin and Lertola 2014). Other publications have also focused on suggesting the didactic potential of interlingual didactic subtitled for languages for specific purposes (Talaván 2006b, for Business English, and Kantz 2015, for Medical English), Content Integrated Language Learning (Bianchi 2015; Fernández-Costales 2017), teacher training (López Cirugeda and Sánchez Ruiz 2013), or fansubbing practices (Tonin 2013).

The interlingual reverse and the intralingual combinations have received less scholarly attention. The former has been studied in terms of writing production skills enhancement (Burczyńska 2015; Talaván et al. 2017; Talaván and Rodríguez-Arancón 2014), and the latter for writing and listening skills enhancement (Talaván et al. 2016). As to the remaining combinations, didactic SDH has just been studied up to now in terms of its potential for writing production, listening comprehension, and lexical creativity (Talaván 2019b); as far as the two remaining ones are concerned, creative subtitled has only been tentatively analyzed combined with creative dubbing (Talaván 2019a), while the creation of keyword captions has apparently not been researched.

Before turning to didactic revoicing, there are two more aspects that need to be put forward: the research related to two relevant European projects that have largely helped to advance in the field and the theses that are available related to didactic subtitled.

LeViS (Learning Via Subtitling) was the first European project on this area, and it undertook the development of a specific subtitled editor designed to be used by L2 teachers and students (Romero et al. 2011; Sokoli 2006; Sokoli et al. 2011). This project gave way to a larger and more thorough one, Clipflair (Foreign Language Learning through Interactive Revoicing and Captioning of Clips), where the software designed also catered for other AVT modes, as a recording option was implemented (Lertola 2016; Sokoli 2018). More information on Clipflair will be provided in Sect. 3.3.

Finally, five theses have been written to date on the use of didactic subtitled, and all of them have focused on the interlingual standard combination. The first one (Bravo 2008) analyzed the possibilities of subtitled for

idiomatic expressions retention and recall together with other analyses of the possibilities of the use of subtitles as a support. Talaván (2009), the second thesis to deal with this topic, researched the possibilities of didactic subtitling for listening comprehension enhancement. The third dissertation (Lertola 2013) dealt with the potential of didactic subtitling for the development of vocabulary acquisition. The following one (Panizzon 2013) combined the possibilities of subtitling for translation training with its potential for language learning and focused on the use of the software LvS from the first European project (LeViS) aforementioned. Torralba Miralles (2016), the last one to date, showed that active subtitling can be suitable in terms of supporting the incidental acquisition of new word meanings in primary education students.

### 3.2 Research on Didactic Revoicing

As far revoicing is concerned, most research has focused on dubbing. Already suggested by a series of authors, in terms of its expected didactic potential (Burston 2005; Duff 1989; Kumai 1996; Wagener 2006), it was not actually researched until Danan (2010) studied its use (in its interlingual reversed combination) for vocabulary acquisition, speaking fluency, and pronunciation and proved it to be an activity that fostered creativity and initiative. After her, a series of authors have analyzed this revoicing mode focusing on the intralingual combination: Chiu (2012) looked at its possibilities to avoid mispronunciation, and to improve fluency and intonation; He and Wasuntarasophit (2015) focused on speaking skills improvement in terms of pronunciation; Talaván and Costal (2017) suggested its potential for speaking production skills enhancement, and provided assessment guidelines; and Sánchez-Requena (2016, 2018) studied its didactic value to work on fluency and pronunciation in spontaneous conversations. Other authors have also advocated for the potential value of didactic dubbing with different degrees of depth, in the course of the last decade: we may highlight Navarrete (2013), who proposed dubbing activities to use with the Clipflair platform, from the European project aforementioned; Wakefield (2014), who suggested dubbing activities including the possibility of undertaking creative dubbing practices; and Zhang (2016), who tried out the use of a mobile app for this type of tasks.

The other revoicing mode that has been the focus of scholarly attention is audio description (AD). The related publications are more recent, just as research interest on audiovisual accessibility in general and on AD in particular dates back to the last 10 or 15 years only (Díaz Cintas et al. 2007).

Unfortunately, didactic AD has only been researched into by a small number of scholars: Ibáñez and Vermeulen (2013, 2014, 2015b, 2015a, 2016) and Ibáñez et al. (2016) have studied the use of AD from three different perspectives: to improve lexical and phraseological competence, to enhance integrated learning skills, and to promote speaking skills through a mobile app called VISP (VIdeos for Speaking). Apart from them, Cenni and Izzo (2016) have analyzed its didactic potential in general to teach Italian, Talaván and Lertola (2016) and Navarrete (2018) have researched its possibilities to improve oral production skills, and Caldúch and Talaván (2018) have assessed its potential value to enhance writing production skills. A few more authors (Burger (2017) or Herrero and Escobar (2018), among others) have also recently suggested various methodological applications of AD.

From the remaining revoicing modes, voice-over and narration, only the former has had been researched, and to this author's knowledge, just in terms of oral production skills (pronunciation and fluency) in Talaván and Rodríguez-Arancón (2018).

As to doctoral theses undertaken in this area in particular, only one to date has devoted to didactic revoicing, focusing on intralingual dubbing to improve speed, intonation, and pronunciation in spontaneous conversations: Sánchez-Requena (2017).

### 3.3 Didactic AVT: Diverse Modes Combined

This last subsection of the state of the art on didactic AVT focuses on studies that have covered various AVT modes combined. To begin with, it is worth mentioning a series of studies, Lertola and Mariotti (2017), Talaván et al. (2014), Talaván and Ávila-Cabrera (2015), or Talaván et al. (2015), that researched the didactic benefits of dubbing and subtitling combined. In this sense, different types of L2 lessons were designed to improve pragmatic awareness (Lertola & Mariotti), and speaking and writing skills (Talaván & Ávila-Cabrera and Talaván, Rodríguez-Arancón, & Martín-Monje), even in English for Specific Purposes contexts (Talaván et al. 2014). Other studies, such as Herrero et al. (2018), are starting to analyze other combinations, such as SDH and AD in this case, and a recent study has been made on the reception of the use of the various AVT modes on the part of practitioners (Alonso-Pérez and Sánchez-Requena 2018).

Also, the research projects aforementioned, especially Clipflair, have been the focus of a series of publications suggesting the didactic potential of various AVT modes, while describing the project's design and main findings (Baños

and Sokoli 2015; Incalcaterra McLoughlin and Lertola 2016; Sokoli 2015, among others). A new research project that deals with didactic AVT in Spain is PluriTAV (Audiovisual Translation as a Tool for the Development of Multilingual Competences in the Classroom) that points toward new discoveries as to the pedagogical potential of the different AVT modes to teach foreign languages and perfect mother tongues in higher education scenarios (Martínez-Sierra 2018; Marzà et al. 2018).

Finally, two monographs to date have been published on the didactic value of AVT in all its modes. Talaván (2013) was the first one to present AVT as a pedagogical tool (used actively by students in the L2 context), especially from the point of view of subtitling. More recently, Lertola (2019) has thoroughly reviewed all the studies on the applications of didactic subtitling and revoicing, paying particular attention at the existing experimental studies on the area.

This review of the state of the art has aimed at including all relevant proposals, studies, and research related to the didactic use of AVT from an active stance within the teaching and learning of L2. Research focused on the use of didactic AVT for translator training or on the use of AVT modes from a receptive perspective (e.g. the use of subtitles as a support) have intentionally been left out, since they escape the scope of this chapter.

## 4 Implications, Future Prospects, and Final Remarks

The social implications of the didactic use of AVT in L2 contexts imply, first of all, a clear enhancement of L2 proficiency, especially as regards production skills (writing and speaking) and listening comprehension, which are often counted among the most challenging aspects to master in L2 learning. In countries with a more marked dubbing tradition, the implementation of didactic AVT may also imply students getting more familiar with other AVT modes, such as subtitling, a fact that can contribute to expose them more often to L2 input also outside the educational context. Finally, the use of audiovisual accessibility modes, such as AD or SDH, in this context, brings about a clear increase on accessibility awareness in all the subjects (teachers and learners alike) involved in this sort of activities.

The future prospects of the field of didactic AVT look positive enough, given the noticeable proliferation of practice and research that has taken place in the course of the last decade. Other large-scale projects would be necessary

though, to establish a more solid scientific foundation that may allow a larger number of teachers and researchers to approach this area to be able to trust its potential pedagogical benefits and so put didactic AVT into practice at different levels and to achieve diverse educational goals.

The present chapter has attempted to describe the relevance of the didactic applications of AVT by justifying its potential educational benefits in the L2 context. To this end, the various AVT modes that can be effectively used in this scenario have been presented from a didactic stance, providing the necessary guidelines for practitioners and researchers who might be interested in discovering the potential of didactic AVT through actual practice. Also, the main scholars and publications this subarea of specialization have been highlighted to allow for further reading if additional information about any of the didactic applications of the AVT modes presented herein is required.

Didactic AVT is meant to become an increasingly prominent subfield of specialization in the years to come. The flexibility of its application (various modes, combinations, levels of proficiency, L2 skills, etc.), the endless and easily accessible bank of video resources available, and the vertiginous technological progress that allows students to manipulate video content increasingly faster and effortlessly, will grant it the place it merits in academia, both in the area of AVT and in L2 education.

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# Analysing Solved and Unresolved Issues of an AVT Collaborative Task Through the Lens of Activity Theory: Implications for Task Design

Laura Incalcaterra McLoughlin and Susanna Nocchi

## 1 Introduction

A long time has passed since *Time* magazine named the computer its “man” of the year.<sup>1</sup> It was January 1983 and, while many of the current functions of the machine were already contained in that article, technology has since moved on to encompass—some would say take over—most aspects of our lives. Since then computers have gradually but inexorably replaced televisions as the technology of choice in education. Their evolution, their dominance of everyday life, their reach into social contexts and delivery of multiple media types have helped to challenge and reshape not only teaching theories and practice and the relationship between teacher and learner, but also that between learner and peers, learner and content and learner and technology. As a result, new teaching methodologies, or new paradigms within tested methodologies, are advocated, tested and implemented with a strong

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<sup>1</sup> *Time*, 3 January 1983.

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emphasis on multimodality. Applied Linguistics in particular has embraced new technologies, contexts and needs and proposed novel and imaginative ways of embedding them into language teaching.

Exploiting the long-established practice of bringing video material into the class and a re-evaluation of the role of translation in language teaching, and combining them with the new perspectives facilitated by modern tools on the one hand and learner-centred approaches on the other, theorists and practitioners have been experimenting with various types of Audiovisual Translation (AVT) performed by learners with interesting results that point to the benefits of the use of AVT in language learning, especially if the exposure to the practice is extended in time and embedded in the language course.

Work carried out in this relatively young but promising area of Applied Linguistics has concentrated on acquisition and/or enhancement of skills and competences, from language to translation to (inter)cultural abilities, which, it is generally argued, are facilitated by cognitive mechanisms explained in Paivio's Dual Coding theory (Paivio 1986) and Mayer's Multimedia theory (Mayer 2005), to name two among the most widely quoted scholars. Statistical results from studies employing various AVT types and combinations of different types are encouraging and so are qualitative data showing, by and large, students' appreciation of such an approach. However, there seems to be limited investigation on how task performance and outcome may be affected by the technology used, the collaboration with peers, the rules governing the task, and by the cultural and historical context in which the task is placed. Collaborative AVT tasks are complex undertakings, not only because of the various semiotic channels of the audiovisual text, but also because of the many intersecting levels of mediation they entail. To date, the degree of such complexity and its impact on learners' behaviour and reaction to the task itself has not been extensively analysed.

In line with activity theory, in this study we maintain that the mediation of physical (such as a technology) or psychological tools (such as language) while performing an activity shapes the activity and the person performing it. Thus, taking into account the perceived gaps in research, this paper intends to be a starting point for a wider discussion on aspects of the use of AVT in language teaching and learning that have not yet been addressed. While stemming from an inter-institutional collaborative AVT task, aimed at the enhancement of both linguistic and intercultural skills, the paper is not specifically concerned with the degree of improvement of such skills by the students involved. Rather, it discusses a number of issues that surfaced when the data collected were analysed. These issues are presented and considered from the perspective

of activity theory, which can help to explain them by taking into account the complexity of the AVT task activity and showing how each component of that activity system influences, and is influenced by, the other components and how multilayered mediation can affect learners' engagement.

## 2 Historical View

The growing interest and rapid developments in pedagogical use of Audiovisual Translation in Applied Linguistics have been extensively reported both in literary reviews of relevant articles and in dedicated publications (Lertola 2019; Incalcaterra McLoughlin 2018, see also the contribution by Talaván in this volume) that trace the history, methodology and theoretical motivation of such use. Here, we will report on the focus of just some of the research carried out in the last five years (since 2014) in order to highlight the breath and range of this area of Applied Linguistics that has seen both research and implementation focus gradually shift from viewing subtitled videos in class to working on the video itself, with students as producers of the audiovisual translation.

To date, subtitling remains the most widely experimented type of AVT in foreign language (FL) teaching and translator training; however, other types, such as dubbing, audio description and voice over, have also been profitably used and sometimes combined to achieve enhanced acquisitional results in relation to a number of receptive and productive skills, as well as intercultural awareness and competence. It should be added that the directionality of the translation contributes another dimension to the AVT task and research carried out so far has concentrated on both standard (L2-L1) and reverse (L1-L2) modalities, as well as on intralingual tasks. Existing studies can therefore be broadly divided according to the type of AVT they employ (captioning, revoicing or combinations of the two), the directionality, or according to the main research focus. This includes:

- vocabulary acquisition (Talaván et al. 2016).
- listening comprehension (Talaván and Rodríguez-Arancón 2014a).
- writing skills (Talaván and Rodríguez-Arancón 2014b; Burczyńska 2015; Talaván and Avila-Cabrera 2015; Talaván et al. 2016, Talaván et al. 2017; Caldúch and Talaván 2018).
- speaking skills (He and Wasuntarasophit 2015; Ibáñez Moreno and Vermeulen 2015a, 2015b, 2015c; Sánchez Requena 2016; Talaván and

Avila-Cabrera 2015; Talaván et al. 2015; Talaván and Lertola 2016; Talaván and Costal 2017; Sánchez Requena 2018; Navarrete 2018; Talaván and Rodríguez-Arancón 2019).

- integrated skills (Ibáñez Moreno and Vermeulen 2014).
- translation skills (Talaván and Rodríguez-Arancón 2014b).
- pragmatic awareness (Lopriore and Ceruti 2015; Incalcaterra McLoughlin and Lertola 2016; Lertola and Mariotti 2017).
- intercultural education (Borghetti and Lertola 2014).
- collaborative language learning (Talaván et al. 2014).

It should be noted however that, whilst the areas listed here are the primary focus of these studies, they often also report on further collateral skills and competences that are affected by the task.

What all these studies have in common is a view of the learner as a social *agent* and intercultural speaker, who develops a range of linguistic, paralinguistic and extralinguistic competences that s/he should then be able to reuse to communicate effectively in different contexts. To this effect, researchers underline the benefits of working with contextualised authentic material, of the multi-level interaction between learner and content, and of the functional, and ultimately shareable, nature of the task itself.

Remarkably, the vast majority of studies report very positive effects of AVT on language learners, and qualitative data point to an overwhelmingly favourable feedback by learners. Criticism or negative feedback seems to be nearly non-existent or at least not statistically significant. Yet, anecdotal evidence gathered by the authors suggests that resistance to and issues in the performance of AVT tasks do exist. Also Talaván et al. (2017) acknowledge that, whilst collaborative learning applied to AVT in FL learning proves to be both “engaging and fruitful”, at the same time “small problems [...] may occur when undertaking the collaborative activities (such as lack of synchronization, member drop-out, and different levels of engagement and participation)” (p. 53).

Issues reported are not enough, we hasten to add, to invalidate studies carried out so far, but their presence points to the need for at least a reappraisal of such tasks, of their complexity, and of the difficulties learners face while completing them. Such issues can be linked to the use of the technology (software or hardware) and therefore are common to technology-mediated educational tasks. They can also be caused by the specificity of certain tasks, their design and the situational context in which they are being conducted. The social and cultural nature of collaborative tasks in particular can lead to tensions and conflicts that can detract from the perceived usefulness of the task itself (Thorne 2003). An analysis of the problems arising during the

undertaking of a collaborative task can therefore provide insight into the constraints of such a task and improve future design.

Hence, this article acknowledges the validity of the theoretical standpoint of published research in this field, but seeks to move beyond current positions by exploring the complexity of collaborative AVT tasks. The research study presented in this paper, therefore, looks at a collaborative project conducted at the Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT<sup>2</sup>) and the National University of Ireland, Galway (NUIG) between January and April 2018, through the lens of activity theory, selecting instances of disruptions and issues that emerged during the undertaking of the task and analysing them with a view to informing further tasks.

### 3 Activity Theory

Activity theory developed in 1920's Russia, through the work of the psychologist Lev Vygotsky (translated in English in the 1960s), who saw human cognitive development as an inherent product of its social and cultural context, and studied mental functions as a result of both human history and human ontogenetic development. In Vygotsky's view of human activity, tools become essential to the carrying out of any individual's cognitive and material function, and artefact-mediated object-oriented actions shape the individual's cognition through their enactment. Vygotsky's emphasis on the interdependency of the social organisation of behaviour and the individual organisation of thought and his introduction of the central role of artefacts into human actions was revolutionary. His approach was however seen as limited by Alexei Leont'ev (translated in English in the 1970s). According to Leont'ev, Vygotsky had failed in taking into account the mediation offered by other human beings and other social relations in human cognition. Leont'ev added a stronger focus on the social dimension, by taking into consideration the influence of the collective activity on the individual's behaviour. Leont'ev's critique of Vygotsky brought the cultural-historical school of psychology to maturity and his approach was subsequently expanded and modified by Yrjö Engeström (Engeström 2015) into what is now known as Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT).

CHAT conceptualises human activity as central to our being human. Every human activity is collective, it is artefact-mediated, it is object-oriented and it is motivated by a need. The object of every human activity is attained by

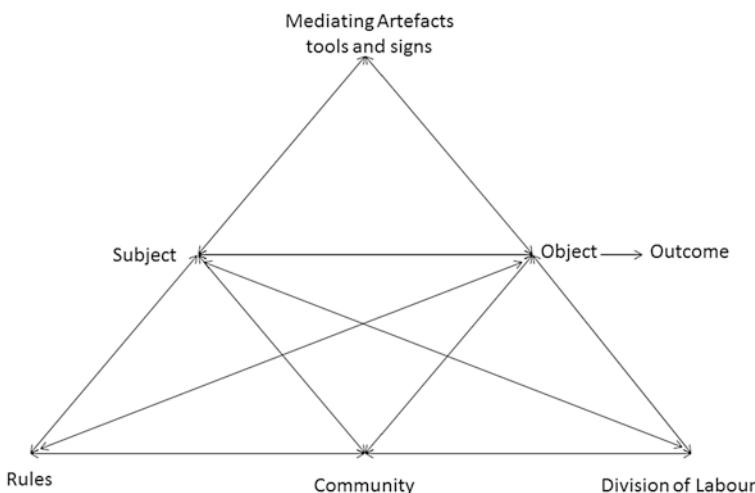
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<sup>2</sup>The Dublin Institute of Technology is now Technological University Dublin.

means of individual and cooperative actions, which are in turn composed of operations and take place in a historical and social context that develops over time. In the activity theoretical framework, the collective activity system (Fig. 29.1, based on Engeström 2015, p. 62) becomes the unit of analysis.

Figure 29.1 depicts the model of an activity system, the subject of which is the individual, while the activity is multi-voiced, as it carries the different voices of all its participants, their points of views, their traditions, their interests and their histories, which mediate and shape the activity, while contributing to it. The activity is also mediated by the use of material artefacts and cognitive tools available to the subject, by the rules regulating the actions taken to perform the activity, by the community that is part of the activity, and by the rules regulating the division of labour within the activity. Human activity is thus not just an individual production; it is “simultaneously and inseparably also social exchange and societal distribution. [...] takes place within a community governed by a certain division of labor and by certain rules” (Engeström 2015, p. 113). Indeed, the mediation occurring during the performance of the activity shapes the activity and may facilitate or hinder it, through emerging tensions that may highlight inherent contradictions within the activity itself. Further, as human activities are not closed systems, coexisting and interacting in “network relations to other activity systems” (Engeström 2009, p. 56), contradictions can also occur between different activity systems.

The following section presents the idea of mediation in human activity and the concept of contradictions as a source of both conflict and possible development in the activity system.



**Fig. 29.1** Activity system. (Based on Engeström's model, 2015)

### 3.1 The Role of Mediation and the Construct of Contradiction in Activity Theory

Activity theory views all human activities as taking place in a historical and cultural context and using tools that are deeply imbibed of the culture and history of the user's and the community's; moreover, all constituents of the activity system contribute to the activity and have a mediating connection between each other. It is argued (Engeström 2015) that the historical development of multi-voiced mediated collaborative activities can be affected by the context they function in and that they are constantly changing and moving. Furthermore, every activity system interacts with other activity systems at a macro level, in a network which creates multiple, dynamic mediations or "webs of mediators" (Bødker and Andersen 2005, p. 354) that contribute to shape the activity. The mediation of the elements within the activity system, the multi-voicedness of the activity system and the creation of networks of interacting activity systems can bring about contradictions, which emerge "within and between interacting activity systems as the activity unfolds" (Blin 2012, p. 88). Contradictions can manifest themselves as issues, tensions or disruptions in the activity, which may cause the activity to reshape itself in the course of its unfolding; the reconceptualisation of the activity can bring about an expansive transformation that can "embrace a radically wider horizon of possibilities than in the previous mode of the activity" (Engeström 2001, p. 7). In this perspective, mediation can afford or constrain the unfolding of the activity.

The concept of contradiction in human activity systems has been used by researchers in order to zoom in on emerging issues in work or educational activities (Basharina 2007; Thanh Pham and Renshaw 2015; Postholm 2015; Nocchi 2018) and to highlight problematic areas and the approaches taken by the participants to solve them. Engeström (2015) describes four different types of contradiction: (1) primary inner contradictions, which can occur within each of the different nodes (subject, rules, etc.) of the activity system; (2) secondary contradictions, which can occur between the different nodes of the same activity system; (3) tertiary contradictions, which can develop between the object/motive of the dominant form of the central activity and the object/motive of a culturally more advanced form of the central activity; (4) quaternary contradictions, which are external and occur between the activity system analysed and its neighbouring activities.

When the participants in an activity system are faced with issues or breakdowns in the course of the activity, they will try to resolve these problems, in

an effort to attain the object of the activity. By working at solving these disturbances, the participants collectively re-shape and develop the activity in a dialectical expansive cycle that is at the core of Engeström's theory of expansive learning. If contradictions are resolved, then this may bring about the adoption of new forms of practice and the construction of a new object and motive(s), which may lead to an expansive transformation in the activity and, possibly, to expansive learning. Whether or not this occurs, CHAT views problems as resources. It should be noted, however, that these emerging tensions are not always resolved and that at times the activity may come to a halt (Murphy and Rodriguez-Manzanarez 2008).

In studies researching instances of collaborative learning, the aforementioned tenets of activity theory allow researchers to direct their focus towards resolved and unresolved issues in the activity system analysed, in order to highlight the contradictions inherent to the activity, with a view to improving future design. Also, activity theory provides a useful lens to researchers who study collaborative computer-mediated learning activities, as it makes it possible to "capture knowledge creation (e.g. the formation of new practices through the construction of new mediating artefacts) in learning communities operating in digital environments" (Blin 2010, p. 181). Therefore, given the collaborative and computer-mediated nature of the specific task discussed in this paper, activity theory was found to offer a valuable framework for the analysis of the qualitative data collected.

## 4 Context of the Study

### 4.1 Description

In January 2018 four students of the National University of Ireland, Galway and nine students of the Dublin Institute of Technology took part in a 12-week collaborative inter-institutional AVT project. The project was a real-life task, as it was a subtitling "job" commissioned by the Università degli Studi di Pavia (Italy). Students were tasked with adding English subtitles to six video lessons of an Italian online module on Italian Public Administration. Each video lesson was approximately 15 minutes long, it was subtitled in Italian, and included diagrams and other forms of written text. The subtitle files, in Italian, were supplied by the Università di Pavia.

Students were required to follow the subtitling format chosen by the commissioning body, who also provided the time codes.

**Table 29.1** Participants to the project

Institution	No. of students	Undergraduate or postgraduate degree	Native language	Level of Italian
NUIG	2	UG: Bachelor of Commerce International with Italian Year 4	English	B2+
	2	PG: Master of Arts in Advanced Language Skills	1 English 1 Italian	C1 Native
DIT	9	UG: International Business and Languages (IBL)—Year 2	English	B1

The students were at different stages of their academic career, had different level of language competence and came from different faculties, as shown in Table 29.1.

All students were native speakers of English, except for one native Italian with a C1 level of English. Therefore this was a standard interlingual subtitling task for 12 participants and a reverse subtitling task for 1 participant.

The overall goal of the project was to produce a high quality, finished AVT product in accordance with the customer's requirements. The pedagogical objective of the AVT task was predominantly linguistic: the acquisition of specialised language (business and public administration) relevant to the students' area of study (Commerce, Business, technical translation), as well as the development and/or enhancement of translation skills and the improvement of their intercultural competence. In addition, given the real-life nature of the task, a second objective was the enhancement of a set of collaborative and organisational skills that are useful in work environments and contribute to the development of graduate attributes.

A collaborative online work-space was created on Freedcamp<sup>3</sup> project management system, where the videos and the subtitles to be translated were uploaded. Students were divided into groups, and allocated tasks and deadlines. Freedcamp also served as a communication tool for all participants.

The subtitling software chosen for the task was VisualSubSync (VSS).<sup>4</sup> Students were required to download this programme onto their laptops so that they could also work outside classroom hours. Each group was asked to translate and subtitle one video lesson and liaise with the other groups to solve issues relating to terminology, translation problems, style, register, etc.

The project was designed to be the first of a number of similar future projects that will give the authors further insight in the way AVT affects both

<sup>3</sup> <https://freedcamp.com/>.

<sup>4</sup> <https://sourceforge.net/projects/vss-itasa/>.

language learning and learning behaviour, as well as its impact on the development of skills that lead to the attainment of graduate attributes. It was decided that only qualitative data would be collected at this early stage. Anonymous online questionnaires were therefore circulated at the end of the project to obtain a qualitative reading of the level of perceived improvement in language, translation and soft skills, as well as gauge students' engagement with the project, the difficulties they encountered, if any, how they resolved them and their degree of satisfaction with the whole project. However, the analysis of the data collected revealed interesting episodes of disruption in the performance of the task that required interpretation before implementing further tasks. Activity theory provided the framework for such interpretation, as will be discussed in the next section.

## 5 Operationalisation of Activity Theory for Data Analysis in this Study

Activity theory is “a well-established approach to contemporary research in the fields of applied linguistics, [...] and education” (Lantolf and Thorne 2006, p. 209). Indeed, a large amount of studies of collaborative learning in technology-mediated environments (Basharina 2007; Hirsh and Segolsson 2017; Levine 2010; Blin 2012; Nocchi 2018) have found in activity theory a valid theoretical framework that allows a robust understanding of human collective activities, such as the learning activity, and facilitates the representation and analysis of the societal and collaborative nature of tool-mediated social activities.

The operationalisation of the activity theoretical framework in the context of this study required the researchers to make two main methodological choices, one regarding the choice of the minimum unit of analysis for the study and the other in relation to how to proceed in order to identify the contradictions emerging in the course of the activity.

### 5.1 Choice of Unit of Analysis and Operationalisation of the Concept of Contradictions

Choosing the minimum unit of analysis in activity theory is of paramount importance, as it allows the researcher to set the focus of his/her analysis. Observing and analysing richly mediated data can indeed be daunting and overwhelming (Rogoff 1995) and activity theory does not provide precise guidelines to guide the choice of the unit of analysis (Blin 2004). This, however,

allows researchers to be in charge of how deep they want to zoom into the analysis of the data, and to decide whether they want to prioritise a birds-eye view of the activity, at a macro level, or observe the details of an activity at a micro level. Rogoff's (1995) advice is to zoom into one level of analysis and blur others, albeit still considering the features of those other planes that are still relevant to the study, as is done here.

The unit of analysis chosen for this particular study is the single video AVT task activity. Figure 29.2 represents the related AVT task activity system.

The activity system in Fig. 29.2 shows that:

- The subject of the collaborative AVT task is the student working at translating the subtitles into English,
- The object of the activity is: the successful completion of the task, the improvement of the students' competence in the FL, the acquisition of topical language relative to the students' area of study, the development or refinement of the students' translation skills, the improvement of their intercultural competence and the enhancement of a set of collaborative and organisational skills that can be useful in work environments.

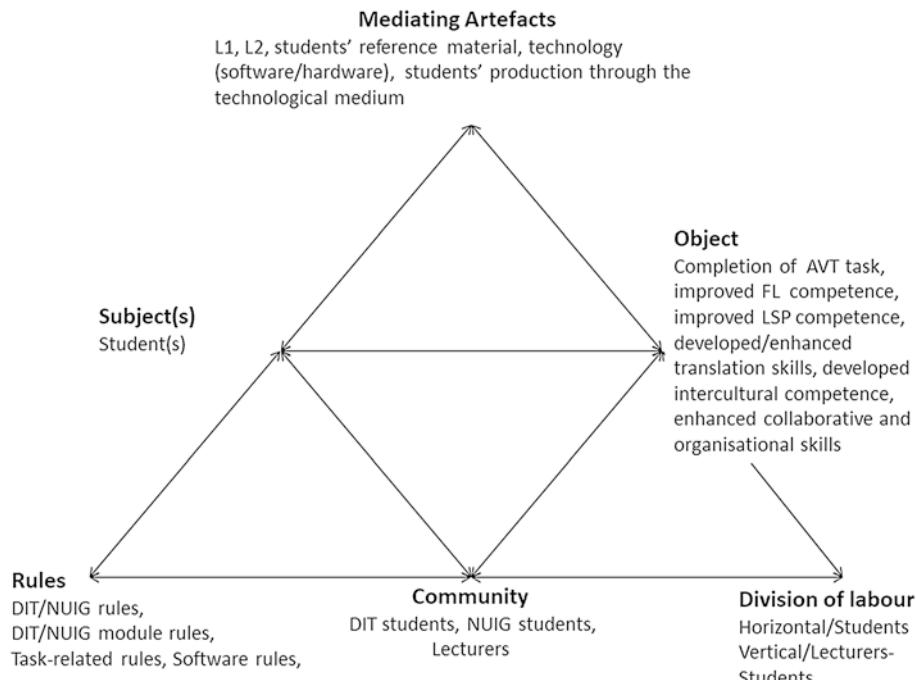


Fig. 29.2 AVT task activity system

- The community participating in the AVT activity consists of: the 13 students from both institutions and the two teachers/researchers.
- The rules regulating the development of the activity encompassed: the organisational rules of the two institutions (comprising opening times of the two colleges, access to technology, etc.), the rules pertaining to the teaching modules in which the AVT task was included (such as timetables, access to rooms and weight of the task in terms of module assessment), the rules regulating the audiovisual translation task (such as, interim deadlines, sharing of resources and rules organising collaboration) and the rules and conditions of use of the software utilised by the subject for the task (VisualSubSync, Freedcamp, Google Drive, emails, Microsoft Word, etc.).
- The division of labour was vertical, regarding the role of the two lecturers, who assigned the task, trained the students in the use of the subtitling software and of the collaboration platform and maintained contact with the commissioning university. At the same time, the division of labour between the students collaborating on the AVT task was to be horizontal. However this evolved during the performance of the task, as will be discussed in the data analysis.
- Finally, the mediating tools and artefacts available to the subjects during the performance of the AVT task activity were varied. The mediational signs were the two languages in which the task was conducted (English and Italian) and the students' own productions through the technological medium, as draft translations were exchanged and collaboratively worked on. The material mediating tools available were constituted by the student's own reference material, such as online dictionaries, the software used (VisualSubSync, Freedcamp, Google drive and other software) and the student's own hardware (computer, laptop, tablet etc.).

It was argued earlier that research on the contradictions underlying activity systems can help to bring to the fore areas that need change or improvement, or emphasise changes bringing about an expansive cycle in the activity. Therefore, an awareness of the different layers of mediation offered by the constituents of the activity system helps to analyse reports of problems and tensions during the performance of the task, and allows us to view them as a potential for expansive change. In order to identify the contradictions in the activity system it was decided to highlight only those responses to the questionnaire that indicated (1) discontent on the part of the students, (2) issues experienced by the students during the performance of the task.

The methodological considerations regarding the operationalisation of the activity theoretical framework presented in this section informed how the data analysis was conducted. The next part of the paper presents the practical implications of these considerations for the data analysis.

## 6 Data Analysis

The data consisted in the responses to a questionnaire distributed to the 13 students at the end of the project. The questionnaire was created and delivered online using Google Forms and was strictly anonymous. It consisted of 5 sections: Evaluation of the Technical Tool, Teamwork and Collaboration, Evaluation of Task, Language and Self-evaluation of Learning, General Opinion (the task, issues encountered and how they were resolved). It included multiple choice questions, Likert scales and free text.

In line with similar studies (Sect. 2), results from questionnaires showed that the majority of participants perceived improvements at various levels: they felt that they had extended their knowledge of:

- specialised vocabulary (23% a lot, 46.5% a good amount, 30.5% some),
- language structures (15.4% a lot, 30.8% a good amount, 38.4% some, 15.4% not much),
- topic (15.4% a lot, 30.8% a good amount, 38.4% some, 15.4% not much),
- Italian teaching approach (15.4% a lot, 53.8% some, 30.8% not much).

As far as skills and competences were concerned, students felt that both their core (translation and subtitling) and soft skills (teamwork above all, but also time management, proofreading, editing) had improved, and particularly mentioned the ability to work collaboratively online.

Given the scope of this paper, these results will not be discussed here. As mentioned earlier, we will leave aside considerations on the level of language learning and/or translation skills enhancement through the AVT task, and concentrate instead on students' verbatim<sup>5</sup> responses to questions relating to technology and collaboration.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Responses are reported verbatim; however, typographical errors were corrected.

<sup>6</sup> Even within these two categories (technology and collaboration), we are not concerned with positive responses (such as "I am more than delighted to have participated in this project. Although we encountered some difficulties, I learned so much about translation, proofreading and subtitling", "I really enjoyed this project and think it was a great addition to my Italian studies"), but rather with those answers that highlight tensions.

Some of the students' responses and comments in the questionnaire described problems that occurred during the work on the AVT task, causing disruptions to its performance. These responses were grouped into two main issues, namely (1) issues related to the use of the technology and (2) issues related to the collaboration with the other participants in the AVT task activity. The disruptions reported by the students are analysed in the following sections, with a view to focusing on what happened to the activity when such tensions emerged and if and how the participants solved those issues, in order to proceed with the AVT task activity.

## 6.1 Students' Responses Highlighting Issues with Technology

The data show that some of the issues experienced by the students emerged in relation to the software used to carry out the AVT task activity (VSS and Freedcamp). As noticed in previous studies in AVT,<sup>7</sup> the adoption of the technological tool was not as straightforward as desired. When answering question 2:

"If you experienced issues in the use of the software specified for the task (Freedcamp, VSS), specify what and in which case".

9 out of the 13 students reported problems. The majority of students (8) found the use of the AVT translation software, Visual SubSync, problematic. Student 11 was the only student to mention a problem with the Freedcamp platform.

In six of the nine cases, the students had issues using VSS, as shown in the comments below:

*(Student 10) Found it relatively difficult to make the video and subs run concurrently.*

*(Student 11) The correct VSS software was unavailable to download on my laptop and therefore I did not have the Italian subtitles with the times on it. I could only write the English subtitles in on it. The times were slightly off. I found freed camp confusing as I did not know the right places to be posting comments.*

*(Student 12) When uploading the video onto the visual sub sync, the video would not attach properly as it kept saying that there was issues with the audio of the video. Therefore, It would not allow me to watch the video on the VSS software.*

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<sup>7</sup> In their presentation of the ClipFlair project, Baños and Sokoli (2015) report that feedback questionnaires from 37 tutors and 1213 learners showed that 23% of the tutors and 20% of the learners reported some kind of difficulty with the software.

Three students mentioned problems installing the VSS software on their own machine, as in the two comments below:

*(Student 5) VSS wouldn't download properly onto laptop so we had to use another laptop to submit our translations properly.*

*(Student 6) I was unable to install Visual SubSync on my laptop.*

Similar issues were also highlighted by two students, in their reply to question 10:

“What did you enjoy least when collaborating in your team and what were the main difficulties?”

Student 13 gave an articulated response, which underlines both the frustration caused by the difficulties experienced with downloading VSS on his/her machine, and his/her views on the utility of Freedcamp as a tool for task completion.

*(Student 13) Wasted time on trying my best to find a device that could download the software and I never did. I felt I only realised towards the end of the project that it wasn't the most important task at hand and it took away my attention from all the rest of the other project as I convinced myself I couldn't complete it without the software. If I had realised sooner I could have put more effort into what I could do. I also found Freedcamp not useful for communicating as I spent most days with the peers in my group so it wasn't realistic for us to write in it unless we were communicating with the students from Galway.*

In replying to question 24:

“What do you feel were the main issues you encountered in working on this task?”

6 out of the 13 students mentioned the technology again, as seen in the comment by Student 4 below:

*(Student 4) VSS wouldn't download properly so it was difficult having to get another laptop each week to put in our own translations.*

The reported instances of disruption to the performance of the AVT task activity, generated by a failure in implementing the technology, caused the

students to halt the collaborative AVT task activity, in order to find alternative ways to proceed with the completion of the task.

In the comment reported below, Student 5 describes his/her group decision:

*(Student 5) VSS wouldn't download properly onto laptop so we had to use another laptop to submit our translations properly.*

A similar approach was reported by Student 11 and Student 4, in response to question 25:

“Did you resolve the issues you mentioned? If so, how?”

*(Student 11) I was able to work around the issue and work with my peers on a different computer.*

*(Student 4) We just kept going with it. There was nothing much we could have done but in the end, it all came together so it wasn't a major issue.*

Both Student 13's and Student 12's group, chose instead to bypass the VSS software altogether, as seen in their reply to question 25:

*(Student 13) No instead we focused on what we could do.*

*(Student 12) We resolved the technological aspect by discovering we didn't need to use the VSS to complete the task and just found the partnership with the other institute was irrelevant.*

Student 1, on the other hand, proceeded by setting new time slots for his/her translation, thus making the task more time-consuming and causing him/herself performance-related stress. Interestingly, Student 1 is the only student who did not mention his/her group.

*(Student 1) no, no matter how many times i redownloaded 'the correct software' the Italian subtitles did not appear, so had to make my own timing, which will probably be detrimental to marks.*

The replies and comments reported above indicate episodes of disruption of the AVT task activity, caused by issues with the technology used for the task. In this case, the issues experienced by the nine students clearly brought their AVT task activity to a halt and forced them all (except for Student 1) to negotiate a solution with their colleagues in order to proceed with the task. In all cases, the technical problems were not fully solved; however, the students found acceptable alternatives.

The issues mentioned in the students' comments appear to evidence an underlying secondary contradiction between the subject and one of the technological tools used to mediate the AVT task activity. The disruptions brought about by that contradiction resulted, at times, in the students' frustration, as seen in the comment by Student 13:

*(Student 13) Wasted time on trying my best to find a device that could download the software and I never did. I felt I only realised towards the end of the project that it wasn't the most important task at hand and it took away my attention from all the rest of the other project as I convinced myself I couldn't complete it without the software. If I had realised sooner I could have put more effort into what I could do. [...]*

and in the worry expressed by Student 1:

*(Student 1) [...] so had to make my own timing, which will probably be detrimental to marks.*

When this type of contradiction occurs, the technological tool may become the object of the activity, as noticed by Lim and Hang:

ICT may become an object rather than a tool for the student or teacher when the subject encounters problems using the hardware or software. Instead of focusing on the object of higher order thinking, the object may become using the ICT hardware or software. (Lim and Hang 2003, p. 52)

This is particularly noticeable in the students' comments above which indicate how the students' time and attention was diverted from the object of the AVT task activity and focused on the problematic technology. In these situations the participants collaborating on the AVT task activity stopped that very activity and took part in a new activity, whose object was to resolve the disruption caused by the tool.

## 6.2 Reports of Issues Within the Community

Questions 5 and 7 were designed to enquire about the students' perception of the collaborative aspect of the AVT task activity. In response to Question 5:

"Do you feel that everyone (including you) in your college team put in a fair amount of work on the task?"

most students (11 out of 13) indicated a good level of collaboration within the groups that had been formed in the two institutions.

The responses to Question 7:

“Did you find collaboration with your peers in the partner institution useful?”

however, painted a different picture, as shown in the chart below.

When asked to rate collaboration with the students in the other institution, a larger number of students (6) felt unsure or negatively (3) about it. Students who had ticked MAYBE or NO, were then asked to expand on the reasons for their choice, and their comments highlighted one problematic area pertaining to work organisation, as can be read in the comments below.

Student 3, Student 12 and Student 13 commented openly on the difficulties in collaboration caused by different work ethics adopted by the participants in the activity.

*(Student 3) (MAYBE) There were different degrees of dedication to the project and also different work ethics regarding deadlines and use of Google translate. It was difficult when groups divided a file for translation, and then turned the sections in separately rather than in one master file.*

Interestingly, Student 3’s comment above suggests that this student took upon him/herself a project leader role, as s/he comments on different groups “turning in” their work. This is reiterated in his/her response to question 24:

“What do you feel were the main issues you encountered in working on this task?”

in which Student 3 brings forward, again, an issue in managing the project, as seen below.

*(Student 3) [...] Our most difficult task was in keeping each group on the same page and trying to communicate deadlines and turn-in procedures.*

A similar stance is noticed in Student 2, who replied YES to Question 7, in Fig. 29.3. Student 2’s comment below shows how this student, and his/her colleagues in the group, had taken over the role of a project manager of the AVT task.

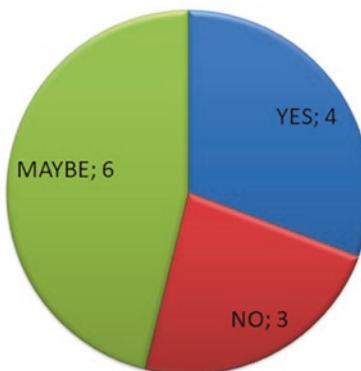


Fig. 29.3 Responses to Question 7

(Student 2) [...] I sometimes found the correction quite problematic, not only because they hardly respected deadlines (eg. group 3 submitted the whole video at the end of the project and not partially as other groups), but also because we felt that they were machine translations, which sometimes did not grammarly make sense in English. On the other hand, some groups put a real effort into the project and came up with interesting solutions. I wish some of the students used the glossary more often;)

In addition, the response given to Question 24 by Student 13 (who replied MAYBE to Question 7) gives us a clear description of the difficulties encountered by this student during the performance of the collaborative AVT task:

(Student 13) (MAYBE) I always find with group work projects everybody has different ways of completing the task at hand. It's a great way to share and learn from your peers but it can also result in less learning being achieved as your way of completing assignments might not be the same as others. For example, some people prefer to just split the work and not look at any of the other project making it hard to get a grasp on the project as a whole. I prefer doing the whole group projects together as a group rather than dividing it amongst everyone as I find assignments a lot easier to figure out and do well in when I have a peer to bounce ideas off etc. Unfortunately this method of working doesn't suit everyone.

Student 12 was more direct in his/her comment and felt that team work with colleagues in the partner institution did not work well at all.

(Student 12) (NO) I felt as though they didn't work very well as a team and didn't seem too interested in helping.

Other students commented on the disparity in the division of labour from a different angle, as they reported on poor communication or lack of help from their colleagues in the other institution. Again, the comments below seem to indicate that the division of labour, that had been designed to be horizontal among the students in the two institutions, had changed in the course of the AVT task activity, during which some students seemed to have taken on a leading role. As a consequence, other students found this confusing (Student 1) or tacitly accepted a “less equal” role in the activity system and behaved accordingly (Student 7, Student 9).

*(Student 1) (NO) I don't see what their job was in the project, we were just given deadlines and when questioned were asked responses were usually 'will give this a look when we have time'.*

*(Student 7) (MAYBE) They didn't clarify a lot of things, as in we didn't [know] if everything was correct or not.*

*(Student 8) (MAYBE) Not clear if what was done correct.*

*(Student 9) (MAYBE) Did not find their participation to be that helpful, though they did help us if any problems arose, I had thought that they were to also help us in translation etc.*

Student 10's comment on the type of communication with colleagues in the other institution also shows that a vertical division of labour had been adopted in the AVT task activity.

*(Student 10) (NO) I thought we communicated well, however they were very blunt in their responses about what more we had to do for the project.*

In addition to this, Student 8's reply to Question 24:

“What do you feel were the main issues you encountered in working on this task?”

also reported difficulties with the new design of the AVT task.

*(Student 8) New way of communicating and doing task.*

When the students were asked how they had managed to resolve the communication issues they had experienced during the undertaking of the AVT task activity, in response to question 25:

“Did you resolve the issues you mentioned? If so, how?”

two students reported a failure to resolve those problems (Student 3 and Student 7).

*(Student 3) [...] Managing the groups was not as successful as it could have been, as each group ended up setting their own deadlines and turning the files in divided into different parts, with some obviously being run through Google translate line for line.*  
*(Student 7) No.*

In the comment above, Student 3 clearly mentions his/her role as a project manager.

On the other hand, two other students (Student 8 and Student 9) report finding a solution to the problems they experienced. In Student 8's case, the difficulty with adapting to a new and different task was overcome by asking the help of the teacher, as seen below.

*(Student 8) Yes, through help from the lecturer.*

Student 9, on the other hand, communicated directly (and somewhat bluntly) with the team in the other institution, in order to have help and support in the performance of the AVT task activity.

*(Student 9) Yes, though very close to the deadline. The issue was resolved by my requesting that things be changed immediately.*

The data above indicate how some disruptions to the performance of the AVT task activity were reported as issues of communication with peers in the other institution. However, a focused analysis of the students' responses, through the lens of activity theory, suggests that some of the tensions that emerged in the communication between the participants in the different groups were spurred by underlying contradictions that occurred within the AVT task activity. These contradictions were noticed between the subject of the activity and the division of labour or between the subject of the activity and the rules pertaining to task performance. In an activity theoretical framework, human activities are collaborative and multi-voiced. As "the basic internal contradiction of human activity is its dual existence as the total societal production and as one specific production among many" (Engeström 2015, p. 66), this implies that the individual's actions, part of the collective activity, may clash with the activity system. Also, activity systems interact and overlap with other activity systems. In our case, some of the participants to the collective AVT task activity adopted a different division of labour and their actions

varied accordingly. As mentioned before, the AVT task activity had been designed by the two teachers/researchers as a collaborative learning activity to be completed by the students via a horizontal division of labour. It appears however that in the course of the activity, some participants took on a leading role, thus creating a vertical division of labour in their activity system, which had not been agreed upon or made explicit. Some of the participants “deviated from the standard script” (Engeström 2000, p. 964), as in these students’ own activity system the rules regulating the performance of the task and the division of labour and possibly the object of the task activity diverged from the AVT system as shown in Fig. 29.2. The interaction between the different activity systems then created disturbances that emerged in feelings of frustration and discontent on the part of some participants. In addition, tensions within the community may have been amplified by the fact that collaboration happened with different modalities: face-to-face within groups but online among groups, thereby adding an additional layer of mediation.

## 7 Final Remarks

The primary goal of the AVT project presented here was to create high quality subtitles for a number of online video lessons in accordance with the specifications provided by the customer. In this respect, the AVT task was completed satisfactorily and professionally, as testified by the positive review of the commissioning institution, the Università degli Studi di Pavia. Indirectly this suggests that a good level of specialist language competence was achieved by the group as a whole.

However, in their responses to the final questionnaire, students also highlighted problematic areas. Some comments reported breakdowns in the AVT task activity due to issues with the technology used to perform the task. Other remarks suggested a discontent, which pointed to difficulties in communication among the collaborating students. These issues reveal a high level of complexity of collaborative AVT tasks that can be overlooked or downplayed when the primary goal of that task is achieved. This paper argues that an in-depth activity theoretical analysis of the solved and unresolved episodes of disruption occurring during the execution of the AVT task can help us to gain a better understanding and draw indications for future task design and performance. Indeed, in an activity theory framework, episodes of disruption are seen as inherent to the activity and constituting a potential for change and development of the same activity. Once the collaborative AVT task activity

was examined as the minimum unit of analysis, two main problematic areas emerged: the use of the technology and the mode of communication among participants.

The data show how the technological issues emerging from a secondary contradiction in the activity system (between the subject of the activity and one of the tools used in the activity) were a clear cause of frustration and momentarily disrupted the activity, diverting the participants' attention from the object of the AVT task. The time and effort spent on resolving these issues, however, did not always lead to a successful incorporation of the tool in the AVT task activity, as some students decided to avoid the use of the software altogether (Student 12 and Student 13). Additionally, Student 1 chose to embark on extra work in order to complete the task.

Especially significant were the tensions that arose among the collaborating students. Students' comments reported issues created by the "new ways of communicating and doing the task" (Student 8) and mainly pertaining to the organisation of work around the AVT task. An activity theoretical analysis of the data allowed the researchers to zoom into the episodes described by the students and identify an underlying contradiction in the AVT task activity. What initially had appeared to be a tension between the subject and the community of participants to the activity was revealed to be a tension between the subject of the activity and the rules and division of labour, created by the interaction of the different activity systems of the participants to the task. Two different types of collaboration developed, a predominantly horizontal one within each group and a vertical one between at least one group and the other groups. As some of the students assumed a leading role in the performance of the collaborative tasks, the way they envisaged the division of labour in their activity system changed, clashing with the other students' view of their and their colleagues' role in the performance of the task. In this regard, it is interesting to note that two respondents reported perceived improvements in project management skills, which may have been connected to what is explained above.<sup>8</sup> Whilst the anonymous nature of the questionnaires does not allow us to identify the students who took on a project management role, the similarity of their comments leads us to believe that they were working together in the same group. We suspect that academic seniority played a role in the vertical division of labour and led to a hierarchical re-interpretation of the rules governing the division of labour.

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<sup>8</sup>In response to the question: What competencies do you feel you have acquired in this task that can be featured in your CV?, Student 3 replied, "proofreading, editing, team management" and Student 4: "group cooperation; remote collaboration; organizational skills; subtitling skills using software and online project manager".

The analysis suggests that future design will need to take into consideration the impact that the many layers of mediation of an AVT task can have on task performance. In regard to the technology, closer attention should be paid to each student's access to the required hardware and familiarity with the software used for the task. It should be considered that, in addition to training in the use of subtitled software, students may require additional technical support.

The disruptions caused by participants adopting a different view of the division of labour highlight an interesting area of the collaborative AVT task that could be designed differently in the future, in order to take into account the individual students' differences in terms of academic seniority, language competence or personality. Also, these tensions could be resolved by including, as part of the rules, virtual meetings among all participants, regardless of the group they belong to and the degree of collaboration they will be involved in. These meetings should lead to a shared interpretation of the rules and consequent division of labour.

This study presents some limitations. Because of the anonymous nature of the survey, it is not possible to correlate individual reports of issues to a specific solution adopted by the group each individual was working with. As a result the solutions reported are generalised. Also, time constraints did not allow the researchers to conduct interviews at the end of the project. This would have clarified some of the data, in particular if specific issues were encountered only by members of a specific group. For future research, it would be interesting to gather information on any kind of disturbance experienced by participants in collaborative AVT tasks with a view to creating a "taxonomy of constraints", based on an Open Science approach, which might inform future and possibly even more complex activity design.

With AVT rapidly gaining momentum in foreign language teaching and learning, it is perhaps time to pause for a reflection on all its implications. Such reflection would not detract from its usefulness and beneficial effects, but rather enhance its contribution to the development of future professionals who are both competent at discipline level and equipped with the soft skills embedded in twenty-first century graduate attributes.

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# 30

## Censorship and Manipulation in Audiovisual Translation

Dingkun Wang

### 1 Introduction

The tension among language, culture, and politics that is encroached in translated texts has been widely addressed in Translation Studies with primary foci on the mediation and brokering of national cultures across different socio-political systems and ideologies (e.g. Qian 2017; Spirk 2014; Zanettin 2018, etc.), the degree of ideological transparency in translated texts (e.g. Chang 2008; Kuhiwczak 2011; Munday 2007, etc.), and the translator's self-imposed or unconscious manipulation of the translator in the translation process as their primary focuses (e.g. Barrale 2018; Somló 2014; Tan 2014; Valdeón 2007, etc.). Scholarly exchanges also seek to investigate more deeply the relationship between translators and the texts and cultures in contact, as well as the ways translators choose to deal with ideological restrictions enforced in the target culture (Leung 2006). The invisibility of translators in cultural, economic, and socio-political processes has granted them the capacity to refract the manifold dimensions of power in different translation processes throughout human history (Venuti 2008). André Lefevere stressed that “translators have to make decisions over and over again on the levels of ideology, poetics, and universe of discourse, and those decisions are always open to criticism from readers who subscribe a different ideology” (Lefevere 1992: 88). While translators are compelled by the ruling power to expunge or

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exclude certain texts, they are sometimes committed to the perpetuation of foreign ideas in the hope of affecting changes (Chang 1998; Kamvnikova 2019; Tan 2019).

Research on audiovisual translation (AVT) remains acute regarding the dynamic relation between hegemonic orders and ideologically motivated translation of audiovisually encoded media in the ideological, technological, and economic spaces of power. Two special issues published respectively in *Meta* (2012) and *Altre Modernità* (2016) were dedicated to censorial practices imposed by political and religious norms as well as by transnational capital. These issues were followed by several articles published in recent special issues of *Perspectives* on translation in popular culture (Bianchi and Federico Zanettin 2018), interdisciplinary AVT research (Zanotti and Ranzato 2019), and censorship (McLaughlin and Muñoz-Basols 2016). Although manipulations in AVT is triggered initially by the spatial and temporal constraints of the audiovisual medium, translators who work in audiovisual genres also know that “their work may be modified significantly by revisers, editors, dubbing adapters and publishers of some form” (Cordingley and Manning 2017: 2). In the latter scenario, manipulative interventions are “normally instigated by agents in a position of power (e.g. board of censors, film producers) and consists in the incorporation in the target production of modifications (including deletions and additions) that deliberately depart from the semantic meaning of the original and unscrupulously misconstrue what is being said (or shown) in the original” (Díaz-Cintas 2019: 184).

In a previous survey on politics and Audiovisual Translation (AVT), Henrik Gottlieb (2018) focused on the exertion of power in deciding to what to make available for whom, at what historio-ideological time(s), into what language(s), via which semiotic mediation(s), by whom, and under what medial technological conditions. Gottlieb (2018) also drew upon the informal circulations of global screen cultures backed by technologically empowered users who were able to circumvent restrictions on audience access and to communicate individual and shared social agendas and ideals. Although the amateur and industrial fields of practice still uphold different and often contrasting codes and ethos in rendering the hybrid, multimodal, and aesthetic novelties in the audiovisual media (Pérez-González 2014), they have also shown the tendency to exploiting the creative potential of manipulation in rendering culturally and ideologically unpalatable source information. Bearing this characteristic in mind, the scope of inquiry in manipulative conducts in AVT should extend beyond “clear[ing] the ideological smoke screen that confounds the original message in an attempt to see the silver screen behind it” (Díaz-Cintas 2012: 283).

## 2 Censoring AVT

Censorship is enforced in autocracies and democracies alike to prescribe what is socially, morally, and politically acceptable according to political or religious norms, and to block, delay, or modify the form of dissemination in order to prevent the discursive formation of public opinions beyond official prescription (Merkle 2018). While censorship can also be an essential means of protection for ensuring that “any content that may have potentially harmful effects on the next generation are filtered” (Zhang 2012, 339), institution-sanctioned or legitimised censors resort to filtering transcultural flows to discipline the tastes and opinions of the vast and socio-culturally diverse audiences (Billiani 2007: 3–5). The Italian-dubbed version of *Scarface* (1932) produced in 1947 shunned all negative images of Italian people (e.g. as criminals, poor immigrants, and fools) (Keating 2012). To safeguard the *Catecismo Patriótico Español* (Patriotic Spanish Catechism), Francoist censors rewrote the source information in *The Barefoot Contessa* (1954) at many points to reinforce Catholic values so as to create the illusion among target audiences of the universality of the Christian stance beyond Spanish borders; ultimately, the original was dubbed into a completely different story in Spanish to serve the “repressive, despotic regime of the epoch” (Díaz-Cintas 2019: 197). More recently, the first cinematic presence of Quentin Tarantino in mainland China, *Django Unchained* (2012), was re-called by the censors shortly after its premiere on April 11, 2013. In the revised version released one month later, the censors surgically eradicated most of the vulgar English expressions featuring with “fuck” and its lexical derivatives. They also moderated the ubiquitous depictions of bloodshed and violence in the original through techniques such as darkening the colour of blood and lowering the height of blood splatter.

Recent studies in film history have also drawn upon historical and contemporary evidence to uncover locales of censorship as sites of power negotiation and resistance against its manipulative and expurgating effects. Largely without a solid legal basis, the former colonial government of Hong Kong appraised local and imported films even-handedly in order to prevent the ideological infiltrations of international powers via the movie screen and thereby maintained the local political stability and economic progress amid the historical predicament of the Cold War (Du, Y. 2017). Film censorship enabled Hong Kong to provide “a cinematic platform for the imagination of the frontier-crossings of foreign powers in their uneasy negotiations with Communist China” (Ng 2008, 31) but simultaneously contributed to a without-a-nation cinematic identity that can simultaneously be both local and transnational

(Ng 2008, 33; see also Fu 2013 and 2018). Before the Cultural Revolution (which occurred between 1966 and 1976), mainland China produced Mandarin-dubbed versions of more than 800 films that were imported from the former Soviet Union, Western Europe, and beyond (Chen 2004). The importation and translation of those films did not comply strictly with the propagandist orientations at that time but were conducted to serve three competing and often conflicting purposes: supplementing domestic productions, civil education, and betokening diplomatic friendships (Du, W. 2015). Many dubbed films exhibited between 1949 and 1966 were at odds with the censorship and ideological propaganda during that period by constituting “a legitimate space of mild dissident against mainstream aesthetics and ideology” (Du 2015: 142). The authorities were aware of the risk associated with the inevitable conflict of interests and employed numerous strategies to guide the general audiences in their viewings. The national newspaper *Ren Min Ri Bao* (People's Daily) had a column dedicated to plot summaries and correspondence with audiences on ideologically appropriate interpretations of the dubbed foreign films. Before screening, projection workers were required by local authorities to read official explanations of the plots of the films and relevant cultural and historical information to the viewers in the cinema. Instead of learning the ideological lessons framed and foregrounded by the authorities, audiences tended to indulge their “inherent, irrational mimetic impulse” towards pragmatic efficacy demonstrated by the foreign films while giving themselves up to “mundane interests in exoticism, fashion, humour or sexual desire” (Du 2015, 153).

Regarding translation, Dwyer (2017) included censorship in her theorisation of translation errancy, in which deliberate misrepresentation of the original is projected to produce and re-shape the censored discourse in new contexts of reception. Despite recent tendencies towards vulgarisation (e.g. that in contemporary AVT practice in Spain, as verified by Valdeón [2015; 2020]), translators are pressured by either professional norms or state-imposed regulations to eliminate, tone down, or euphemise the strong language in the original while coping with various verbal and non-verbal elements on screen (Ávila-Cabrera 2015; Trupej 2019; Yuan 2016). In *Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 2*, Rocket mocks a fearsome galactic pirate aliased ‘Taser Face’ by comparing his face to a ‘scrotum hat’, which was translated into Simplified Chinese as ‘裹蛋皮’ (*guo dan pi*; thin flatbreads for wrapping eggs). The subtitle Bowen Fu (2017) explained that he invented the Chinese phrase as a euphemistic substitute for the actual equivalent to the source-language expression in order to avoid alerting the censors, who would have disapproved the access of the film to the mainland China. Besides reminding the target audience of the

sexual allusion intended by the source information, the translation also made a pun by being phonetically identical with ‘果单皮’ (*guo dan pi*), a sour-sweet taste snack food made of thornapples and beetroots.

The censorship self-imposed by Fu on the source body-part reference reveals his awareness of the horns of dilemma when projecting strong language to target audiences. On the one hand, offensive language and taboos are presented in translation sparingly due to the consideration of their potential sensitivity in many cultures, while the indication or excessive displaying of swearing can overshadow other, and often more important aspects of the original and its translation (Greenall 2011, 51). On the other hand, the decision of the translator at the micro level of lexical choice, eschewing taboo and offensive elements in the source dialogue, can directly influence the macro level of characterisation and context (Maher 2012, 371–375). In extreme cases of censorial manipulation, cleansing controversial language and potentially disturbing themes can genetically transform the original into a different story (Bucaria 2018). When *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018) was eventually approved by Chinese censors in March 2019, it was modified into a biopic about the rock band Queen with minimal vulgar language and no explicit reference to sexuality/homosexuality. Since different fansubbed versions of the original edition had been widely viewed and praised by domestic audiences, the stubborn censorship once again became a subject of debate, parody, and ephemeral criticism on Chinese social media. Interestingly, while the film was rated PG-13 in its home market, the leading Chinese fansubbing group YYeTs (*Ren Ying Shi*) rated it ‘A’ for containing “no inappropriate subjects and hence is suitable for viewing by all”.<sup>1</sup>

As Dwyer argued, censored translations as such have achieved a kind of wilful unfaithfulness that defiantly resists notions of fidelity and foreignisation by exposing audiences to the power dynamic at stake with “unintended, particularly productive effects” (Dwyer 2017: 121). With their impetus for resistance, translators may also manipulate originals consciously at various levels in the hope of encouraging target audiences to think autonomously rather than living uncritically in support of the dominant discourse (Leung

<sup>1</sup> This information can be found at: <http://www.zmz2019.com/resource/38015> (last accessed on 21 September 2019). All resources shared and translated by YYeTs are simultaneously rated by the group in accordance with the following criteria: A for films that contain no inappropriate subjects and hence are suitable for viewing by audiences of all age groups; B for films that require parental guidance for young children due to minor depictions of violence and/or horror; C for films that are not for viewing by young people under the age of 13 due to depictions of drug use, strong violence, coarse language, horror, etc.; D for films that are not suitable for viewing by audiences under the age of 18 due to depictions of sex, violence, drugs, coarse language, etc.; E for films that are for adults only, due to abundant explicit depictions of sex and sexuality, nudity, strong violence, drug use, etc.

2006: 133–134), such as YYeTs ratings. By opening the queer cinematic space to all in the heteronormative mediarchy of the China-shaped Internet, the veterans of Chinese fansubbing took their target audiences to somewhere unimaginable over the rainbow.

### 3 Manipulation in/of Linguistic and Cultural Representation

Although research has increasingly stressed on the creative, positive role of audiovisual media (film in particular) in constructing images of language and culture (Guillot 2016, 2019), transcultural, and translingual creation and dissemination of national and cultural images “are perhaps the most ingrained way of pigeonholing human behaviour into imputed group characteristics” (Leerssen 2016: 14). In *The Square* (2017), a museum staff member stopped three middle-aged Chinese women (tourists, most likely) and told them, in English, to take the opposite direction in order to reach ‘the castle’, even though directional signs showing ‘THE CASTLE’ and ‘ART EXHIBITION’ (the way the tourists attempted to go) were displayed on the wall. After several repetitions of ‘err-hum’ in response, one of the tourists ‘interpreted’ the message for the others by saying ‘那边, 那边我们应该去那边’ (There, there. We need to go there.). No translation was provided at this point in the DVD version distributed in Australia, so that the Mandarin utterance remained incomprehensible and perhaps irrelevant to the overall viewing experience of *mainstream* English-speaking audiences. The non-translation foregrounds an ethnotypical portrayal based on the impressions left by Chinese tourist groups in Europe.

The animated film *Mulan* (1998) by Disney retold the Chinese epic of Hua Mulan in the module of ‘Disney princess’ without obviating the exotic appeal that Western audiences anticipated for the original tales in ancient Chinese text, especially *The Ballad of Mulan* (*mu lan ci*). To tell the story about Hua Mulan, who disguised herself as a man in order to take the place of her father in the army, the Chinese source was stripped of contextual verisimilitude and deconstructed into “a culturally faceless whole” that was rampaged by cultural and historical inaccuracy after a complex process of mixing, blending, and synthesising (Wang and Yeh 2005). In the film, Mulan cooks sausages and eggs for breakfast. She behaves like an American teenager, slamming her cup on the dinner table, standing up and speaking ‘you shouldn’t do that’ to her father in front of her mother and grandmother. Although she was worried

about her father, who was too old to join the military to fight the Huns, her Disney-appropriate manner fundamentally violates the Confucian doctrine on the feudal ethical code for women, which is still partially upheld in contemporary China. The Confucian doctrine urges women to observe the Three Cardinal Guides and Five Constant Virtues (*san gang wu chang*) in their everyday lives (Wang 2017).<sup>2</sup> During her military mission, Mulan was accompanied by a horse called Khan and a surrealistic character, a minified dragon called Mushu, whose name alludes to one of most widely known Chinese dishes in Western (and particularly American) cultures—Moo Shu pork (*mu xu rou*). Mushu, in particular, speaks with a streetwise black dialect through the voice of Eddy Murphy and thus, as suggested by Sheng-mei Ma, was marked by a “transparency of race” that “bespeaks the relative powerless of the Asian-American constituency; Disney takes this calculated risk of offending a particular minority for the potential profit might garner from the majority and other minority groups” (Ma 2000: 129).

Greene (2014) argued that what Chinese characters and references were assembled to represent was not the authentic identity and meaning associated with them, but rather Americanised cinematic simulacra.<sup>3</sup> Hidden in those cinematic simulacra was a deep continuity of Hollywood stereotyping that enforced the dichotomy with a mythic China on the one end and a realistic America on the other, that, “while China is reduced to a series of visual motifs, at a still deeper level, America—at least American values and sensibility—is felt at every turn” (Greene 2014: 199). As Darrell Y. Hamamoto wrote in response to the wave of Asiaphilia in the West, as manifested in their taste for Eastern design, cuisines, and films, among other popular-culture products, that “[w]hereas ‘Orientalist’ discourse in cinema once helped mobilize and sustain support for U.S. and European imperium in the Near East and Asia, Asiaphilia is deceptively benign ideological construct that naturalizes and justifies the systematic appropriation of culture property and expressive forms created by Yellow people” (Hamamoto 2000: 12).

In addition to a 20-min cut, the translator, Weizhong Tu, was also assigned by the authorities to restore the cultural authenticity wherever he deemed appropriate. According to Jun Tang (2008), the official translation created

<sup>2</sup>In the explanation given by Ning Wang, “The Three Cardinal Guides are: ruler guides subject, father guides son and husband guides wife, and the Five Constant Virtues include benevolence, righteousness, propriety, knowledge, and sincerity, which make up the principle of feudal moral conduct” (Wang 2017, 21).

<sup>3</sup>The ‘simulacrum’ concept originated in an essay written by Jean Baudrillard, in his perception of a scenario in which the disappearance of the real leads to the proliferation of the imaginary and the imagined original in the process of simulation.

other misconceptions. For example, whereas Tu sought to overcome gender stereotyping in the original in his effort to conform to the official agenda to promote gender equality in China, the submission and obedience to husband indicated in the film is transformed into the obedience to one's parents, as shown in the scene in which Mulan struggles to determine what she can achieve in her life—for her family. Tang (2008) also noticed that, instead of recreating her inner contradiction depicted in the film, the Chinese subtitles inform the target audience about Mulan being an escapist craving for a reclusive life disengaged from all kinds of social bounds. Perhaps, the main challenge to translation “does not generally lie in the rendering of cultural otherness into a different language”, as Di Giovanni argued, “but rather in adapting those American expressions, idioms and references which are designed to act as balancing elements but whose primary role is to ensure a smooth and pleasure reception by the American and English-speaking viewers” (Di Giovanni 2003, 217).

Furthermore, border-crossing cinematic representations can lead to intercultural dialogue within the domestic spectatorship of a multicultural state such as Australia. When three central characters in *Walkabout* (1971) meet for the first time, the Aboriginal boy speaks to the Girl and the Boy in his native language and shows them the lizards he caught during his journey, while the other two are more focused on their urgent need for food and water. The Girl speaks affirmatively, “We’re English! Do you understand? This is Australia.”, resorting to a lifetime of conditioning that had imposed the authority of Englishness on the Aboriginal. *Australia* (2008) confronted the denialism that causes the historical narrative about the Stolen Generations to be treated as fiction, with a left-leaning pro-Aboriginal political rhetoric. The film director (Baz Luhrmann) sought to manipulate the audience acceptance of his ideological stance through the foregrounded English voice-over of the diegetic Aboriginal character Nullah, which is featured in the authentic Aboriginal speech known as ‘Station English’. With vocal femininity, the Aboriginal voice begins the narration from the very first scene, “providing an initially disembodied sonicity that surrounds the audience, gently bathing the receiver in its subjectivity but then forcefully and irresistibly directing us all to the narrator’s singular perspective” (Starrs 2012: 628). However, the non-racism scheme advocated by Luhrmann may still be faulted by the Chinese Australian character, Sing Song; the ways in which the Chinese cook is portrayed in the film reiterated the Asian stereotypes that have existed in Australian film since the 1920s (see Khoo et al. 2013). Disguised in the Coloniser-Aboriginal dialectic is the active forgetting of the traumatic history of non-European

immigrants, as committed, ironically, by those films that re-call the Australia at the cusp of transformation into a multicultural nation. Despite touching on a range of themes that are still debated in our time (e.g. gender equality, multiculturalism, and refugees), *Ladies in Black* (2018) deliberately avoids the issue of racism. It acknowledges the establishment of European immigrants who came to Australia after the Second World War but shows no trace of the racist resentment against the later arrival of Asian immigrants. In the film, refugees from (Eastern) Europe have their difficulty upon arrival but eventually are able to live a comfortable life without assimilating to the local cultural context. In stark contrast, non-European ethnicities disappeared in the historical simulacrum of the film, Sydney in the late 1950s, while in the reality they were struggling for survival and recognition. Although cinema continues to voice interrogation on institutionalised narratives of Australian culture, the persistent marginalisation and stereotyping of certain people and their cultures will jeopardise the multicultural realism pursued by many filmmakers (Khoo 2008).

## 4 Retranslation of Pre-Distributed Audiovisual Products

A more recent trend arose from the revival of scholarship in retranslation, with the objectives of exploring economic and technological forces behind the retranslation of audiovisual materials (Chaume 2018) but simultaneously, perhaps more irrefutably, the changing socio-political and ideological environments in global marketplaces. For example, the media giant Al Jazeera sealed the large-scale deal of distribution with Disney to release redubbed versions of its films in Modern Standard Arabic (MSA). According to Di Giovanni (2017), the MSA versions were produced not only for an expanded scope of distribution and the economic benefits thus generated, but also in an attempt to promote a reframed pan-Arabic identity. While catering to all Arabic speakers with renewed reflections on the present world order, the redubbed versions also ensured the delivery of appropriate social, cultural, and religious messages to children. By rewriting the socio-cultural and religious values represented in the original films, the redubbed versions have also assisted the dissemination of covert messages regarding cultural and ideological unity when broadcasted across the Arabic-speaking world. Therefore, retranslation of Disney films into MSA may forge an alliance between hegemonies upon the rise of Al Jazeera as a pan-Arabic media

empire. Retranslation can also be performed as a more liberating work of de-censoring, such as in the Italian redubbing of *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. As shown in the archival documents retrieved by Zanotti (2018), whereas the 1948 version shunned ideologically loaded words that reflected the conflict and tension during the Spanish Civil War, the redubbed version produced with a different agenda by neutralising the suppressive effects of the former censorship. The film was transformed in the process of redubbing with a renewed intertextual connection between the film and the Italian translation of the novel by Hemingway and assisted to restoring its canonical status in Italy.

While it is meaningful to increase the diversity of research topics in terms of language, culture, and audiovisual genres, it is also crucial to consider the periodic, sporadic, or even spontaneous (re-)geneses of popular-culture franchises channelled by user-driven mediality such as fansubbing. The polyvalence of retranslation can be explored by examining multiple fansubbed versions of the same original produced by different groups over a specific period of time or by tracing the genealogical history of the same fansubbed version which evolves through multiple revisions done by different members of the same fansubbing group. In particular, substantial focus is yet to be given to those “communities of practice” (Wenger 2000; Denscombe 2008; Thompson 2005) that are dedicated to particular audiovisual genres (e.g. sci-fi films, queer cinema, reality shows, music videos, (etc.)), specific popular-culture trends (e.g. the Korean Wave/Hallyu), or iconic cultural franchises such as *Game of Thrones* and the *Marvel Cinematic Universe*. In addition to the debate regarding whether the objective of retranslation is qualitative improvement of the translated audiovisual text (see O’Sullivan 2018; Raffi 2018), future research may also be focused on deepening our understanding of the aesthetic and ideological negotiations that unfold in at least the following three respects: (1) the discursive formation of “basic story” (Brownlie 2006) in the simultaneous or relaying processes of translating from the same source material; (2) the impact of the diverse and interrelated translation types, strategies, and processes in fansubbing on the mediation of genre-specific knowledge for like-minded fans and lay audiences; and (3) retranslations and performative interpretations of the source information in fandubbing and parodic translations, where existing fansubbed versions are reused or referred to as secondary source texts, especially in societies in which fansubbing functions as the primary access to global screen cultures.

## 5 Censorship and Mediality

Mediality defines the form of communication in which we seek to engage via the mediation of various medial tools, ranging from spoken language to computer-based storage and transmission tools (Littau 2011). Rapid transformations occurring in the technological landscape of a civilisation will inevitably engender a unique arrays of translation practices which can lead to significant “personal, political, economic, aesthetic, psychological, moral, ethical and social consequences” (McLuhan and Fiore 1967/1996: 26). Translators who are working on audiovisual materials strive to adapt to their media environments by performing AVT as an act of communication with the assistance of technological tools that simultaneously enable translators to transform their fields of practice in a process of democratisation (Jones 2018: 178). The communication mediated by translators in transnational audiovisual flows is not determined only by technological advances, as human translators and technology are “implicated in one another, rather than one influencing or directing the other” (Deuze 2006: 65). The impacts of technology on the mediated communication in AVT should not be perceived separately from the “network of complex and variable social relations” (Williams 1981: 227) in a particular cultural context in which translators are situated and negotiate with the censorial power at work. Hence, a social constructive approach to technology can be adopted in research to uncover those ideological, institutional, and political causes and consequences of technological progress with an emphasis on the social success of technology as something “related to the take-up by relevant social groups” (Olohan 2017: 273) rather than the function it fulfils. The following provides a review of the role and efficiency of censorship in light of the constraints and possibilities introduced by media technologies at different phases of social transformation. From inventions ranging from cinema to television to the latest networked digital technologies in post-cinema and post-television media flows, AVT has been gradually shifting away from the previous institution-/industry-dominated field of production towards an open-to-all participatory culture.

## 6 Cinema

Cinema expanded rapidly across Europe and around the globe shortly after its invention, which not only led to a mass culture engendered by the socio-economic logic of capitalised film industries but also enforced a linear, industrially centralised model of distribution and translation of cinematic products.

Ordinary citizens had little opportunity to intervene in or contribute to the process of production and distribution, as filmmaking technologies were reserved for patented individuals and groups who also preferred to maintain a rigid gap between the film producers and their audiences (Thompson 1995). Most members of society could access to motion-picture texts only at public venues specifically constructed for film exhibition at pre-determined times, over which they had no direct control. Although average spectators could influence industrial decisions with their purchasing power and their rights to comments on the quality of films, they remained comparatively passive as long as their fundamental asymmetrical relations with the industry were sustained. The primary concern of filmmakers is to guarantee an “efficient, purposeful and uninterrupted flow of narrative information” (Berliner 1999: 6), such that translation is not intended to satisfy affective charges in the subjectivities of individual spectators, nor would it be produced to provide audiences with deeper appreciation of the cultural richness presented in the source film. That said, their products have never been smoothly disseminated on a global scale without interruptions by ideological censors.

During the time when access to audiovisual narratives was largely restricted to public venues such as cinemas, and when global travel and migration had not become as common as they are presently, censorial disruptions in the transcultural flows of audiovisual narratives were unimaginable to the general public. At which historical points did average viewers become aware of censorship before or at the transition from cinema to more diverse means to appreciate audiovisual narratives? How did the de-territorialised cinematic experience of tourists (especially for those travelling from states in which audiovisual entertainment is policed for ideological control) change their awareness and cause subsequent critiques to the ideological censorships in their own countries? What has been done, especially by authoritarian regimes, to make their cinematic censorship policies (if any) compatible with the constantly evolving media environment, or are they merely strengthening their grips on citizens without any consideration of technological challenges whatsoever? These are among the questions for interdisciplinary research to answer, hopefully, in the near future.

## 7 Television and Analogue Media Technologies

Although television did not cause fundamental changes in the consumer-producer relations when it was firstly introduced as a luxury that could be afforded only by the wealthy, it enabled more individualised viewing

experiences in diverse private spaces such as the living rooms. As it became common among households, television gradually integrated the exposure to audiovisual media into the daily routines of the general public. It granted average audiences more flexible patterns of viewing despite the remaining broadcasting schedule constraints, which nevertheless have become decreased continually since the emergence of home video technologies in the 1960s. To refer to Neil Gaiman, television is the twentieth-century family alter. At this stage, the top-down logic remained in the global mediascape, as essential technologies for audiovisual production and translation were still reserved mostly for profit-focused corporations and state institutions. It was difficult for ordinary audiences to intervene in the process of production, distribution, and indeed translation, while overcoming the language barrier to attain widest range of distribution was, and still is, a challenge for the industry to overcome. Meanwhile, viewers began to record and archive audiovisual programmes by drawing on the similar analogue media technologies. They were also able to form networks of enthusiasts or hobbyists by sharing personal collections of purchased or recorded programmes and creating individualised or collective narratives on particular audiovisual cultures and genres (Hills 2002, 2017).

Analogue media technologies enabled the informal economy of audiovisual piracy to proliferate in regions that were either undermined by industrial distributors for low market potentials or barred from the substantial portions of global audiovisual flows by local political institutions (Lobato 2013). Taking China as an example, the distribution and consumption of pirated audiovisual products spread rapidly in urban public spaces after the country opened up to global economics in the late 1970s (Wang 2003). Analogue media content that would otherwise be blocked by censors permeated the media life of urban audiences, who were craving for the experience of global screen cultures; audiovisual piracy even impacted the aspiring domestic creative industries and provided significant sources of inspiration for those who would become auteurs of the contemporary Chinese cinema (Gao 2014). Fandoms thrived in video shops, community video projection saloons, and gaming clubs to the extent that several gaming and film magazines were distributed to circulate original and translated articles about the latest trends, gaming tips, film reviews, etc. Among them, the once most popular cinephilic magazine *kan dian ying* (Viewing Films) even published a pamphlet in every issues that contained the latest information about the global (mostly Western) DVD markets. Most of the DVD products introduced in there did not have any officially sanctioned distribution in China but nevertheless reached local video stores and clubs through bootleg replications of commercially

distributed copies. Research on AVT may approach these informal, marginal cultural practices by retrieving the kinds of underground translation networks that were sustained by those informal audiovisual economies, how original copies were translated in accordance with the linguistic habits of audiences in their domestic contexts of reception, and how those translations are reviewed by the present-day audiences. Although hard copies of the translated products are difficult to find nowadays, a large quantity of pre-distributed analog media contents, pirated products included, has been digitally archived by collectors in former destinations of bootleg distributions. Whereas further ethical debates on grassroots archiving are inevitable at interdisciplinary intersections, it is undeniable that what used to be a cult sustained among limited circles of affective fans can now be perpetuated to the general digital publics.

## 8 New Media Ecology

With the arrival of the digital age, computer-mediated forms of production, distribution, and communication incorporate all stages of communication in all types of media. The use of computers to record, store, create, and distribute media brings a sense of newness that changes existing cultural languages but simultaneously can leave culture unaffected (Manovich 2001). The genesis of media undergoes fundamental changes at the interface between the enduring printed culture and the rapidly growing network digital culture. The proliferation of computational technology and network culture continues to generate “so many new venues that a term such as *new media* needs an addendum almost daily” (Davidson 2008: 708). Computer-mediated forms of production, distribution, and communication have permeated all kinds of information exchanges in all types of media which are converged to computable numerical data in compliance with numerical representation, modularity, automation, variability, and cultural transcoding (Hayles 2012). Meanwhile, the technological progress not only grants audiences in their individualised context the flexibility to consume and interpret the media, but also enable them to become consumer-turned producers—prosumers—who organise their lives in the myriad of mediapolis (Deuze 2012). The field of AVT is not immune to the dramatic shift brought about by the “demotic turn”, in which information is constantly (re-)mediated, debated, (re-)edited, archived, or deleted by experts and non-expert users in their attempts to secure the “increased control over the production and distribution of media content” (Turner 2010). Their participatory interventions should be perceived as “a principle of improvement, an instrument of change, a creative force” (Kelty

2013: 24), rather than threatening the broader media ecosystem. In comparison with the widely perceived phenomenon of digital culture, which emphasises “the outcome of discrete processing units” (Varnelis 2008: 146) in the informational media, network culture emerges from the relations between those units, and in particular, from the connections (and interactions) between people, between machines or network systems, and between people and machines. Their co-creative translational activities form a vibrant field of practice in “convergence culture” (Jenkins 2006), in which the conventional, mass media intersects with the new, in which users collide with media corporate and institutions, and in which the division between media producer and consumer blurs.

Prosumers draw upon the means and resources available to them in order to actualise their aesthetic or political ideals. They traverse “the interface between the actual and the digital” so as to “develop the capacity of mobilize fluid radical constituencies and foster inter-subjectivity” (Pérez-González 2016: 120). Through what Mercea (2011) observes as “digital prefigurative participation”, unaffiliated users rival in their virtual assemblies the capacity of mass communication and thereby circumventing the filtering discipline of censorship. When the 91st Academy Award ceremony was broadcast live in China by the China Central Television 6 (CCTV-6), a branch of the national television network, and by the local online streaming broadcaster Mango TV, on both channels, the phrase ‘gay man’, which was included in the acceptance speech given by Rami Malek, was not translated in the Chinese subtitles on either channel. Mango TV also took several measures to censor Lady Gaga during a live broadcast due to the official ban on the singer/actress in response to her meeting with the Dalai Lama in 2018. No ‘surgical’ measures were taken by the CCTV-6. These acts of censorship were ‘lived’ by internet users on Chinese social media such as Sina Weibo, WeChat, and Douban, drawing attention from international media providers such as Reuters, BBC, and China Digital Times. The next day, records of the censored contents and the full-length records of the ceremony became inaccessible on the websites of Mango TV website and the CCTV official website. Meanwhile, a citizen mediator aliased ‘译@我才是咕噜’ posted a subtitled clip of the speech given by Malek on the rogue but extremely popular Chinese video-streaming website ‘bilibili’,<sup>4</sup> showing the previously censored information displayed in ‘gay’. The uncensored footages and GIF frames showing Lady Gaga at the ceremony also ran viral in the China-shaped cyberspace.

<sup>4</sup>The video can be found at: <https://www.bilibili.com/video/av44758781?from=search&sid=10646392618125390843> (last accessed on 2 September 2019).

Dispersed populations gathered in the deliberation-driven, technology-facilitated linguacultural contact zone to build their collective identity based on shared interests and negotiated differences. Their translation activities brought to the foreground otherwise obscured social heterogeneity and submerged tension between dominant and non-hegemonic voices, and therefore disrupted the linguistic uniformity of the legitimate meaning with which institution-sanctioned practitioners are privileged (Pérez-González 2016: 121). Despite the socio-political potentials of user productivity, as formulated by “the mutually constitutive relation between the structural dimension of technology and the generative potential of human cognition” (Pérez-González 2016: 124), how would digital citizens continue to leverage between their reliance on the supranational interconnectivity and their impetus to contesting dominant discourses? This question should be addressed in future research in lieu of uncritical celebration of technological empowerment.

## 9 Concluding Remarks

As described above, manipulation is referred to in academic exchanges primarily as wilful distortion, alternation, or elimination of source information even though translators and filmmakers are motivated to manipulate source information for more creative outcomes. The current reality of the global media flows continues to challenge the existing knowledge about censorship. It is crucial to move beyond the binary schemas of freedom and oppression and of creativity and restriction to investigate the viability of censorship in maintaining rigorous distinctions between global democracies and authoritarian regimes. Wherever censorship regulates and suppresses, it simultaneously stimulates creativity in the translators, whose final outputs are crucial to the fate of an original at the threshold of the anticipated marketplace. Although censorship remains efficient in some sectors of the contemporary world in fulfilling its roles of socio-political and ideological governance, contemporary audiences can acquire sophisticated media literacy which, in turn, enables them to intervene and (re-)shape the constantly evolving digital environment. Instead of celebrating with “digital optimism” (Turner 2010), future research should be responsive to challenges and issues arising from the new ecosystem of global streaming. Recent transnational expansion of streaming media capitals has tremendously enhanced the impacts on the linguistic and cultural diversity in global media culture. While promoting emerging languages and associated screen cultures, transnational streaming broadcasts have also reinforced the vicious cycle of media dependency reinforced on the audiences

around the world with unprecedented algorithm control. Unlike other global television networks such as BBC iPlayer and HBO Go, transnational streaming broadcasters such as Netflix, Hulu, and Amazon Prime Video break the contingent television schedule by granting viewers self-determined viewing. They can not only decide when and what to watch, but also experience insulated flows of more seamless, serialised audiovisual narratives. Like traditional television broadcasts, streaming media capture new audiences with the remodelled process of socialisation, by which media life is uniform as much as individualised. On the one hand, Netflix, in particular, explicitly ventures on a global scale to colonise transnational viewers by culturally eradicating sleep and thus assimilating them into the biopolitical protocol of binge-watching (Horeck et al. 2018). On the other hand, nothing is dominant within a given streaming platform where algorithmic profiling enables a personalised television life with “each viewer experiencing their own individualized interface and consuming their own niche segment of the culture” (Pitre 2019). In addition to the exploration of how the new online streaming media work and how they are employed by producers to keep viewers glued to their screens, by what means would translators shape transnational viewing protocols for a wider media ecosystem? What are the initial focuses of translation-inflicted critical reflections on the part of viewers in response to the multilingual, multicultural schemes pursued by streaming broadcasters such as Netflix? Further, where may the transnational penetration of streaming franchises contributes to or be confronted with local and trans-local developments of media culture such as Asianisation (Funabashi 1993; Iwabuchi 2014, 2017, 2019)? To answer these questions, researchers should also be aware of the distribution and consumption of transnational streaming media beyond officially sanctioned territories through user-driven modes of translation such as fansubbing.

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# **Part V**

## **Themes for Audiovisual Translation and Media Accessibility**



# 31

## The Problem with Culture

Irene Ranzato

### 1 Introduction: Cultural Translation and Culture in Translation

This chapter will deal with various issues related to culture as a topic in translation and with cultural translation as a practice. Given the enormous and multi-faceted range of the topic, and the pervasiveness of the very word ‘culture’ in translation research, I will focus on some of the most renowned intersections between translation and culture, while highlighting a few of their least investigated aspects.

By way of introduction, it is useful to remember that cultural translation made its academic debut in the anthropological domain. According to Burke (2007: 8), the term was originally coined by anthropologists in the circle of Edward Evans-Pritchard, “to describe what happens in cultural encounters when each side tries to make sense of the actions of the other”. One of the first to discuss cultural translation in depth was Roger Keesing, whose seminal article on “Conventional Metaphors and Anthropological Metaphysics: The Problematic of Cultural Translation” (1985) somewhat ominously concludes: “Cultural translation will, I fear, remain inescapably problematic” (ibid.: 215). According to this scholar, a step toward “less-distorting cultural translation” is to remain faithful to linguistic evidence and not fall in the trap

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of “attributing what the philosopher of science Campbell calls ‘entitativity’ to a world of relations and processes” (*ibid.*: 204).

Following Maitland (2017: 13), however, it was only at the beginning of this century that “cultural translation really exploded onto the academic stage”, with the majority of studies related to the subject published in the last ten years alone.

Cultural translation is considered pertinent within the most diverse fields across the humanities, and has aptly been described, among other definitions, as a “double process of decontextualization and recontextualization, first reaching out to appropriate something alien and then domesticating it” (Burke 2007: 10). The elusiveness, or at least pervasiveness, of the concept of cultural translation is emphasised by Maitland who maintains that despite “this current of epistemological excitement”, the notion “remains as diffuse as it is tantalizing” (*ibid.*: 14) while its meaning is given generally as self-evident and never precisely defined. Among the few books which offer definitions, Sturge’s entry in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies* (2011: 67–70) summarises some of the debates that revolve around the concept, while Katan’s (2011) following entry (*ibid.*: 70–73) on “culture” clarifies the apparently contradictory definitions of the concept by presenting them as hierarchical frames or levels and discusses its import in translation studies and on the work of the translator.

In translation studies, the terms culture and translation are usually associated to the “cultural turn”, a definition by Mary Snell-Hornby (1990) applied to the relatively new focus that scholars such as André Lefevere and Susan Bassnett advocated as editors of the seminal collection *Translation, History and Culture* (1990), a move beyond the text itself towards “larger issues of context, history and convention” (*ibid.*: 11).

In the specific domain of audiovisual translation (AVT), although conspicuously absent from the exhaustive table of contents of *The Routledge Handbook of Audiovisual Translation* (Pérez-González 2019), the terms culture and cultural are some of the most diffused in the field and are used especially in studies dealing with the translation of cultural references and with ideological issues. Chaume has recently stated (2018: 40) that AVT has taken to date “four turns”: the descriptive, the cultural, the sociological and the cognitive turns. Studies related to the cultural turn focus on the concepts of “ideology, otherness, post-colonialism, power, resistance, patronage, censorship, genetic analysis” (*ibid.*: 55). What Chaume fundamentally underlines is that in AVT “cultural approaches put into question the recurrent use of some allegedly innocent strategies and reveal their intentional and deliberate choices” (*ibid.*: 42). Chaume maintains that although some of these studies are based on the

foundations of prior descriptive studies, the cultural turn in AVT has meant that cultural studies have gone beyond the explanations for the translation patterns normally found in descriptive research (*ibid.*).

It is natural that a fairly young discipline such as AVT should embrace the cultural turn in translation studies as a vantage standpoint and look at problems of language and culture as closely intertwined. This chapter will approach the theme of culture as a problem in translation from the only possible angle from which such a protean topic can be tackled: the analysis of problems of an empirical nature. Among these, I decided to offer some insights on three aspects of culture in translation:

1. Cultural references: this is one of the most successful topics in the field and as it has been discussed several times from diverse standpoints, I will point only to some of the directions which I believe would need further investigation.
2. Linguacultural clashes: against the backdrop of a rich literature on multilingualism in AVT, I will focus on what one could term ‘intralinguistic culture clashes’, involving individuals from different cultures sharing the same language.
3. Translating culture as a topic: references to what we often understand as ‘culture’ proper, that is high-end or low-brow products of art, literature, music and so on, constitute a special problem but also a special opportunity for translators.

## 2 Cultural References in AVT

Every language has different semantic ranges and different ways of grouping objects and concepts. If this is true for the general vocabulary, it is even truer for culture-bound vocabulary which carries with it a whole world of images and associations. Sapir (1949/1985: 36) described the close connection between vocabulary and culture reflecting on how distinctions which seem inevitable within a linguistic system may be ignored in languages which reflect an entirely different type of culture.

The different classifications discussed in the relevant literature<sup>1</sup> have mainly proposed groupings into lexical fields (i.e. geographical objects, animal and

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<sup>1</sup> For a detailed overview of cultural references, from the earliest definitions by Finkel (1962) and Vlahov and Florin (1969), please see Ranzato 2016. Among the most recent and most in-depth studies in AVT,

plant species, objects from daily life and so on). Although most scholars stress that culture specificity depends on the relationship between source and target culture, the relative nature of this relationship does not appear to be reflected in the respective classifications which consider the elements as specific of a single culture and objectively problematic. The taxonomy proposed in Ranzato 2016, on the other hand, is mainly concerned with the relationship between source and target culture, taking the point of view of the latter in relation to the source text. As I have argued (*ibid.*: 63–65), only this relationship can be taken into account with some objectivity as all other considerations on the more or less wide dissemination of a given cultural reference risk to be subjective. The concepts of ‘specialistic’ and ‘elitarian’ knowledge and culture are in fact problematic as virtually any cultural element can be very well known to a small or large portion of specialists. The relative nature of cultural references in the taxonomy, which I summarised as follows, is thus conceived as a quintessential quality pertaining to these items:

*Classification of cultural references*

*Real-world references*

1. Source culture references

Elements originating from and embedded in a given culture, which may be more or less known outside its boundaries but have no objective connection with other cultures. They have remained ‘other’ and exotic to an extent.

2. Intercultural references

Elements which have forged a dialogue between source and target culture and that have been absorbed to some degree by the latter.

3. Third culture references

Elements which do not originally belong to either the source or target culture but to a third one.

4. Target culture references

References in the source text which originate from the target culture.

*Intertextual references*

5. Overt intertextual allusions

Intertextual references to other texts which are explicitly quoted.

6. Covert intertextual allusions

Indirect references and more or less covert allusions to other texts.

7. Intertextual macroallusions

The whole audiovisual text, at a macro-level, is an allusion to other texts.

Macroallusions do not work so much (or not only) as accumulation of details but as a general concept.

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see Pedersen (2005 and 2011). Díaz Cintas and Remael (2007: 202–207) also proposed influential and widely quoted taxonomies.

For an in-depth discussion and examples relative to this taxonomy, see Ranzato 2016. The relevant comment to make here is that third culture references and target culture references are those which best demonstrate the importance of taking the point of view of the target culture in dealing with cultural references as they are the ones in which the distance between source and target culture is best exemplified.

This classification also introduces a distinction between real-world and intertextual references. The former are references to non-fictional persons, objects and events: living or once living people, food, currency, institutions, celebrations and everything which composes our reality. The latter are intended as explicit or indirect allusions to other texts, which create a bond between the translated text and other literary, audiovisual or artistic texts. The nature of these references is different from the nature of real-world references, and allusions to and quotations from other fictional works are included here in the domain of cultural references more explicitly than it has been done by other scholars. Their different nature, however, is acknowledged, as allusions create a special relationship between the audience and the text itself, and to a certain extent, they presuppose a disposition on the part of the target audience to retrieve information and make associations which are usually more than general as they require a certain degree of specialist knowledge.<sup>2</sup> See Sect. 4 for a discussion on the challenges and opportunities that this type of references may create.

One research area has been, in my opinion, comparatively neglected by scholars in AVT while it is ideally much favoured by a descriptive translation studies stance: diachronic studies on long TV series such as those of long-lasting sitcoms (e.g. *Will&Grace*, *Big Bang Theory*, *Modern Family* and so on), drama and comedy series of various genres (such as *Gray's Anatomy*, *CSI*, *Law & Order*, *Doctor Who* and so on), soap operas (e.g. *EastEnders*, *The Bold and the Beautiful*, *Coronation Street* and so on), cartoons (as *The Simpsons*, *South Park*, *Family Guy* and so on) to mention some of the programmes that are still being broadcast at the moment of writing or have just concluded their running. My contention is that sitcoms may be the most revealing audiovisual text for this kind of investigation. While these audiovisual texts are customarily full of cultural references to high-end and, especially, popular culture, the target audience of this particular kind of show is typically mainstream: lexical items (as well as contents) that are either deemed sensitive (e.g. sexual or political elements) or not familiar enough to the target culture are arguably more susceptible to manipulation by adapters. This type of films and TV

<sup>2</sup> Reflections on allusions were first inspired by the work of Ritva Leppihalme (1994, 1997, 2001, 2011).

shows allows to monitor the evolution of a given cultural element. For example, a reference which was originally restricted to a particular culture may have been exported systematically during the years with the result of being known today by other cultures, including the target one. Certain elements can thus be followed, through the analysis of some television programmes, in their evolution from being specific to a particular culture to slowly becoming more international, thus allowing insights on the changing mentality of a culture in its contacts with another one.

In Tourian terms, this is an area in which the search for matricial norms, which govern, among other things, “the very existence of target-language material as a substitute for the corresponding source-language material” (Toury 1995: 58), becomes inexorable and has the potential of yielding fruitful results. In this sense, it would be very interesting to carry out a diachronic analysis of how certain terms and references that are named in the source language and that do not seem to have an equivalent in the target language may eventually make it into the other language and culture.

If studies on cultural references from a diachronic perspective do not abound (but see Sanderson 2005 on the translation of Woody Allen’s films), there is a lack of research also on the cultural specificity of items pertaining to other film and television codes (see Chaume’s seminal 2004 article on the signifying codes of cinematographic language), such as the syntactic (editing and montage) code, the musical and special effects codes and so on. In other words, research on cultural elements has focused widely on the verbal code, the dialogues of films and TV shows. They have also quite naturally included insights on the visual code, generally perceived as the specificity of audiovisual texts. If this is certainly true, other elements, such as sounds, noises, pauses and silences, which may also assume a culture-specific dimension, have largely been neglected. I observed elsewhere (Ranzato 2016: 114–117), for example, how the so-called laugh tracks of TV sitcoms can be culture-bound, as each nation seems to insert its own kind of laughter into DVD soundtracks. Not all audiences, moreover, perceive silence in a film scene in the same way. Italian audiences, for example, are deemed by certain professionals in the field to be extremely intolerant of long silences, to the point of suggesting the addition of entirely new dialogue in the target version. Gianni Galassi is the dubbing director of some films by the French director Eric Rohmer, well-known for the silent moments he includes in his films and for speech which has no narrative function and is even unintelligible (whispered dialogue or dialogue heard from a distance: what (Kozloff 2000: 120) terms “verbal wallpaper”). According to the dubbing director (in Licari and Galassi 1994: 166–167), although adding dialogues is certainly an arbitrary practice, it is also true that

every language has its peculiar “metronome” to dictate the rhythm, so in his opinion, in the case of long silences, dialogue additions are always a good option. If anyone should think that this is a practice belonging to the past, see the following dialogue at the end of the Italian version of *Le sens de la fête* (Italian title: *C'est la vie—prendila come viene*), a 2017 film by Olivier Nakache and Eric Toledano. The last dialogue exchange between two friends walking away from the camera (“A moi personnellement ça ne me dérange pas de marcher”, “A moi personnellement ne se dit pas, eh, c'est un faute de syntaxe”) is followed in the original version by the music soundtrack which drowns completely the rest of the actors’ conversation. In Italian, the dubbing actors’ voices can still be heard clearly and provide an interesting ‘metadubbing’ commentary:

#### ITALIAN ADAPTATION

Julien: Hai appena fatto una ripetizione, cioè è come se dicesse “io, me”, capisci? Cioè, è ridondante. Certo, è un errore che si fa spesso, però comunque è grave. In un compito in classe sarebbe segnato col blu. Eh, ai miei tempi io lo segnavo col rosso. Sai, questi sono errori che possono sembrare semplici ma alla fine possono portare alla depauperazione di tutta una lingua. Beh, vedi, ad esempio, tu prendi il doppiaggio...

Samy: Il doppiaggio?

Julien: ...nasce con uno scopo nobile, quello di rendere fruibile a tutti la visione di un film. Eppure anche lì, negli anni, si sono fatti talmente tanti errori che possono sembrare semplici ad un primo esame, ma che poi si sono rivelati, dopo anni e anni e anni di costante uso errato, si sono rivelati come ti dicevo, un...

Samy: Un che?

#### BACK TRANSLATION

Julien: You just made a repetition, that is it's as if you said “I, me”, do you understand? That is, it's redundant. Of course it's a common mistake, but it is serious anyway. In a class homework it would be marked with a blue pencil. Well, in my time I marked it with a red one. You know, these mistakes can seem simple but in the end they may lead to the depauperation of a whole language. Well, you see, for example, take dubbing...

Samy: Dubbing?

Julien: ...it was created for a noble purpose, to make a film available to everyone. However there, too, with the years, so many mistakes were made, which may seem simple at a first analysis, but which then turned out to be, after years and years and years of constant erroneous use, they turned out to be, as I was telling you, a...

Samy: A what?

This is indeed an interesting moment of ‘creative dialogue’ and one which makes the voice of the target version authors clearly audible. It is the conveyance of thematic messages, one of the functions of film dialogue according to Kozloff (2000), which will be discussed further in Sect. 4. In the following section, a specific kind of linguacultural clash will be examined in its implications for AVT.

### 3 Linguacultural Clashes in AVT

In the science fiction comedy film *The Watch* (Akiva Schaffer 2012), a suburban neighbourhood watch group discovers an alien plot threatening the world. One of the highlights of the comedy is the moment in which a member of the group, Jamarcus, played by British actor Richard Ayoade, reveals that he is an alien, too. Following the well-known *topos* of the British villain (Ranzato 2018), Ayoade, the only British actor in a cast of Americans, speaks his native British English. The alien and the potential (only potential in this story) bad guy is the British character in a group of American goodies. This film best exemplifies a particular kind of culture clash between characters who speak the same language but whose accents typecast them as ‘different’ from the rest. In this section I will then expand on this particular *topos* which involves individuals who speak the same language.

Stories developing in cosmopolitan settings and/or involving travels, conquests and migration often describe conflicts which “are likely to find expression on the linguistic plane as well” (Delabastita and Grutman 2005: 24), with translation playing a fundamental mediating role (*ibid.*). A fruitful area of research in AVT is devoted to multilingualism, codeswitching and related subjects (see e.g. Badstübner-Kizik 2017; Beseghi 2017; de Higes-Andino 2014; Dore 2019; Federici 2017; Matamala and Ortiz-Boix 2016; Monti 2016; Corrius and Zabalbeascoa 2011; Zabalbeascoa and Voellmer 2014, to cite but just a few of this decade).

However, my contention is that the texts which are particularly indicative of a more nuanced form of culture clash are the ones in which the language of the relevant characters is in common but speakers are divided by different backgrounds, places of origin, habits and mores. In the case of English the contrast is often played by exploiting not only accents, but also prosodic features and other linguistic elements such as interjections, for example *Ah*, and especially the arguably British *Oh /əʊ/* as opposed to the American *Oh /oʊ/*, as underlined in a metalinguistic moment of the blockbuster US film,

*Transformers—The Last Knight* (Michael Bay 2017) which exemplifies how this situation is exploited with particular relish, in comedic situations, especially between British and American English speakers. In this scene, the main character, Cade Yeager, meets Viviane Wembly, an Oxford professor, for the first time and has to endure her evident and snobbish dislike. After their formal introduction and some sarcastic comments, Viviane reacts to the news that he is an inventor whose patents are pending by simply going:

Viviane: Ah...

Cade: Ah? Don't say ... What's "ah"? You know, I could do that, too: (*with a fake British accent*) "Oh, I'm English and I'm too cool for feelings".

The exchange, translated literally in the Italian dubbing (but with no English accent), is of course one which feeds on well-established stereotypes, for example the already discussed (Ranzato 2018: 219–224) “British as upper class vs. American as working class” and the “British as villain” stereotypes. The British upper-class character in a mostly American context or, vice versa, an American character in a British context, is a common contrastive *topos*. This opposition is usually not only linguistic but also social, as the American characters are typified as more ‘vulgar’ and ‘working class’ or simply more humble, while the British are portrayed as more refined and ‘upper class’. Class associations can at times be slightly different, but they are always implied. And it is not to be thought that only UK productions support the equation of British people as more refined, but colder and stiffer characters, and of US people as more vulgar, but warmer and nicer. Several US productions endorse this view and perhaps *Garfield: A Tail of Two Kitties* (Tim Hill 2006), a variation on “the rich and the poor” narrative theme, can be a good example. In this cartoon film, a happy-go-lucky, lovable, but extremely vulgar, American kitty switches places with an aristocratic British kitten in England.

The general public has long been alerted to the presence of yet another recurrent theme which is relevant here, that of the British villain in an American context, as hinted in the introduction of this section. British actors are often selected to play “baddies” in films and antagonists played by British actors with a flawless Received Pronunciation are so many that it is difficult to choose one as an exemplification. I chose an extract from the film *Deadpool* (Tim Miller 2016) as an example because it also contains a cultural reference:

Deadpool (an American talking to a British villain): Hey, is Ajax your actual name, because it sounds suspiciously made up. What is it really? Kevin? Bruce? Scott? Mitch? The Rickster? (*taking up a British pronunciation*) Is it Basil Fawlty?

In the Italian adaptation, the name of the comedic character Basil Fawlty, one of the staples of British TV humour but virtually unknown to the general Italian public, was replaced by the hugely popular Mr. Bean. And this time, when the American character of the original fakes a British accent, his dubber speaks Italian with an English accent.

The most common way to exploit the contrast between the British and the American ‘types’ is, however, to accentuate the former’s supposed snobbishness and play on the different vocabulary items of the respective varieties. The following excerpt from *Mad Men* (Matthew Weiner 2007–2015), an American series which sees the arrival, in season 3, of a British character, Lane Pryce, is an example of this recurrent situation. This dialogue from the first episode of season 3 is an exchange between Joan, the head of the secretarial pool, and Eric, Lane’s assistant:

#### ORIGINAL DIALOGUE

John: While we’re on the topic of decorum, I’d like to speak with you about the way I’m being addressed.

Joan: Could you be more specific?

John: The switchboard. I’m not John. I’m Mr Hooker.

Joan: That’s the way they’ve been taught to address the secretaries.

John: Yes, well, as I’ve explained, in Great Britain...

Joan: A truck is a lorry and an elevator is a lift. I’ve got it, Mr. Hooker.

Despite your title, you are not a secretary.

John: I’m Mr. Price’s right arm. I’m not his typist.

#### ITALIAN ADAPTATION

John: A proposito di rispetto, vorrei chiarire il modo in cui vorrei che ci si rivolgesse a me.

Joan: Puoi essere più specifico?

John: Quella del centralino. Io non sono John. Sono il Signor Hooker.

Joan: Noi segretarie ci chiamiamo tutte per nome.

John: Si, però come ti ho già spiegato, in Gran Bretagna...

Joan: Un tir è un camion e il fish and chips è il pesce fritto. Recepito Signor Hooker. Malgrado le sue mansioni lei non è una segretaria.

John: Sono il braccio destro del Signor Pryce, non la sua dattilografa.

#### ORIGINAL DIALOGUE

John: About respect, I would like to clarify the way I would like to be addressed.

Joan: Could you be more specific?

John: The one at the switchboard. I am not John. I'm Mr Hooker.

Joan: We secretaries all call each other by first name.

John: Yes, but as I have already explained, in Great Britain...

Joan: A truck is a lorry and fish and chips is fried fish. I've got it, Mr. Hooker.

Despite your tasks, you are not a secretary.

John: I'm Mr. Price's right arm, not his typist.

The adapters of this drama series did not choose the option of dubbing English characters with a British accent, a strategy sometimes followed, as in the former example, in comedic texts. The Italian translation relies on the words of the exchange to convey the conflict between the two worlds by finding first of all a solution for the truck/lorry and elevator/lift pairs of words. The translation of the latter (*fish and chips è il pesce fritto*, fish and chips is fried fish) is more effective than the former as *tir* and *camion* are two standard ways of defining a *truck* in Italian and they do not convey a linguistic difference. The translation becomes however very effective with Joan's last line: by choosing the feminine *segretaria* for *secretary*, the Italian translation adds a dimension of gender critique which is perfectly in line with the series' rationale. The most obvious choice would have been the masculine *segretario*, as she is addressing a man, but this word does not have the same sexist nuances of its feminine counterpart.

Although the British vs. American dichotomy is by far the most exploited in cases of intralingual conflicts, other stereotypes are successfully exploited to the same end. I have already had the occasion to comment (Ranzato 2019) on Pip, the only British English speaker in the mostly North-American (US and Canadian) speech community of the *South Park* (Parker and Stone 1997-in production) cartoon series. As in Dickens's novel *Great Expectations*, an inspiration for the cartoon character, this Pip, too, does not fit in and is the butt of everyone's jokes. The dubbed rendition of Pip's accent in the first seasons of the series is an odd-sounding Italian only vaguely reminiscent of a mock-British accent, achieved by mispronouncing some words, particularly word-endings, as shown in the following exchange in episode 1 season 5, when Pip's friends start picking on him because of his name:

#### ORIGINAL DIALOGUE

Eric: I sure am hungry.

Pip: Hello, gentlemen! Any of you blokes know what's for lunch today?—  
Lunchy munchies?

Eric: Go away, Pip, nobody likes you!

Stanley: Yeah. What kind of a name is Pip anyway?

Pip: My father's family name being Pirrup and my Christian name, Phillip, my infant-Eric: Goddammit! Would you shut the hell up? Nobody gives a rat's ass!

Stanley: Yeah, go away, Pip.

Pip: Right-to.

#### ITALIAN ADAPTATION

Eric: Cazzarola, ho una fame da lupo mannaro.

Pip: Salve a tutti! Qualcuno sa che c'è per pranzou? – Che pappa c'è da papparei?

Eric: Smamma, non piaci a nessuno, Pip!

Stanley: Sì e poi che minchia di nome è Pip?

Pip: Il cognome della famiglia di mio padre è Pirrup, il mio vero nome è Phillip, la mia baby sitter...

Eric: Vuoi chiudere quella fogna di bocca? Non frega un c\*\*\*o di te a nessuno!

Stanley: Sì, sparisci, Pip.

Pip: Perfettou.

#### BACK TRANSLATION

Eric: Fuck, I'm werewolf hungry.

Pip: Hello everybody! Anyone knows what's for lunch-o? What mush is to munch-o?

Eric: Clear off, nobody likes you, Pip!

Stanley: Yes, and besides what fuck of a name is Pip?

Pip: The surname of my father's family is Pirrup, my real name is Phillip, my babysitter...

Eric: Will you shut that cesspool mouth of yours? Nobody gives a fuck about you!

Stanley: Yeah, clear off, Pip.

Pip: Perfect-o.

This solution achieves its humorous ends by making the character's manner of speech sound funny and exotic at the same time. The elongated vowels at the end of some of the words recall, in a way which is both stereotypical and surreal, the accent which is often used to represent English people on the Italian screens. The linguistic distance between Pip and his North-American friends is accentuated in the target version also thanks to the use of dialectal words: *cazzarola*, a typically Roman exclamation, literally meaning 'saucepans' but actually a euphemism for *cazzo*, 'cock', used in Italian as an exclamation similar to *fuck* in English, when the original line just said: "I sure am hungry"; and *minchia*, a Sicilian term with the same meaning. The overt allusion to Dickens's novel was abandoned (the source text literally quotes the novel: "My father's family name being Pirrup and my Christian name, Phillip..."), but while not

acknowledging the literary style of this line, the Italian version implements various other devices to recreate a humorous linguistic divide.

The explicit reference to Dickens's (1861/2003) masterpiece can serve as an introduction to the following section in which I will briefly comment on a particular type of cultural references.

## 4 Translating Culture as a Topic: Testing the Audience's Cultural Awareness

The overt quotation from or covert allusion to works of literature, cinema and the arts in general create an intertextual bond between texts that makes particular demands on members of the audience, who are expected to possess information, have a knowledge, make connections related to cultural items that may not be so readily available within the target culture. The referents of these elements belong to a body of "assumed shared knowledge" (Kaskenviita 1991: 77), which may include intertextual references explicitly quoted in the text and more covert allusions. I termed this category of cultural references "allusions" (Ranzato 2016), but here I am not concerned with the definition and the nature of these elements so much as with the possibility that they offer authors, both of the original text and of its translations, to "make a statement". Whether highbrow or lowbrow, these references are generally perceived as having a sophisticated quality to them and thus represent a sensitive category in translation. They are often felt as problematic and sometimes too cryptic to be kept unaltered in the target text, even when an official translation may already exist. It is, in other words, a category of references which arguably 'invites' translators and adapters to manipulate and render them more easily available to the members of the audience. They can be, and there are examples of them having been, carriers of a "thematic message" (Kozloff 2000).

The Italian dialogue of the French film illustrated in Sect. 2 can also be interpreted this way as it is obvious that its author (Anton Giulio Castagna) wanted to express his opinion on dubbing and its "noble purpose". Other more meaningful examples of authorial interventions in Italian dubbing can also be made. In the Italian dubbing of the film *Sleeper* (Woody Allen 1973, first discussed in Ranzato 2011) it is evident how the adapter worked with the aim of drawing attention to the international sociocultural reality of the early 1970s. The translation of the whole film is interesting, but it culminates with the following scene, a case of rewriting and indigenisation of an audiovisual

text. In the scene, Miles, the main character played by Woody Allen, is hypnotised and, believing that he is Blanche Dubois from Tennessee Williams's *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947/2009), he launches into one of the play's most famous monologues. In the meantime, Luna, a character played by Diane Keaton, imitates Marlon Brando playing the role of Kowalski in Elia Kazan's 1951 film based on the play. As the transcription below shows, the intertextually rich monologue was completely rewritten for the Italian dubbing:

#### ORIGINAL DIALOGUE

Miles (*with a Southern US accent*): Oh, no. No, please, don't let in the light.  
 Cover those lights, please. Please, don't get up. I was just passing through.  
 Luna: Oh Erno, what's happening?  
 Erno: Something's gone wrong with the treatment. His brain is locked somewhere else. He believes he's another person.

Miles: No. I need...  
 Luna: Who are you, Miles?  
 Miles: I'm Blanche. Blanche Dubois. It means 'white woods'.  
 Erno: He's like a sleepwalker. We can't upset him or it could be fatal.  
 Luna: What are we going to do?  
 Erno: Well, you've read *Streetcar Named Desire*. Just play along with him. He needs another injection.

Miles: Physical beauty is passing. A transitory possession. But beauty of the mind and richness of the spirit and tenderness of the heart, and I have all those things, aren't taken away but... but grow, increase with the years. Strange that I should be called a destitute woman... when I have all these riches locked in my heart.

Luna (*as Marlon Brando's character in A Streetcar Named Desire*): I been onto you from the start. I seen how you try to sprinkle this place up ... with them powders and those fancy French colognes.

Miles: Why, you're not the gentleman that I was expecting. What's going on? Whoever you are, I've always depended on the kindness of strangers.

#### ITALIAN ADAPTATION

Mike<sup>3</sup> (*with a French accent*): Oh no, ti prego, il topo non lo voglio. Il topo no, non lo posso vedere. Je t'en prie, metti via il topo. Togli il topo se mi ami.

Luna: Erno, Erno, cosa gli prende?

Erno: Qualcosa non ha funzionato.

Mike: E' così.

Erno: Il suo cervello è bloccato altrove, si crede un'altra persona.

Mike: Oh no, mi fa schifo.

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<sup>3</sup>The name of the protagonist was changed to Mike in the Italian version, for no apparent reason other than its being a more familiar name or perhaps easier to pronounce for dubbers.

Luna: Mike, chi sei ora, Mike?

Mike: Marie, Marie Schneider. Tango, voglio un tango.

Erno: E' come un sonnambulo, risveglierlo può essere fatale.

Luna: Allora come si fa?

Erno: Hai visto L'ultimo tango a Parigi al Sex Cine Club? Vedi di assecondarlo.

Mike: Sono la romantica degli anni '70. Amo le vecchie cose di Parigi. Vecchi appartamenti, privi di letti e di poltrone, e dormire sulla coperta. Un estraneo violento ma grassoccio. Un tesoro di stronzo. Io amo le cose vecchie, e amo le cose nuove. Quei blue jeans con la lampo di dietro, li adoro. Marlene.

Luna (*imitating Marlon Brando in Last Tango in Paris*): Io t'ho azzeccato fin dal principio. Les girls comme toi, you know, lo sai come me le faccio le donne come te? Al burro. E se mi vuoi tagliati le unghie, stronza.

Mike: Ah, tu non sei il gentiluomo che avevo immaginato. Oh no, il topo no. Je vous en prie. Sai che odio i topi, mi fanno senso più della censura.

#### BACK TRANSLATION

Mike (*with a French accent*): Oh, no, please, I don't want the rat. Not the rat, I can't look at it. Je t'en prie, take the rat away. Take the rat away if you love me.

Luna: Erno. Erno, what's happening?

Erno: Something's gone wrong.

Mike: That's the way.

Erno: His brain is locked somewhere else. He believes he's another person.

Mike: Oh no, it's disgusting.

Luna: Mike, who are you now, Mike?

Mike: Marie, Marie Schneider. Tango, I want a tango.

Erno: He's like a sleepwalker. Waking him up could be fatal.

Luna: Then, how is it done?

Erno: Have you seen *The Last Tango in Paris* at the Sex Cine Club? Just play along with him.

Mike: I am the romantic of the 1970s. I love Paris's old things. Old flats, without beds or armchairs and sleeping on the carpet, with a stranger for a blanket. A violent but chubby stranger. A lovable son of a bitch. I love old things, and I love new things. Those blue jeans with a zip behind, I love them. Big Marlon.

Luna (*as Marlon Brando's character in The Last Tango in Paris*): I've been onto you from the start. Les girls comme toi, you know, you know how I eat the girls like you? With butter. And if you want me, have your nails cut, fucker.

Mike: Ah, you're not the gentleman that I had imagined. Oh no, not the rat. Je vous en prie. You know I hate rats, they make me sick, even more than censorship.

The reference to *A Streetcar Named Desire*, a famous play also for the target culture, but one which is arguably not ingrained in people's consciousness as

it undoubtedly is in the source culture, is replaced in the Italian dubbing with quotes from the (at the time) extremely topical *Ultimo tango a Parigi* (*Last Tango in Paris*, Bernardo Bertolucci 1972), the story of the casual encounter between an American man (played by Brando) and a French woman (played by Schneider) in an empty apartment in Paris. Their relationship is mainly sexual and the film was famously banned in Italy, its copies sentenced to be burned. This course of action provoked a public debate and the general outcry from various intellectuals that is echoed in the very last sentence uttered by Mike/Miles. The operation of rewriting was obviously facilitated by the fact that both Kazan's and Bertolucci's films were played by the same actor, Marlon Brando interpreting both the young Kowalski and the mature Paul. The transformation of this somewhat surreal scene is thus rendered smoother by the fact that the character played by Diane Keaton can imitate the same actor with his famous mannerisms in both versions, without compromising the kinetic information transmitted visually. At the end of the dialogue, Luna imitates Brando with the words of Kowalski in *A Streetcar Named Desire* in the original version, and with the words of Paul in *Ultimo tango a Parigi* in the Italian version. In both cases the dialogue sums up the plot and the gist of the respective stories using keywords and images from the texts. Up to the very last phrase, the Italian version is certainly raunchier than the original and its main purpose would apparently be that of appealing to a more general audience, substituting literary allusions with references to an erotic film which was widely talked about at precisely the same time as *Sleeper* was being distributed in cinemas across the country. The last line, "rats make me sick, even more than censorship", however, sees the adapter follow a very different train of thought and reveals his firm stance on the subject of film censorship. The adapter as author feels the right to rewrite and to comment about the world he lives in, namely about the sensitive issue of film censorship dramatically highlighted here with the continuous reference to Bertolucci's masterpiece. The interplay between all the cultural elements in *Sleeper* provides us with a fascinating portrait of a historical period in a given time and in a given place. At the same time, the great number of departures from the original dialogue gives us a precise picture of the extensive freedom that dubbing adapters can enjoy even when faced with the supposedly constraining lipsync limitations.

Other similar operations can be found in the history of Italian dubbing. In the adaptation of the film *Laura* (Otto Preminger 1944), for example, the poem *Brief Life* by Ernest Dowson is replaced by *La visitazione*, a very different composition on superficially similar themes by the Italian national poet Gabriele D'Annunzio. Even if not as interestingly as in the previous example, the aim of the adapters appears to be the same: disentangling a particular type of cultural

reference from the network of associations it creates in the source text and rebuilding a completely new world of imagery around a different and indigenous element. It appears that this type of more sophisticated cultural references has been felt both as a problem and as an opportunity to give free rein to one's creativity and give voice to the opinion of the translators and adapters.

## 5 Conclusive Remarks and Future Directions

This chapter has dealt with the topic of culture as a problem in translation from the only possible angle from which such a wide-reaching topic could be addressed: the analysis of problems of an empirical nature. Three aspects of culture in translation were illustrated: the popular subject of cultural references; linguacultural clashes and the translation of cultural objects which create bonds with other texts, such as the products of art, literature, music and so on. The analysis has highlighted some of the less investigated aspects of each category. One of these aspects is the opportunity offered by the analysis of long television series to draw a wealth of data also from a diachronic perspective, which can shed light on the changing position of cultural elements and lexical items in their transfer to another culture through translation. If studies on cultural references from a diachronic perspective do not abound, there is a lack of research also on the cultural specificity of items pertaining to other film and television codes, such as the syntactic (editing and montage) code, the musical and special effects codes and so on. In other words, research on cultural elements has focused widely on the verbal code and on the visual code, leaving aside other elements, such as sounds, noises, pauses and silences, which may also assume a culture-specific dimension.

For what concerns what I termed 'intralingual conflicts', I argued how texts which are particularly indicative of a more nuanced form of culture clash are those containing linguacultural clashes between individuals from different cultures who speak the same language. If the clash is cultural, it is often expressed linguistically and as the same language is shared by the relevant characters, the forms that the conflict may take can be fascinating.

In the last section, I highlighted how overt quotations from or covert allusions to works of literature, cinema and the arts in general may create an intertextual bond between texts that makes particular demands on members of the audience, who are expected to make connections related to cultural items that may not be so readily available within the target culture. These elements are analysed in the possibility that they offer authors, both of the original text and of its translations, to 'make a statement' and ultimately convey their personal opinions.

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## The Role of Humour in AVT: AVHT

Patrick Zabalbeascoa

### 1 Introduction

The word *humour* appears in Lawrence Venuti's (2000) highly praiseworthy anthology of essays on translation studies *The Translation Studies Reader* a mere five times, and always in the same essay on translating camp talk, and restricted to a comment on it being the fourth feature of gay camp strategies. The words *humour* and *comedy* do not appear in the index. This is not a criticism of this particular book but evidence of a state of affairs within translation studies. The invisibility of humour derives from a situation that is so powerful that it is never mentioned, the default of anything said about translation is that translation (studies) deals with serious (important) messages and texts. Who would want to deal with what is not important, not said in earnest, and not serious, that is, just a joke? Alternatively, we might say that there are two sides to communication and social interaction, the serious and the humorous, and any full account of translation as communication and social interaction requires a full account of both sides. And so far, one of the sides has remained largely heads down.

Humour translation (HT), in general, and audiovisual humour translation (AVHT), in particular, along with humour in multimodal (and multilingual) communication is a problem, indeed. The problem is basically the imbalance

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between its great importance and ubiquity (the sheer size of its readership and audiences) on the one hand, compared to the little research and academic attention it has received, on the other. Online television on demand and internet social media are just making the need for this problem to be adequately addressed even more pressing. It might even be fair to say that the people doing much of the research (albeit not strictly scientific) and coming up with the most penetrating insights are the comedians themselves. In this sense, it is a bit like online tennis tutorials: it does not really matter how much the pros tell you about the nature of their professional skills and performance because you are not going to be able to emulate them and really be a threat to their livelihood even when you know what they know, so they (the comedians) do not mind telling you, in their interviews and shows, and what they have to contribute is important.

The ubiquity of humour and its translation cannot be overstated. It is not only a matter of cinematic slapstick, spoofs, satire, and parody, along with TV sitcoms and candid cameras. There is so much more to deal with in terms of: spreading jokes and memes globally on social media, stand-up comedy on Netflix, politically militant late-night shows on US television and their dubbed, subtitled, voice-over or adapted versions in other countries. The proliferation of so many forms in so many places also raises issues of censorship, humour in advertising, political correctness, and, very interestingly, creativity in translation.

Looking at humoristic elements in texts to be translated as “the problem”, and following James Holmes’ (1988) so-called map, theoretical accounts of HT might be classified as a sort of problem-restricted theory, as in “the problem/challenge of translating humour”. However, it is probably more complicated than that, as Holmes himself anticipates, there is so much overlap: comedy related to genre (e.g., sitcom, political satire, comedy of manners, romantic comedy) could fall within text-type restricted theories, time-restricted theories could include period comedy, and the ephemeral nature of much humour, medium-restricted theories (humour as possibly the last frontier for MT to conquer, and oral vs. written humour), area-restricted theories a-la-Holmes might deal with any hypothesis regarding different senses of humour according to language or culture.

It is also important to distinguish and compare humour in AVT studies with HT in written literature and other modes of expression, as well as the terminological need to be more precise in not confusing audiovisual with multimodal.

Part of the problem of finding the right place (or at least a more beneficial one) for HT and AVHT would be to acknowledge the traditionally unstated

default status of serious texts and messages as the starting point (and finish line?) of much thinking about translation, expecting that anything that “works” for translating serious texts will work for humour and comedy, or else the latter will simply have to fall outside the discipline and be moved “beyond” translation (and its essential requirement for “equivalence”) into something like creative rewriting or adaptation. An analogy would be to do medical research solely on the basis of studies made on one of the sexes, and just assume its findings will necessarily work for the other, providing a few adjustments and allowing for obvious differences.

Just as with any area of translation studies it is essential to distinguish between: (1) the practical and pedagogical side of how to translate humour/ how humour is translated; and (2) the theoretically related side of how to research HT and how to propose theoretical models for HT within translation studies, with an awareness of the findings and theories of the discipline of humour studies.

Within translation studies it is as if humour were considered a slippery elusive object of study, almost entirely dealt with as an appendix to some other point of interest that has much firmer ground or is more easily defined: a certain author, a certain period, a certain type of literature, a certain mode of communication, or certain textual items or linguistic features or units (clauses, idioms, tenses, discourse markers, etc.).

## 2 Definitions

It is just as difficult to provide a definition for *humour* that will satisfy everyone for all purposes as it is for the term *translation* (Toury 1995) but it is useful to have a working definition to start from, while recognizing the likely need for various updates as research and theory become more refined. A straightforward definition of *humour* might be: a quality of a statement, action or situation that makes a person laugh or smile or feel similarly amused; consequently, a sense of humour is the ability to recognise, appreciate and sometimes produce such actions, situations, and statements. For the purpose of translation theory and practice, the word “statement” in this definition is connected to texts, the objects and products of translation. Such a definition is complicated by the fact that not all humour can make a person laugh or smile (hence, “similarly amused”), and people might laugh or smile because they are nervous or not showing their response sincerely or spontaneously. The concept of fun includes humour but is broader (e.g., watching or playing sport for fun). A sense of humour can vary considerably from one person to the

next, just as some people have a better sense of balance or direction, and it can also be trained or educated, the results depending on how gifted one is from the start, somewhat like the sense of smell, or music appreciation. Nash already pointed out the complexity of this subject (1985: xi). Attardo (1994: 3) goes so far as to claim that finding a definition of humour is practically impossible, and this still appears to be true nowadays. In any case, this lack of **definition** has not impeded (and nor should it) a growing number of pieces of research on the translation of humour.

Considering humour as a feature of certain genres, there is an alternation between mandatory and optional, and a cline from recurrent to rare. Humour (restricted to textbound comicality) is imbedded in the very definition of lim-ericks, TV sitcoms, parody, and satire. Humour can appear in most genres and social occasions, especially in places like the UK (advertising, novels, text-books, songs, journalism, children's literature), except when explicitly forbidden or implicitly taboo or without precedent (not including parodies of these cases), for example, laws and rules. Humour is not only a matter of personal appreciation, determined by an individual's innate characteristics, personal taste, experience, and values. It is also determined culturally, socially, historically, politically, linguistically. Two independent variables are *worth* (professional and artistic) and *degree* (from mildly mirthful to hilarious).

Formal aspects of jokes and humour are easier to define and study than the nature of their essence or spirit. And in between form and essence there is a crucial element of humour mechanism: exactly what a joke is based on and works around that might be rendered in translation, the target that HT is aiming for. For example, researchers tend to favour studying Shakespeare's puns or Wilde's witticisms, or Carroll's allusions, or even more vaguely, children's literature or comic books (and their translations), rather than the translation of Shakespeare's humour, or Wilde's, or humour for children. This is because puns and other forms of wordplay can be isolated and analysed formally. The formal aspects of humour are easier to spot and analyse, like rhyme in poetry; but, like poetry, form is only half the story. What we are missing, then, are studies that go beyond lengthy discussions about formal linguistic, discursive, textual, and cultural aspects. There is not enough evidence of the benefits of studying the translation of comedy (and humorous elements in other genres) by the same methods as serious texts and elements, that is, cutting a text up into parts of speech, and then applying traditional concepts of translational equivalents and shifts. Studies in this vein tend to search for instances of literal translation, alternating with compensation and modulation, in the hope that counting the number of literal translations versus the number of modulations for a given translation will shed some sort of light on

the degree of equivalence or success in terms of humour. In Nord's (2003) study of the translation of proper nouns for foreign-language versions of *Alice in Wonderland* there are all sorts of statistical data for the formal features of proper nouns in various translated versions, but little is said explicitly about the factor of humour.

The elusiveness of humour, then, is its main challenge, along with a daunting number of variables. First, it requires some sort of materialization; and that seems to be the connection between *humour* and *jokes*. A *joke* can be broadly defined as any concrete instance of humour produced (or assumed to be produced) by human design. This definition crucially distinguishes jokes from funny accidents or amusing cats, happy coincidences, and other situations that can make people laugh. A joke can be textual (verbal or visual gags) or non-textual (e.g., a *practical* joke), and textual jokes can be verbal, non-verbal or semiotically complex and multimodal, involving words and other sign systems or paralinguistic or performance (delivery) features. Thus, a textual joke can constitute a unit for textual analysis, to be described according to certain features, and jokes can hopefully be labelled and classified according to humour-specific parameters and variables (type and degree of funniness), and not only typologies based on linguistic units or features, for example, lexical, grammatical, stylistic or pragmatic. AVT has to deal at some point with every type of textual joke.

The problems posed by AVHT highlight the importance of the periphery in translation practices and theories. The problem is not only to define humour, HT, and AVHT; rather, the very existence of these and other traditionally peripheral phenomena call for updates of what translation means and its scope. Should a definition of "translation proper" include, let's say, non-literal creative renderings of (AV) jokes? How far can we go in adapting or substituting a joke in a foreign version before we cross the boundary from translation into something else? And how this affects any definition of translation and its scope will also affect the scope of translation studies. Similarly, we seem to be forced to ask questions like, should/can we include stand-up comedy (traditionally perceived as aural) and gifs (with no sound) as part of audio-visual communication, especially now that there is so much (subtitled) stand-up comedy on internet TV? So, we must now revise the boundaries of the concept of what is audiovisual, prototypically represented in the past by feature-films (in cinemas) and soap-operas (on TV); for some scholars audio-visual should also include less obvious candidates, like stage productions with no screen involved (ranging from underground comedy to opera buffa).

In focusing on definitions, as required for research and theory, it is important to distinguish professional humour practices from naturally occurring

humour as a part of social bonding and other forms of interpersonal interaction and relationships, in the same way we distinguish non-professional natural language from scripts and literature.

### 3 A Historical View

Humour has travelled across linguistic boundaries in various textual forms for centuries, but it was not until the 1990s that the subject of HT started to receive the attention it deserves: “the area of humour and translation has not always been so popular in academia. Before the mid-nineties academic literature on the subject was scarce and often more anecdotal than scholarly in nature” (Chiaro 2010a, 2). It might have been delayed even more were it not for observations coming from studies in AVT, namely feature films and TV situation comedy at that time, with later additions of home videos, and more recent digitised formats and online availability, where humour simply cannot be ignored. An additional complication comes from fun-dubbing and fun-subbing (as variants of fan-dubbing and subbing), performed by amateurs for fun, meaning that the fun comes from the process of translating, leading to the observation that there can be fun there as well as in the product of AVT. In short, humour, which may be overlooked in other forms of translated communication, simply stands out more clearly, glaringly, and more frequently in AV comedy, and forces academia to acknowledge its social importance.

Humour, like poetry, has often been considered among the greatest challenges facing translators (Vandaele 2001, 30). Those who like to claim the impossibility of translation tend to quote humour based on wordplay and/or poetry (a form of playing with words with and without the element of humour) as proof of their position. No-one will deny the difficulty involved in finding foreign-language equivalences for textual elements that are highly culture-specific and/or language-specific. As Vandaele puts it (2010, 150), “[t]he specific trouble with humor translation [...] is that humor has a clear penchant for (socio)linguistic particularities [...] and for metalinguistic communication”, two aspects which are often associated with cultural and linguistic untranslatability—not just in the realm of humour. The problem with this type of dismissive approach is that it fails to explain, objectively and systematically, the processes and contexts in which humour does travel; that is, a necessary focus of interest. Nevertheless, from the mid-nineties, and particularly in the present century, HT has attracted growing attention from researchers, evidenced by the publication of international monographs both within translation studies and humour studies, like Chiaro’s latest two-volume

compendium (2010b) and Martínez Sierra and Zabalbeascoa (2017). An increase in the amount of research focused on this topic has broadened the range of the approaches, topics, and translation modalities studied in relation to humour (Mateo and Zabalbeascoa 2019).

Del Corral (1988) claims that “we need not offhandedly abandon the translation of humor simply because we have traditionally dismissed it as untranslatable” (1988, 27). She outlines certain broad categories of humour—universal, national and literary—to discover which ones defy and which ones allow for successful translation (1988, 25). Key concepts are introduced in her study, including the translator’s agency—establishing “how much humor will be lost, how much retained, and how much understood in a different way” (1988, 27)—and a culture’s perception of, and people’s collective and individual penchant for humour.

One of the first thorough studies on HT within Descriptive Translation Studies is by Mateo (1995). In her analysis of a series of English stage comedies from different periods, and their various translations, the author goes beyond evaluating how well the humour was retained in each case or prescribing what should have been done, in order to describe the solutions actually proposed in the translations and analyse the factors involved. Considering the various elements involved in comedy—for which she draws concepts from Humour Studies, Theatre Studies, and Pragmatics—Mateo looks at the translation solutions provided for different textual issues, assessing their role as elements of comedy and in the complex process of translation: wordplay, irony, the reversal of expectations, and cultural references.

Zabalbeascoa (1993) was the first to define “audiovisual text” (indeed, to propose the term) and include such texts as a legitimate part of translation studies, the idea coming precisely from observations regarding the complex nature of the AVT of humour and how these observations challenged certain well-established tenets of traditional thinking regarding translation, both because of audiovisual text factors and the nature of the problems posed by audiovisual comedy for the purpose of translation. The dilemma was clear: either translation studies needed to expand its horizons and scrap certain long-held beliefs, or AVT would have to drop its T for an initial that represented renderings that were not actually translations, with a similar dichotomy facing foreign-language versions of jokes in and beyond comedy. This opened the way for a series of studies on AVHT.

Adopting Holmes’ proposal for a two-way street between restricted theories and a general theory the implication for all of this is that the outcomes of improved research into AVHT can only lead to an improved general theory of translation, and if everything that has traditionally been said about translation

in general (coming from serious texts) may not necessarily apply to HT, it is the case that any insights gleaned from HT, including AVHT, will have a bearing on what is said about translation “in general”. For example, Zabalbeascoa’s 1993 thesis includes a theoretical model of “Priorities and Restrictions” to account for AVHT and other forms of translation. Humour may have different levels of priority in different texts: high, medium, and low (e.g., TV series *Seinfeld*, *Fargo*, and *Game of Thrones*, respectively). This theoretical model also allows for the practical, professional, and technical restrictions that operate in AVT and HT, separately and combined. Because of its flexibility, the P&R model can be applied to non-humorous and non-AVT cases and work just as well, by establishing a level of priority for all textual features of any translation and the potential or actual restrictive force of all textual and extra-textual factors that have any bearing on the end result. Zabalbeascoa (1996) expands on this by presenting a classification of jokes according to “the way jokes lend themselves to translation” (1996, 251) and the different translational solutions associated with each type, in an attempt to complement any typologies coming directly from humour studies, not specifically focused on translation, or AVHT. The author distinguishes between international or bi-national jokes, national-culture-and-institutions jokes, national-sense-of-humour jokes, language-dependent jokes, visual jokes, and complex jokes (1996, 251–5). This classification has been used as a point of departure for other analyses, for instance, Martínez Sierra (2008), and Ptaszynski (2004), who discusses the (un)translatability of jokes, analysing Polish jokes and their translation into English using Zabalbeascoa’s typology.

It is the steady development of AVT, very noticeable in Spain and Italy in the 1990s and 2000s that promotes an interest in HT and not the other way around. The combination of the linguistic and cultural difficulties generally involved in HT and the technical constraints imposed by AVT modalities like dubbing and subtitling, made this topic a particularly challenging and increasingly popular one to investigate. The first studies in Spain and Italy, as could be expected, were devoted to humour in dubbed versions, while in the north of Europe, and other countries like Greece, studies were focused on subtitling. An important challenge in AVHT is that the target audience is supposed to laugh at exactly the same moment the source audience’s laughter is expected, particularly when the programme makes use of canned laughter. Zabalbeascoa (1993, 1996) can be said to have laid the theoretical basis for research on dubbed humour, with an influence on other forms of HT. Another important contribution was Fuentes (2000), whose doctoral dissertation was the first reception study on AVHT, comparing the Spanish dubbed and subtitled versions of the Marx Brothers. Fuentes identifies categories based on situational

criteria—humour of the absurd, dark humour, or US humour, for instance (2000, 14–17). Fuentes also proposes a list of restrictions which can affect AVHT: image, noise, diachrony (the different situational and sociocultural contexts of source and target texts), the text's title, and taboo language (2000, 43–56). Díaz-Cintas' seminal research on subtitling paid some attention to humour, mostly focusing on the semiotic and cultural aspects of comedy in AVT (2001a, 2001b).

HT in comics and animated cartoons gradually started to attract researchers' attention too: two early articles on this are Sopeña-Balordi (1985), and Campos Pardillo (1992), focusing on *Astérix*, and its English and Spanish translations, and concluding that humour can cross cultural and linguistic borders successfully and even improve along the way, as found in some instances of the English version. TV cartoons took a little while to arouse academic interest, but they finally became the object of an exhaustive piece of research: Martínez Sierra (2008) analyses the success of the dubbed version of *The Simpsons*.

## 4 Theoretical Foundations

The theoretical foundations of AVHT are likely to be found at the crossroads of translation theory (e.g., Toury's 1995 norm theory; Reiss and Vermeer's 1984 *skopos* theory), humour studies (e.g., Attardo 2002; Raskin 1985; Nash 1985), and AV studies. Representing this view, each from their own angle, we can find authors like Chaume whose theoretical contributions (e.g., Tamayo and Chaume 2016) in the area of AVT for dubbing draw from a greater awareness of film studies; Holmes, as a visionary of the possible relationships between a general theory of translation and partial theories; and Chiaro, whose academic career has been largely devoted to developing research for HT based on contributions from humour studies, as an independent interdisciplinary academic field. A general theory of translation should cover HT, AVT, and AVHT, just as a general theory of humour should cover HT (Zabalbeascoa 2005). A good theory for AVT should be an essential contributor to the development of general theories of translation. This is precisely why Holmes envisions a general theory of translation as a very long-term tapestry weaving (dialogical) strands from every mode of translation and every language combination and every sociocultural situation.

In short, (professional practice and academic research of) translation, humour and AV communication are polyhedral phenomena, with such diverse interplaying factors as ideology, literature, psychology, history, social

relationships, education, culture, aesthetics, and semiotics. The keen student or scholar will find as many (partial and overlapping) theories as there are disciplines related to the topic, and complex case studies where humour and/or (AV) translation may or may not be the main focus of the research.

Literary, linguistic and AV studies of metaphor, irony and ambiguity, may include a component of humour or not. Just as one may wish to study the presence of humour in tragedies and epic adventures, it is also possible to study aspects of comedies other than humour. Similarly, and unfortunately, theoretical models of translation are not usually explicit enough with regard to their relevance to HT. For example, when translational studies concentrate on formal, aesthetic, or semantic equivalence (or non-equivalence) humour may be considered to a greater or lesser degree, but one can only know by reading the whole study. There is much humour in advertising, but it is hard to know which studies of advertising translation deal with humour in a way that makes a real contribution to the field.

Ideally, there is a flow between theories that aspire to be general verbal communication theories, such as Sperber and Wilson's (1995) relevance theory or Grice's (1975) cooperative principle, and theories whose initial scope is intended to be much more restricted, such as any account of how jokes are produced—and missed—in AVT from British sitcoms into Spanish, in the 1990s, for example. The theories that aspire to be general must prove their worth in all specific areas if they are to be truly general; just as limited-scope theories may actually prove to be quite valid beyond their initially intended scope.

The interesting case of humour as a challenge for AVT as outlined above, basically implies that any theory for AVT ought to be tested and validated against the case of humour, regardless of whether humour is ultimately defined or researched as a sense, a function, a rhetorical device, a mood, or an elusive quality. In mid twentieth century, Nida (1964) proposed the theoretical concept of dynamic equivalence, whereby he envisaged that translation equivalence could (or should, he was somewhat prescriptive at certain points) be measured by comparing the reactions (as in reception studies) of the users of the source text and target text. The reactions he had in mind were of people converting to Christianity but the idea is perfectly well suited for the case of translated comedy. Nida also expounded the notion that a translator had to be aware of humour in order to avoid it, especially unwanted wordplay (e.g., using *ass*, where the unambiguous *donkey* is the recommended option).

## 5 Research on the Topic

It is not easy to find research boldly stating that its focus is HT. It is usually presented according to the author under study (the humour of Shakespeare); or by work (*The Simpsons*, *The Big Bang Theory*); or particular linguistic or textual items, like wordplay (Delabastita 1996; Martínez Tejerina, 2008, 2016); or part of a broader study or issue (censorship, e.g., Vandaele 2015); or as an incidental aspect for other studies (children's films, musicals, cinematic multilingualism and language variation).

Although there are some important correlations between form and humour, such as the limerick, humour is more closely tied to a reaction and a feeling or a mood, as defined above, so an important field of research is the area of pragmatics, including Nida's 1964 dynamic equivalence and what we might update and adapt as "dynamic communicative efficiency and efficacy" (for the case of creating amusement in AVHT), given that equivalence has lost grace within translation studies. It is not only a question of looking for microtextual solutions for bits and pieces of a text, but it is also important to identify the purpose and relevance of translations (including localization, recreation, transcreation, adaptation, etc. no matter what their true relationship to translation is). It is not always, or necessarily, equivalence that will help a translation survive or justify its existence. In other words, equivalence is not an absolute standard or criterion.

The scholarship involved in researching translation and humour alike—audiovisual and otherwise—must be taken seriously if we honestly wish to gain further insight into the nature of human communication and interaction, socially, politically, culturally, and psychologically. The aims of research in HT include: (1) a better understanding of how humour is translated, improving our insight into other particular translation problems and the general nature of translation overall; (2) dealing with instances and elements of humour from various areas within translation (by theme, medium, specialization); and (3) the real or potentially beneficial relationship between academic studies and professional practice. The goal is to contribute to furthering knowledge about the relationship between related practices and disciplines and to explore the full range of solutions that can be found (descriptions) or might exist (speculations) or are somehow desirable (prescriptions) for different problems that are posed by the presence of humoristic elements in AVT and, more broadly, all texts to be translated (Zabalbeascoa 2019). Despite all that has been done so far, there still remain multiple spheres to explore, given the polyhedral nature of humour and the myriad of translation possibilities,

regardless of whether it is in writing, spoken, audiovisual or multimodal, scripted and rehearsed or spontaneous. In short, AVHT provides researchers in Translation Studies with a vast fertile ground on which to work, given the variety of texts, topics, perspectives, and AV media outlets, and a range of different research methods and theoretical objectives to work from.

For example, relevance theory has been applied to research in the AVT of humour (for instance, Martínez Sierra 2008) and wordplay (Díaz Pérez 2014). Mendiluce and Hernández's (2004) research into the dubbed animated comedy *Chicken Run* discovered the role of translation strategies in its box-office success. Asimakoulas (2004) turned his research interests to the subtitling of humour, regarding it as a key part of intercultural communication—based on Attardo's theoretical proposals for humour (2002). Díaz-Cintas and Remael (2007) devoted one section of their prestigious book to the subtitling of humour, an issue also addressed by Jankowska (2009). Bucaria (2007) examined several dubbed Italian versions of American series to analyse the changes that had been introduced, especially in the case of the HT in texts that mix humour and drama. Fuentes' (2001) contribution is worth mentioning as one of the first attempts to conduct a reception study of a translated humorous product. Arampatzis' doctoral thesis (2011) focuses on the translation of dialects and accents in the dubbing of some US sitcoms.

In researching AV and multimodal HT several authors follow a linguistic or discursive approach to the translation of humour: Attardo (1994, 2002), Curcó (1995), Vandaele (2001, 2002b), Yus (2003, 2016) and Ritchie (2004). Chiaro (2005) leans mainly on Verbally Expressed Humour theory.

Various humour taxonomies have been proposed, such as Ruch and Rath (1993), Zabalbeascoa (1993), Berger (1997), Fuentes (2001) and Vandaele (2002a). Following their lead, authors like Martínez Sierra (2008) have adapted such taxonomies to suggest a similar list of potentially humorous elements for AVHT.

Below is a brief presentation of items of AVHT research, to show possible paths which can work separately or in carefully laid out crisscrossing paths.

- Theoretical quests to develop insights and concepts for humour (Nash 1985, Raskin 1985), for translation (Toury 1995), for HT: for example, Delabastita's 1996 classification of shifts for wordplay, Raphaelson-West's 1989 proposal for translating humour types; or for AVHT more specifically, like Zabalbeascoa (1996), and Fuentes (2001).
- Descriptive studies (case or corpus) for various purposes, for example, to develop or validate a given theory, or simply to analyse instances of HT: for

example, Delabastita's 2002 study of Shakespeare's *Henry V* as an instance of multilingual text translation.

- Case studies, which tend to study a film, a TV show or other types of communication, (1) by using a descriptive methodology, with or without a hypothesis; or (2) involving a critical analysis, judging the merits of the piece (the source text or the target text, or both).
- Corpus studies, as a branch of descriptivism, which differ from case studies in their attempt to accumulate as many instances as possible, and serve as a tool for later analysis or practical applications that a corpus might have. Corpora may or may not include samples of humour and/or translation as possible browsing criteria (e.g., Chiaro et al. 2008; Arias 2020). Some research projects might include an examination of metaphor translation, or the translation of idioms or phraseology, vulgar language, proper nouns, forms of address, expletives, etc. with a large number of samples, some of which are humorous while others not so.
- Critical analysis and evaluation. Studies with a bias (though not always made explicit, unfortunately) towards one way or another of translating, aiming to show how and why a certain translation (solution or criterion) is better or worse than another. There is nothing wrong with prescriptive research, methodologically, other than to declare one's study as descriptive, while adding within it statements of judgement or criteria for correctness and good practice.
- Humour as the central focus of the study. A prime example of this kind of researcher is Chiaro (e.g., 1992, 2010a, 2010b), who skilfully combines humour and translation as objects of academic research.
- Humour not as the central focus of the research, but in aid of some other central focus (e.g., AVT-specific techniques, or translating cultural elements, studies in politeness or pragmatics...). A representative example is Díaz-Cintas (2003), who includes humour among all the various aspects of translating for subtitling.
- A theoretical account or model of humour restricted in scope to a practical translation problem, which may have more far-reaching repercussions, if strong enough, for a more general theory of translation. The relevance of researching AVHT lies in the fact that it may in all likelihood provide insight into how so many other problems and challenges in translation (practice and theory) can be accounted for.
- Humour as an exception to the rule, or as a real test for general statements and models for translation (for example, Pavlicek and Pöchhacker 2002, who studied humour as a problem in interpreting). This kind of research is like the previous point in the way it connects partial theory to general

theory but it works in the opposite direction. It starts by taking a general theoretical claim about translation, and tests its validity for the case of AVHT (e.g., Relevance Theory in Díaz Pérez 2004), and its results can be either that all is well and the general claim is validated, or that there is a discrepancy, which in turn offers two possible outcomes. Either humour is deemed to be an exception to the rule, or the rule or claim is seriously called into question, certainly as a general or universal theory when a case of HT is found that it cannot account for.

- Experimental studies of HT, which as the name suggests, involve the design and implementation of some sort of experiment (e.g., eye-tracking studies as carried out by Kruger et al. 2015) to test, for instance, the funniness of a translation by measuring informants' reactions, or by asking them through questionnaires.
- Humorous views and stereotypes about translation in audiovisuals, such as scenes with characters performing tasks as interpreters, as unreliable translators, or comical uses of subtitles by film and TV directors.
- Nearly every aspect and issue already mentioned in relation to the case of accessibility, and special needs groups or situations (e.g., subtitled humour for people with some kind of hearing impairment or subtitles for people with special reading requirements).
- Forms of AVT other than dubbing or subtitling, especially, for the case of humour, such as remakes, even same-language ones, like *The Office* and *Shameless*, or a series of film plots regarding dialects all based on the same idea of a character visiting a remote part of the country (*Bienvenue chez les Ch'tis* (France), *Benvenuti al Sud* (Italy), *Ocho apellidos vascos* (Spain)).

It helps for researchers to state the area where they are most interested in making their contribution; for example, any combination of: audiovisual and multimodality studies, cultural studies, semiotics, linguistics applied to translation, contrastive phraseology, communication theory, literary studies, discourse studies, interdisciplinary studies of ideology, social psychology, political science, theories of verbally expressed humour, and pragmatics (Raskin 1985; Yus 2016).

## 6 Implications

The best way to tackle the dimension of humour in translation is to treat it as an integrated part of translation studies (Zabalbeascoa 2005). For example, we can learn a lot about the strengths and weaknesses of literal translation by

putting it through the test of how (well) it renders humour in foreign versions and rewritings. And we can contrast literal renderings within translation with the notion of literal readings of the source text (especially when literal readings are not intended, as in the case of irony, bantering, sarcasm, satire, symbolism, metaphor, wordplay, and other rhetorical devices). Indeed, literal interpretation is actually a sign of Asperger syndrome, of intolerance, of humourlessness, or blind faith in the sacrosanct status of the source text. In an exercise of interdisciplinarity translation scholars need their work to include an awareness of well-tested insights into oral and written humour (e.g., Nash 1985). Just as academics need some knowledge of humour studies, professional and aspiring translators, expected to be able to appreciate and produce humour, will need a receptive sense of humour to identify it and a productive competence to be able to render it, even, presumably, when not in the right mood at the required time. The latter requirement begs the question of whether a special skill can be learnt to overcome times when the translator is in a foul mood. The complexity of HT is compounded when we consider how pervasive and unavoidable humour is in audiovisual texts with all of the contextual audio effects and visual clues and cues.

The implication of what we have laid out so far is that there can be a fruitful dialogue and triadic exchange between translation, AVT and humour, at all theoretical and practical levels alike. In this context, knowing more about HT and HTS (humour translation studies) and improvements in professional standards can lead to greater self-awareness (in translators, and possibly, everyone), awareness of the nature of translation and the difficulty to define it within Translation Studies, among other benefits. Theoretical and prescriptive proposals of translation methods, strategies and techniques have to be reformulated under the scrutiny of HT when they cannot be validated. Thinking in terms of faithfulness, equivalence and timelessness of the message may be the blinkers of Bible translation and ideas emanating from the translation experience of other serious, canonical texts. But now we need answers for a fast-changing world where the ephemeral and other factors of humour that challenge traditional thinking regarding translation, like nonsense, the absurd, slapstick or anarchical humour must also be considered. So, the element of humour would seem to press for a renewal of proposals for translation that could accommodate it better, including an answer to the crucial role of creativity in translation and with it the issue of (the translator's) authorship. Furthermore, we might say that humour also has its core and its fringes: not all humour has a friendly, feel-good, politically correct quality to it. Humour explores the nature of taboo, for example, and might even attempt to push its boundaries back. Humour can be offensive, dark, subversive and aggressive. A

lot of TV comedy in the USA right now seems completely overtaken by the contentious figure of Donald Trump, not only late-night host shows, but even scripted tragicomically into TV fiction like the third season of *The Good Fight*.

The new AV landscape, with all of its technological developments, presents new scenarios and problems. How much room is there for AVHT in respeaking, for example? Where do we place stand-up comedy in relation to AVHT now that there is so much of it on PPV TV? How do we deal with humorous inter-textuality in the ever-expanding universe of video games? How do we integrate new theoretical challenges like emoji signs and social media in a global study of HT? Is humour any different in web-based series compared to television series, and how does the medium affect the way humour is delivered and received?

## 7 Concluding Remarks and Future Prospects

Greater acknowledgement of the theoretical and practical importance of knowing more about humour in AVT and translation studies is a very likely development and a much needed one. The belittling of humoristic and comic issues in TS will surely change for the better in the near future. We hope that just as AVT took a long time to arouse academic interest, HT—and with it AVHT—will eventually interact more, and more productively with “core” translation studies, given its ubiquity and universality on so many levels: textual, social, linguistic, cultural, semiotic, cognitive, and political. We hope we can eventually witness the dawn of a full-fledged HTS and AVHT picking up and joining the strands of work carried out internationally, like Chiaro’s (2010b) and Delabastita’s (1996), with humour becoming more and more visible in the titles, such as those of Mateo (1995), Díaz Pérez (2004), Fuentes (2000), and Martínez Tejerina (2016).

Given what has been put forward here, it is clear that there is still much to be done, and that the field is lively and well. The foreseeable future will produce more research in AVHT, maybe along with other new trends and dynamics in translation, forcing us all to rethink traditional ideas about and approaches to translation.

Machine translation, for example, is making impressive progress, and AVHT is likely to be its ultimate challenge. Indeed, significant progress has already been made towards producing automatic subtitling and dubbing. In the meanwhile, given the sheer number and variety of shows offered in video on demand (internet PPV TV), translators who wish to succeed in the

profession would be well advised to hone their skills in creative translation, with a flair for humour.

The topic of HT will surely grow from being seen as a problem to a phenomenon worthy of a discipline or at least a subdiscipline, interdisciplinary, of course, and largely boosted by audiovisual products. The pressing need now is for translators and translation scholars (1) to delve into the mechanisms that make humour work (succeed), and (2) to know about HT mechanisms that have worked well, have failed miserably or are somewhere in between.

There may be a future for researching the darker side of humour, such as its relationship to (online) bullying, harassment and offensive humour; and, related to this, what gets translated and what does not.

Another promising avenue is research into the AV remake as a way of introducing new comic genres into different cultural environments.

A final word must be for cultural and language combinations that do not have English as the main language of the source text. We need to know much more about translations into English from other languages and between languages other than English.

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# 33

## Multilingualism and Translation on Screen

Delia Chiaro and Giuseppe De Bonis

### 1 The Role of Multilingualism in Film

While in relation to cinema, at first sight the term multilingual appears to refer to the portrayal of cross-cultural encounters in which at least two different languages co-occur, in reality, multilingual films represent a somewhat variegated set of movies whose common feature is that multilingualism itself plays a relevant role in both their storyline and their discourse.<sup>1</sup> In effect, within the history of cinema, genres ranging from thrillers and westerns to period dramas, sci-fi and beyond, have all at some point resorted to multilingualism (see Bleichenbacher 2008; Cronin 2009; O’Sullivan 2011; De Bonis 2014a, 2014b, 2015a) which raises the question of whether multilingual films themselves can actually be considered an independent cinematic genre.<sup>2</sup> Film studies have traditionally pigeonholed films according to a number of categories such as comedy and drama, fantasy and horror and so on (see Campari 1983 and Kaminsky 1985) but the phenomenon of multilingualism crosscuts

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<sup>1</sup> According to Chatman (1978), the concept of *story* is seen as the narrative material of a novel or book, that is, the content of a narrative (the *what*), whereas *discourse* constitutes the way in which this content is expressed through a text (the *how*), that is, the expression of the story.

<sup>2</sup> Scholars such as Dwyer (2005) and Wahl (2005, 2008), for example, consider multilingual films as an autonomous cinematic genre, namely the “polyglot genre”.

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all traditional cinematic genres (Dwyer 2005; Cronin 2009; O’Sullivan 2011). In other words, it might be best to consider multilingual films in terms of what De Bonis (2015a) labels as “meta-genre” or a second-level genre that encompasses and characterises different cinematic genres. Several attempts to classify multilingual European films have been proposed by Wahl (2005, 2008), but for the purposes of this overview, we have adopted the more malleable notion of multilingual films as a “meta-genre”. Hence, the distinctive feature of multilingual films becomes the function that multilingualism itself plays in the plot of each film, a function that however, may vary significantly from film to film.

As we will illustrate, as a rule of thumb, and as argued by Chiaro (2010, 2014, 2016, 2019b), multilingualism frequently displays three main functions in film. In some movies, the inclusion of more languages simply attempts to render the situations represented on screen more lifelike and convincing; in others, it highlights conflict, and in others still, more vernaculars at play result in comedic confusion. However, possibly most common of all, more languages on screen tend to lead to a blend of both conflict and confusion (Chiaro and De Bonis 2019). Despite attempts at strict categorizations, genres remain fluid and can stir multiple emotions in audiences, so it follows that conflict may lead to confusion and confusion to conflict.

## 1.1 Portraying Multilingual Reality

Multilingualism can act as a means to enhance viewers’ perception of authenticity of what they see on screen—after all, linguistic diversity is a vehicle for the audience to experience the globalisation of a contemporary world against which the plots of multilingual films are essentially based. A film may present different lingua-cultural identities in different scenes without necessarily representing cross-language interaction, as occurs in several scenes of films such as *Gran Torino* and *Hereafter* (Clint Eastwood, respectively 2008 and 2010), *Incendies* (Denis Villeneuve, 2010) and the anthology film *Tickets* (Ermanno Olmi, Abbas Kiarostami, Ken Loach, 2005). However, a film may also present one or more of what De Bonis (2014a, 2014b, 2015a) labels “secondary languages”. Secondary languages remain in the background throughout a film, playing a subordinate role to the “primary language”, that is, the main language of communication in the film (Heiss 2004) and above all, the language of the monolingual audience for whom the film is primarily aimed. Secondary languages generally remain untranslated and operate as a semiotic device, a sort of sound effect that contributes to increasing viewers’ perception of the reality depicted on screen along with a host of other visual elements

such as the decor, costumes, and other props. This occurs in movies such as *Empire of the Sun* (Steven Spielberg, 1987), *The English Patient* (Anthony Minghella, 1996), *Kingdom of Heaven* (Ridley Scott, 2005) and the four films in the Indiana Jones saga all directed by Steven Spielberg: *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981), *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom* (1984), *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* (1989) and *Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull* (2008). Incidences of secondary languages that simply linger in the background do not pose any particular challenge to translators since they remain unchanged in their target versions too.

## 1.2 Portraying Multilingual Conflict and/or Confusion

Conflict is a recurrent aspect of dramatic films in which lingua-cultural identities are sharply depicted and strongly maintained allowing multilingualism to function as a means of emphasising the cultural and linguistic diversity of characters, giving rise to communicative problems that are hard to solve (De Bonis 2014a, 2014b 2014c, 2015a). Narratives are mainly related to situations of war or immigration/integration processes as is the case of films such as *The Pianist* (Roman Polanski, 2002), *Lebanon* (Samuel Maoz, 2009), *Inglourious Basterds* (Quentin Tarantino, 2009), *Gegen die Wand* (Fatih Akin, 2004), *It's a Free World* (Ken Loach, 2007) and *Welcome* (Philippe Lioret, 2009).

*Inglourious Basterds* is an interesting case in point in which Tarantino highlights how in a situation of war an ability to function in more than one language can make a difference between life and death. Yet the film does so dramatically, as in the opening scene in which the Jewish family in hiding is “betrayed” by the farmer who is hiding them when he is interrogated by an SS official who switches language so that those in hiding do not understand that they are about to be killed. In contrast, Tarantino takes on a comic stance when the “basterds” try to pass as Italians using unlikely accents and wrong gesticulations. Audiences laugh at the “basterds” awkward attempts at speaking Italian, yet their comic incompetence leads to their deaths (Table 33.1).

In comedy, multilingualism produces humorous effects when lingua-cultural identities become muddled, creating a state of benign disarray (Chiaro 2007, 2010, 2019a, 2019b; De Bonis 2014c). Examples of multilingual confusion can be found in films such as *L'auberge espagnole* (Cédric Klapisch, 2002), *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* (Joel Zwick, 2002), *Mambo italiano* (Émile Gaudreault, 2003), *Spanglish* (James L. Brooks, 2004), *Les poupées russes* (Cédric Klapisch, 2005), *Everything is Illuminated* (Liev Schreiber, 2005), *Le concert* (Radu Mihaileanu, 2009) and *Almanya—Willkommen in Deutschland* (Yasemin Samdereli, 2011).

**Table 33.1** Multilingual conflict and confusion—Tarantino's *Inglourious Basterds*

<i>Character</i>	<i>Dialogue</i>	<i>English gloss</i>
Bridget von Hammersmark: <i>[in Italian]</i>	Signori, questo è un vecchio amico mio, colonnello Hans Landa della SS.	Gentlemen, this is an old friend, Colonel Hans Landa of the SS.
Lt. Aldo Raine: <i>[in Italian with an obvious American accent]</i>	Buongiorno.	Good morning.
Col. Hans Landa: <i>[in flawless Italian]</i>	Signori, è un piacere; gli amici della vedetta ammirata da tutti noi, questa gemma propria della nostra cultura, saranno naturalmente accolti sotto la mia protezione per la durata del loro soggiorno.	Gentlemen, it's a pleasure; the friends of our cherished star, admired by all of us, this outright jewel of our culture, are naturally going to be under my personal protection for the duration of their stay.
Lt. Aldo Raine: <i>[after a pause and with a marked American accent]</i>	Grazie.	Thank you.
Col. Hans Landa: <i>[in Italian]</i>	Gorlomi? Lo pronunzio correttamente?	Gorlomi? Am I pronouncing it correctly?
Lt. Aldo Raine: <i>[with a very bad accent and using wrong words]</i>	Sì... er, corretto.	Yes...it's correct.
Col. Hans Landa: <i>[in Italian]</i>	Gorla... lomi? Per cortesia me lo ripete ancora?	Gorla... lomi? Please, repeat it for me again?
Lt. Aldo Raine: <i>[mispronouncing the name]</i>	Gorlami.	Gorlami.
Col. Hans Landa: <i>[in Italian, faking confusion]</i>	Mi sucsci, com'è?	I'm sorry, again?
Lt. Aldo Raine: <i>[slightly annoyed]</i>	Gorlami.	Gorlami.
Col. Hans Landa: <i>[in Italian]</i>	Ancora una volta?	Once more?
Lt. Aldo Raine: <i>[obviously annoyed, leans forward and whispers]</i>	Gorlami.	Gorlami.

**Table 33.2** Multilingual confusion—Kaplisch's *Les poupées russes*

Character	Dialogue	English gloss
William	<i>Bonjour Paris! Je suis parisien! Je voudrais des escargots et du vin rouge. [...] (to two girls walking by) Parlez-vous français?</i>	Good morning Paris! I'm Parisian! I'd like some snails and red wine! [...] Do you speak French?
French girl	<i>Oui.</i>	Yes.
William	<i>Voulez-vous coucher avec moi?</i>	Do you want to sleep with me?

**Table 33.3** Multilingual confusion—Zwick's *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*

Character	Dialogue
Nick	Listen, I really think you should say " <i>Eho tria arhidia</i> ". It means "everyone, come in the house!" I think everybody will really like it. [...]
Ian	I'm not falling for that, again.
Nick	Why?
Ian	Yeah, why? Angelo, how do you say: "Everyone, let's go in the house?"
Angelo	<i>Eho tria arhidia.</i>
Ian	Everyone ... <i>Eho tria arhidia</i> . [subtitle: I have three testicles]

Chiaro (2010) discusses the confusion caused by the French word *fac*, misunderstood as the well-known taboo word by an English speaker and ensuing farce in *L'auberge espagnole*. In the sequel, *Les poupées russes*, the stereotypically English “lad” William arrives in Paris. William, who speaks no French, starts uttering nonsensical words in French using a form of pseudo-French (Chiaro 2007, 2010) to parody the French, in particular through the sexual allusion present in the well-known song quoted in the final line (for further discussion of William's linguistic repertoire in this film, see Chiaro 2019b) (Table 33.2).<sup>3</sup>

Similarly, *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* is rife with farcical situations caused by two contrasting languages. Ian Miller (played by John Corbett) is the future American groom at a Greek engagement party, who knows no Greek and is led into a linguistic trap by his future brother-in-law (Table 33.3).

In this exchange, the humorous effect is achieved thanks to Ian's unfamiliarity with Greek and the presence of English subtitles assures that the audience grasps the comedic intent of the situation. The scene also highlights the trickster-like aspect of the situation in which one person deliberately uses a language unknown to their interlocutor so that they fall into a trap as in Example 1, albeit in this example, in a benign manner (see Chiaro 2010).

<sup>3</sup> William (played by British actor Kevin Bishop) had already behaved in a similar way by mocking both Spanish and German in the previous film *L'auberge espagnole* discussed in Chiaro (2010).

Both conflict and confusion operate on two different levels—at the diegetic level in the interaction between the film's characters and on the extra-diegetic level of viewers' perception of the reality depicted on screen. In other words, they function both on horizontal and vertical planes of communication (Vanoye 1985; Sanz Ortega 2011; see also Kozloff 2000; Bubel 2008; O'Sullivan 2011). Since multilingualism generally serves as an important means of characterisation (Wahl 2005, 2008; Bleichenbacher 2008; Sanz Ortega 2011), it goes without saying that employing different languages on screen results (or should result) in a more realistic rendering of linguistic diversity, even on those occasions in which multilingualism works as a vehicle for either conflict or confusion.

## 2 Translational Solutions to Deal with Secondary Languages in Multilingual Films

There are a number of different solutions available to help audiences cope with secondary languages present in films, but primarily, they involve subtitling or else, they remain untranslated. In the first case, viewers are provided with subtitles in their own language, so that they can easily follow the parts of the dialogue uttered in the language(s) different from their own. This is what O'Sullivan (2007, 2011) calls "part-subtitles", meaning subtitles which "are appended to part of the dialogue only, are planned from an early stage in the film's production, and are aimed at the film's primary language audience" (O'Sullivan 2007: 81).

Besides part-subtitling, a film may feature additional translation modalities to deal with secondary languages, such as the "translation of sentences performed by characters who interpret for others" and what is defined as "contextual translation" by Baldo (2009) and De Bonis (2014a, 2014c). These characters are what Chiaro labels "accidental interpreters" (2016, 2019b) and provide a clear example of what can alternatively be described in terms of "translation provided directly on screen", "diegetic interpreting" (O'Sullivan 2007, 2011: 80–93; Bleichenbacher 2008: 183–190) or "intratextual translation" (Zabalbeascoa 2012a, b). What happens is that one of the characters takes charge of linguistic mediation, so that the content of the dialogue in the secondary language is translated into the film's primary language (i.e. the language of the audience). The history of film provides numerous examples of translation provided directly on screen with characters acting as lay interpreters (De Bonis 2015b): *La grande illusion* (1937) directed by Jean Renoir, *Lifeboat*

(1944) by Alfred Hitchcock and *Paisà* (1946) by Roberto Rossellini, just to mention three masterpieces that massively resort to this translation strategy.

In more recent times, interesting examples may be found in *Spanglish*, *Everything is Illuminated*, *Gran Torino*, *Inglourious Basterds* and *Miracle at St. Anna* (Spike Lee, 2008), not to mention *The Interpreter* (Sydney Pollack, 2005) in which professional interpreting “goes to the movies” (Cronin 2009: 91–96). The film portrays several occasions in which the main character Silvia Broome (played by Nicole Kidman), an interpreter working at the United Nations in New York, interprets from and into Ku, an imaginary language spoken in the fictional African country of Matobo. However, despite the fact that Broome is not an accidental interpreter, but plays the part of a professional, her consecutive interpretations betray the unlikeliness of her portrayal especially in her ability to memorise and interpret long stretches of speech with little or no note-taking. Similarly, in *Charade* (Stanley Donen, 1963), Audrey Hepburn plays a UN interpreter whose professional function is signalled only by the fact that she permanently wears a pair of headphones round her neck.

According to Baldo (2009), with “contextual translation”, also defined as “translating *mise en scène*” by O’Sullivan (2011), where no translation of the secondary language is provided, viewers are assisted by images and the overall context, from which they can infer the meaning of what they see on screen. According to Baldo and O’Sullivan, viewers’ actual comprehension of every single word uttered in the presumably unknown language is of no importance. In other words, contextual translation simply exploits the polysemiotic nature of audiovisual texts (Chiaro 2009; Chaume 2012; Zabalbeascoa 2010; Zárate 2010).

For example, Mende—one of the major languages spoken in Sierra Leone—is the secondary language in *Amistad* (Steven Spielberg, 1997) a film that contains very few English (the main language of the film) subtitles. This is clearly a deliberate choice, as multilingualism highlights the conflict between the two parties portrayed who are at odds with each other, namely African slaves and their English speaking American overseers. The absence of subtitles stresses the communicative problems and the barriers between the two groups of participants. The point of view of the film is American and only on one occasion is Mende subtitled into English, and this occurs precisely at a turning point in the film that is essential for the storyline to unfold. The film also massively resorts to translations provided directly on screen by one of the characters, James Covey (played by Chiwetel Ejiofor) hired to be an interpreter from and into Mende.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup>The French, Italian, German and Spanish versions all closely mirror the original in which English is dubbed and Mende is retained.

Even more emblematically, contextual translation occurs in such films such as *Schindler's List* and *The Pianist*, when Nazi soldiers give orders in German. Orders in German generally remain untranslated (see Bleichenbacher 2008: 70–72). To this regard, a well-known and much quoted example occurs in the film *La vita è bella* (Roberto Benigni, 1997), where the main character Guido (played by Roberto Benigni) deliberately mistranslates the instructions given in German by a Nazi officer about the duties that the prisoners of the camp have to accomplish. Guido's intention is to make his son believe that the soldiers' orders are all part of a game whose final prize is a tank. The German officer's speech is not subtitled into Italian, as shown in the example. Viewers, like the characters present in the scene, are led by the context to understand the gist of the speech in German (Table 33.4).

As argued by Chiaro (2010) the lager scene exemplifies cross-language confusion and is amusing despite the fact that audiences are aware of the anguish and suffering in store for its occupants. The comedy does not lie in the fact that Guido is mocking the German soldier, but in the absurdity of what he is saying given the context. Yet we both laugh and cry because, like many accidental interpreters, Guido is protecting someone, in this case his young son.

**Table 33.4** Contextual translation *La vita è bella*

Character	Dialogue	English gloss
German officer	<i>Alles herhören! Ich sage das nur einmal!</i>	All right, everyone! I'm going to say this only once!
Guido	Comincia il gioco. Chi c'è c'è, chi non c'è non c'è!	The game starts now. Whoever's here is here, whoever's not is not!
German officer	<i>Ihr seid nur einem einzigen Grund in dieses lager transportiert worden!</i>	You were moved to this camp only for a reason!
Guido	Si vince a mille punti. Il primo classificato vince un carro armato vero!	The first one to get a thousand points wins. The prize is a tank!
German officer	<i>Um zu arbeiten!</i>	In order to work!
Guido	Beato lui!	Lucky thing!
German officer	<i>Jeder versuch der sabotage wird mit dem Sofortigen Tode bestraft. Die Hinrichtungen finden auf dem Hof durch Schüsse in den Rücken statt.</i>	Every attempt at sabotage is punishable by instant death. The executions will take place in the yard by shooting in the back.
Guido	Ogni giorno vi daremo la classifica generale da quell'altoparlante là! All'ultimo classificato verrà attaccato un cartello con su scritto "asino", qui sulla schiena!	Every day we'll announce who's in the lead from that loudspeaker. The one with the fewest points gets to wear a sign that says "Jackass" right here on his back.

Therefore, while indeed we have comic confusion, the scene takes place against the backdrop of conflict and the greatest genocide in history, thus further confounding audiences with a rollercoaster of conflicting emotions (on the duplicity of multilingualism in films see De Bonis 2014a).

“Embedded translation” and “cushioning translation” (Baldo 2009) are special cases of contextual translation. Camarca (2005) first adopted the concept in view to literary texts, but the terms can be also applied to audiovisual texts. More precisely, instances of embedded translation occur when during a conversation the meaning of a question is drawn from its answer resorting to code-switching strategies; in the case of cushioning translation, a single foreign word is inserted into a conversation and then explained using the dominant language as a sort of dictionary or thesaurus (cases of code mixing). Occurrences of embedded translation are often neutralised in Italian dubbing, while instances of cushioning tend to be more frequently preserved (see Monti 2009, 2014; Minutella 2012).

An interesting case of embedded translation may be found in a scene from the film *Copie conforme* (Abbas Kiarostami, 2010), when the two main characters, James and Elle (played by William Shimell and Juliette Binoche), argue about wine-tasting habits in restaurants (Table 33.5).<sup>5</sup>

**Table 33.5** Contextual translation—Kiarostami’s *Copie conforme*

Character	Dialogue	English gloss
James	Yeah, I’ve even tried to change it. He wouldn’t listen to me. And now he’s ignoring me completely! So, what’s this ridiculous ritual for, anyway? Why do they embolden us to taste our wine?	
Elle	<i>C'est Une convention. Tu goûtes et après tu dis: "C'est bon!" Voilà! C'est ça!</i>	It's a convention. You taste it and then you say it's good. And that's it! It's just like that.
James	Then the convention is stupid! They poured in a little bit of wine and you are meant to swallow it around and smell it, taste it, and look into the corner of the ceiling saying: “Oh, perfect!” but if it’s bad, you can’t say so!	
Elle	<i>Mais tu ne peux pas être si exigeant. Tu ne peux pas trouver Une carte des vins exceptionnelle dans Une petite trattoria, perdue au fin fond de la Toscane. Il n'est pas si mauvais, je trouve.</i>	Don't be so demanding. You can't expect a fantastic wine list in a little trattoria, isolated in the middle of Tuscany. I don't find it that bad, after all!

<sup>5</sup>The film is mainly shot in English and French (primary languages), but it also contains some brief dialogues in Italian. The Italian version has dubbed both English and French dialogues into Italian.

Elle speaks French but is also fluent in English and Italian. Throughout the film, she always speaks English to English-speaking James. However, in this scene, the two characters are pretending to be a married couple and Elle's code switching from English into her native French is a deliberate stance to stress the conflict between the two, a common feature in the fictional representation of cross-languaging in films involving romance (Chiaro 2019b). Although James only knows English, he seems to grasp his "wife's" scolding. The film's storyline entirely revolves around the topic of duplicating reality (the film's title means 'certified copy') reflected through the conflict produced by the use of more languages.

### 3 Multilingualism and Dubbing

According to Heiss (2004), dubbing multilingual films represents a "new" challenge for translators of audiovisual products. As the number of multilingual productions has considerably increased since the 1990s (see also Dwyer 2005; Wahl 2005, 2008; O'Sullivan 2007, 2011; Bleichenbacher 2008; Berger & Komori 2010; Sanz Ortega 2011; De Bonis 2014b), operators within the dubbing industry have inevitably found themselves dealing with this phenomenon in a more systematic fashion (O'Sullivan 2011; de Higes 2014a; Heiss 2014; Meylaerts & Ţerban 2014). Considering that the main purpose of dubbing is "to make the target dialogues look as if they are being uttered by the original actors" (Chiaro 2009: 144), a crucial question immediately arises: how can dialogues originally uttered in more languages be reproduced in a target version which is supposedly aimed at a monolingual audience?

What we can generally observe in what are traditionally considered "dubbing countries" such as Austria, Germany, France, Italy and Spain, is that when it comes to dealing with multilingualism on screen, most operators opt for what De Bonis (2015a) defines "a standard of prevalence". This standard involves translating only the language (or languages) that is (or are) quantitatively significant in terms of its or their presence throughout the film—however, it goes without saying that such a standard may vary considerably according to the film and to the national industry involved in the translation process.<sup>6</sup> From a narrative perspective, the so-called "primary language"

<sup>6</sup>The authors of this paper are more au fait with the Italian dubbing industry (see De Bonis 2014b, 2014c, 2014d). For French dubbing see Mingant (2010), Labate (2013, 2014), Brisset (2014), Pettit (2014). For Spanish dubbing see Corrius and Zabalbeascoa (2011), Zabalbeascoa and Corrius (2012), de

usually turns out to be the film's main language (Heiss 2004), meaning that most of the dialogues are uttered in that language. Nevertheless, dubbing practitioners do opt for other screen translation modalities, namely subtitled or no translation at all, to handle languages other than the primary language, present in films (see Sect. 2). These so-called "secondary languages" are those languages which are less present throughout the film in both quantitative (i.e. textual) and qualitative (i.e. narrative) terms.

In the case of European multilingual films the primary language is generally the language of the country in which the film is produced/shot, the language which, in turn, is the one spoken in the place where the film primarily circulates and hence, the language of the monolingual audience for which it is primarily aimed.<sup>7</sup> An exception is however, for instance, the French film *Va, vis et diviens* (Radu Mihăileanu, 2005), entirely set in Israel, in which the film's main languages are Hebrew along with French. In the Italian and Spanish versions of this film, both languages are dubbed into the respective target languages. However, in the case of US films, as English usually remains the main language of communication, even when the story is mainly or totally set in another country (see Bleichenbacher 2008; Shochat and Stam 1985), the application of the standard of prevalence remains the rule. See, for instance: *The Talented Mr. Ripley* (Anthony Minghella, 1999), *Under the Tuscan Sun* (Audrey Wells, 2003), *Miracle at St. Anna* (Spike Lee, 2008) and *Letters to Juliet* (Gary Winick, 2010) all set in Italy; *Everything is Illuminated*, set in Ukraine; *Charlie Wilson's War* (Mike Nichols, 2007) partially set in Afghanistan and *A Body of Lies* (Ridley Scott, 2008) mainly set in Iraq. An exception is the US film *The Kite Runner* (Marc Forster, 2007), mainly set in Afghanistan, in which Dari (the Afghan variety of Persian) is the primary language, whereas English becomes a "co-primary" language in the film. The Italian and Spanish versions have dubbed both languages into their respective target languages.<sup>8</sup>

Still, there may be cases in which this standard of prevalence may not be easily applicable to a multilingual film. There may be films in which different languages may be so inextricably interwoven to make it almost impossible for operators to combine dubbing with other screen translation modes such as subtitled. This is the case of two Israeli films, *The Syrian Bride* (Eran Riklis,

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Higes Andino (2014a, 2014b). For a comparative analysis of different dubbing traditions see Valdeón 2005, Voellmer and Zabalbeascoa (2014), Zabalbeascoa and Voellmer (2014).

<sup>7</sup> European films, be they monolingual or multilingual, are mostly co-productions involving several countries (see in particular Wahl 2005, 2008; Berger and Komori 2010).

<sup>8</sup> All observations regarding the French and Spanish dubbed versions of the films mentioned in the paper are made first-hand by the authors.

2004) and *Free Zone* (Amos Gitai, 2006), in which several languages are so interwoven that the Italian distributor opted to subtitle them—a highly unusual choice for a traditionally “dubbing country” like Italy.<sup>9</sup> On the contrary, in France the film *Free Zone* was entirely dubbed into French.<sup>10</sup> These two Israeli films are particularly complex in terms of translation as they both feature polyglot characters who frequently code-switch from one language to another. Occurrences of code mixing and code-switching by a character within the same scene or from one scene to another as the story unfolds, pose a particular translational challenge when the modality is dubbing (see Monti 2009, 2014; Minutella 2012; Vermeulen 2012; Pettit 2014).

In other cases, a film may contain two primary languages that have the same qualitative and quantitative relevance in the overall narrative design. This is the case of two German films, *Gegen die Wand* (2004) and *Auf der anderen Seite* (2006), both by Turkish-German director Fatih Akin.<sup>11</sup> In the French, Italian, and Spanish versions of *Auf der anderen Seite*, the dialogues are all dubbed into each respective language. On the contrary, in the case of *Gegen die Wand*, while the Italian and Spanish versions are entirely dubbed, the French version has only dubbed the German dialogues while the Turkish dialogues are subtitled. As largely argued by De Bonis (2014b, 2014c, 2015a), the combination of both dubbing and subtitling is not always feasible in the translation of multilingual films, but rather depends on the role played by multilingualism and on the number of multilingual situations represented in the film. As a result, nowadays dubbing still appears to be the prevalent screen translation modality adopted in so-called dubbing countries in most cases of multilingual products.

## 4 Multilingualism and Subtitling

If dubbing multilingual films undoubtedly represents a challenge, subtitling may be equally problematic. As Cronin points out: “Subtitles [...] maintain the linguistic alterity of what is on the screen, the soundtrack of language matching the identity of the image” (2009: 106). As opposed to dubbing,

<sup>9</sup>The languages in the film are Arabic, English, Hebrew, French, and Russian.

<sup>10</sup>The languages in the film *Free Zone* are English, Hebrew, Arabic, and Spanish. The decision to “neutralise” the different languages present in the film has sometimes led the French dubbed dialogues to sound redundant, implausible and bizarre. This may seriously compromise the suspension of disbelief, upon which dubbing relies as a screen translation modality.

<sup>11</sup>The languages used in *Auf der anderen Seite* are German, Turkish, and English. The languages of *Gegen die Wand* are German and Turkish.

subtitling appears to be more effective in maintaining the lingua-cultural diversities on a diegetic level, because whatever happens on screen is comprehensible only to the film's audience. In other words, the audience can understand what is going on because they have an all-encompassing view of the narrative, something lacking in characters who do not and by default rely on languages with which they are not familiar. To this regard, as discussed by De Bonis (2015a), the English subtitled version of the French film *Le concert* does not provide the audience with a visible trace of the two languages spoken in the dialogues. Neither different fonts nor colours for each language are used to distinguish each language so viewers can only rely on the acoustic code and the overall context to grasp the code switching between Russian and French—unless, of course, they can speak or understand one of these two languages. And we might well wonder whether viewers of a subtitled version are always able to recognise the different languages represented on screen. This may depend on how familiar they are with those particular languages. English speaking viewers might be perfectly able to distinguish French from Russian, due to the closeness that they share with France in both geographical and historical terms. But would they equally be able to distinguish say, Spanish from Portuguese or Italian? Or Swedish from Danish? Korean from Vietnamese?

It is in fact questionable in the case of languages with which viewers are unfamiliar, because they come from a different geographic area. In *The Syrian Bride*, for instance, Arabic is often in contrast with Hebrew, two languages with which mainland European viewers may not be so familiar. Watching a subtitled version of the film, it might take longer for the audience to become aware of the differences between these two Semitic languages.<sup>12</sup> As Heiss appropriately remarks: “One should not underestimate the risk that people will simply overlook cultural differences when being presented with nothing but single-language subtitles” (2004: 215). If subtitles seem to better preserve the lingua-cultural identities at the level of the soundtrack (i.e. viewers can acoustically perceive the presence of different languages), this does not necessarily imply that subtitles effectively help the audience distinguish the linguistic differences also at the level of the verbal code (i.e. all the different languages may read and sound the same). As Cronin (2009:106) points out: “Reading the subtitles, the spectator vicariously translates the linguistic multiplicity of

<sup>12</sup>Something similar may also happen in the case of films whose dialogues are in languages that the audience might find more “exotic”, even if they are actually spoken in areas of the same continent viewers are from. For example, in *Black Cat, White Cat* (Emir Kusturica, 1998) the main characters continuously code-switch from Serbian to Roma, making it really difficult for Western European viewers to distinguish the two languages as they watch the subtitled version of the film.

the planet into a familiar idiom". This "familiar idiom" is obviously the viewer's own mother tongue. As a result, "[v]ehicular matching in subtitles, where the subtitles may code-switch alongside the dialogue, is extremely rare" (O'Sullivan 2011:190).

As suggested by O'Sullivan (2011:192), the use of different fonts or different colours in subtitles, a fairly common practice in TV accessibility with teletext subtitles for the deaf and hard-of-hearing (see Neves 2005), may be a feasible way of signalling the different lingua-cultural identities present on screen. To this regard, the Italian version of the film *Biutiful* (Alejandro González Iñárritu, 2010) followed the same strategy as the original Spanish version (de Higes 2014a: 131) by employing different coloured subtitles for each of the secondary languages present in the film, namely cyan for Chinese and yellow for Wolof. Nonetheless, this choice was only available in movie theatres; the subtitles on the Spanish and Italian DVD versions did not distinguish the languages with coloured subtitles.

## 5 Critical Observations on Translating Multilingualism on Screen

The dubbing of different languages into one single language inevitably leads to some kind of flattening, in the sense that different cultural identities present on screen turn out to be deprived of their linguistic component. As a result, in the dubbed version of a multilingual film anything that happens on screen is immediately comprehensible both to characters and to the film's audience. Neutralising the different languages present in the original version of a film necessarily implies the partial rewriting and/or adaptation of the dialogues in those scenes in which the film portrays communicative problems due to linguistic incomprehension. This may lead the dubbed dialogues to suffer from linguistic inconsistency, narrative implausibility and a number of oddities. The Italian dubbed version of the film *Le mépris* directed by Jean-Luc Godard in 1963 is notoriously emblematic. Dubbing whitewashed away three of the four languages present in the film (French, English, German, and Italian), making the presence of Francesca Vanini—a character who acts as the interpreter—totally redundant and nonsensical (Table 33.6).

Another well-known case in point is the Italian DVD version of Iñárritu's *Babel* (2006). The seven different languages present in the original version of the film (English, Arabic, Berber languages, Spanish, Japanese, Russian and French) are totally lost in translation as they were all been dubbed into Italian

**Table 33.6** The redundant interpreter: Godard's *Le Mépris*

<i>Character</i>	<i>Original dialogue</i>	<i>Italian dialogue</i>	<i>English gloss</i>
Jeremy Prokosch	Only yesterday there were kings here	Questo posto ieri era popolato di re.	Yesterday this place was full of kings.
Francesca Vanini (in French)	<i>Hier il y avait des rois.</i>	Quando fa così, non bisogna interromperlo.	When he acts like this, it is best not to interrupt him.
Jeremy Prokosch	Kings and queens! Warriors and lovers!	Vi erano re e regine! Guerrieri e amanti!	There were kings and queens! Warriors and lovers!
Francesca Vanini (in French)	<i>Des princesses, des amoureux.</i>	Gli piace recitare. Faceva l'attore una volta.	He loves the stage. He used to be an actor.
Jeremy Prokosch	All kinds of real human beings.	Esseri umani di ogni specie e di tutte le razze.	Human beings of any kind and of all races.
Francesca Vanini (in French)	<i>Toutes les émotions humaines.</i>	Tutto un mondo di comparse.	A whole world of background actors.
Jeremy Prokosch	Feeling the real human emotions! Yesterday I sold this land	Esseri che vivevano le loro vicende umane. E ora tutto questo non è più mio.	Human beings living their own lives. And now all this is no longer mine.
Francesca Vanini (in French)	<i>Hier il a vendu tout.</i>	Ieri ha venduto tutto.	Yesterday he sold everything.
Jeremy Prokosch	And now they're gonna build a five and ten cent store, Prisunic, on this...	Qui ora costruiranno palazzi di sette piani e magazzini, botteghe, drogherie...	And now they are gonna build high-rises right here, and stores, warehouses, drugstores,
Francesca Vanini (in French)	<i>On va construire des Prisunic.</i>	E noi dovremo trovarci un nuovo lavoro.	And we will have to find a new job.
Jeremy Prokosch	On this, my last kingdom.	E' tutto un mondo che sprofonda nel nulla.	It's an entire world that is disappearing into nothing.
Francesca Vanini (in French)	<i>C'est la fin du cinéma.</i>	(line omitted as the character is temporarily out of shot)	
Jeremy Prokosch	I tell you it is the end of motion pictures.	Questa è la fine del cinematografo.	This is the end of cinema.

so that the accidental interpreter loses his role (see De Bonis 2015a) as all the characters now speak Italian.<sup>13</sup> As the title suggests, the focus of the film is, among other things, a strong sense of alienation that Iñárritu highlights through each character's lack of linguistic understanding and inability to make him/herself understood (see Cronin 2009: 99–107; De Bonis 2015b: 52–54). Audiences will actually lose out if everything is translated as they will be unable to identify with the estrangement of each character caused by his or her non-understanding when everything is spelt out and clarified (Table 33.7).

Films such as *Le mépris* and *Babel* undoubtedly represent challenging material for dubbing operators, especially when different languages share the same qualitative and quantitative presence on screen. With regard to *Le mépris*, a combination of both dubbing and subtitling might have been a preferable strategy to follow as an alternative way to manage the multilingual dimension that characterises the film. This way, the translated version might have mirrored the original version of the film more closely. Despite being a European coproduction, the film is considered to be a French film. Therefore, a standard of prevalence could have been applied, thus dubbing French into Italian and subtitling the secondary languages such as English and German (which are less prevalent in the film dialogue), if needed. But then what about the dialogue originally uttered in Italian? Again, the character of Francesca comes to the fore.

This option immediately turns out to be a feasible solution only theoretically, since dubbing has to face a technical constraint: the problem of harmonising the voice of the original actor with that of the voice actor who overlays it with a new dubbed voice in the target language. If a voice actor had revoiced Francesca when she spoke French, viewers would have immediately noticed the inevitable difference between the voice that character had while speaking French and the one she had while using other languages such as English or Italian.<sup>14</sup> The risk involved is that the suspension of the disbelief, upon which dubbing pivots as a screen translation modality, could be compromised, leading to viewers' confusion and producing what Chiaro (2008: 9; 2009: 156), using the supply of energy as a metaphor, would call a "lingua-cultural drop in translation voltage" of what they are watching on screen. This way the artifice of dubbing is inevitably and inexorably revealed.

<sup>13</sup>While vacationing in Morocco with her husband Richard, Susan Jones is shot. She is taken to the Berber village of Tazarine where the local doctor examines her. Anwar, the tourist guide, does the interpreting from Arabic for Richard.

<sup>14</sup>This is what happens, for instance, in the Italian version of *The Great Dictator* (1940) by Charlie Chaplin: while English is dubbed into Italian, the great dictator's imaginary language—acoustically similar to German—is maintained in its original version, inevitably producing a perceptible gap between the two voices.

**Table 33.7** The redundant interpreter: Iñárritu's *Babel*

<i>Character</i>	<i>Original dialogue</i>	<i>Italian dialogue</i>	<i>English gloss</i>
Anwar	This is the doctor.	Lui è il dottore.	This is the doctor.
Local doctor	<i>Salam Ailechum!</i> <i>Salam Ailechum!</i>	<i>Salam Ailechum! Salam Ailechum!</i> <sup>1a</sup>	<i>Salam Ailechum!</i> <i>Salam Ailechum!</i>
Richard	Easy! Easy! Easy! Easy! Easy! Easy! Easy! Easy! Tell him easy!	Stai calma! Buona! Buona! Buona! Buona! Buona! Buona! Buona! Digli di fare piano!	Keep calm! Easy! Easy! Easy! Easy! Easy! Easy! Easy! Tell him easy!
Local doctor	<i>Speaks Arabic</i>	La pallottola non ha toccato la spina dorsale. Ma se il fiume non sarà fermato, calerà la notte eterna!	The bullet did not touch the spinal cord. But if the stream doesn't slow down, the eternal sleep will fall on her!
Richard	What did he say?	Che vuol dire, cazzo?	What the fuck does that mean?
Anwar	He says she will be fine.	Ha detto che se la caverà.	He said she will be fine.
Richard	You're fucking lying to me! You tell me what he said! Tell me what he said!	Non mi dire cazzate! Dimmi che può fare! Fate qualcosa!	Don't fucking lie to me! Tell me what he can do. Do something!
Anwar	<i>Speaks Arabic</i>	Non si può aspettare?	Can't we wait a while?
Local doctor	<i>Speaks Arabic</i>	Ci vuole l'ospedale  Richard: Sì, lo so! (line added in the dubbed version as the character is temporarily out of shot)	She needs a hospital. Yes, I know.
Local doctor	Hospital.	Ospedale.	Hospital.
Richard	I know hospital. What can you do?	Ci vuole l'ospedale. Ma tu che puoi fare?	She has to go to the hospital. But what can you do?
Anwar	<i>speaks Arabic</i>	Si può fare qualcosa subito? Qui?	There anything else we can do right now? Here?
Local doctor	<i>Speaks Arabic</i>	Il fiume va fermato. Bisogna chiudere.	The river has to stop flowing. We have to sew up the wound.
Anwar	He says he needs to sew up the wounds.	Bisogna chiudere subito la ferita.	The wound has to be closed up now.

(continued)

**Table 33.7** (continued)

<i>Character</i>	<i>Original dialogue</i>	<i>Italian dialogue</i>	<i>English gloss</i>
Richard	Oh, shit!	Cazzo!	Shit!
Susan	What did he say?	Che ha detto?	What did he say?
Richard	He said he puts some stitches on you.	Ha detto che deve metterti dei punti, amore!	He said he has to put some stitches in you, honey!
Susan	Stitches? What do you mean stitches?	Dei punti? Come dei punti?	Stitches? What do you mean stitches?

<sup>a</sup>In order to provide viewers with a trace of the different languages spoken in the original version, it is quite a common practice for Italian dubbing to maintain greetings and terms of address in the original language. This type of strategy is similar to both “postcarding multilingualism” (Wahl 2005) and the “homogenising convention” (see Sternberg 1981; O’Sullivan 2007, 2011; Bleichenbacher 2008; Cronin 2009)

In order to avoid such a risk, a theoretical solution could be to have the English dialogues revoiced by dubbing actors and simultaneously subtitled into the target language. If in theory revoicing secondary languages appears to be an effective way to overcome the problem of harmonising voices successfully, this is not always the case in practice, in particular for non-Western European languages (say, Arabic or Russian). To our knowledge, the only cases in which Arabic has been partially revoiced by voice actors are the Italian versions of films such as *Body of Lies* (Ridley Scott, 2008), *Route Irish* (Ken Loach, 2010) and *Des Hommes et des Dieux* (Xavier Beauvois, 2010). Similarly, one of the few multilingual films in which Russian has been partially revoiced by Italian voice actors is the dubbed version of the US film *Defiance* (Edward Zwick, 2008), in which Russian, however, remains a secondary language and thus has a reduced presence on screen as opposed to English, the film’s primary language. Not only does revoicing a more “exotic” language necessarily mean casting dubbing actors able to speak or at least to acoustically reproduce or imitate the language at issue, but it also entails a huge problem of cost effectiveness, which is a crucial consideration in the dubbing industry (see Paolinelli and Di Fortunato 2005). Moreover, revoicing some non-Western European languages may become a difficult task, simply because there may be no bilingual voice actor available to do so. Nonetheless, this appears to be a new feasible solution for dubbing multilingual films.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup>To the authors’ knowledge, the only case in which a non-Western European language, that is, Romanian, is revoiced by Italian voice actors is the film *The Human Resources Manager* (Eran Riklis, 2010). Hebrew, the main language, is dubbed into Italian, while English and Romanian, the secondary languages, are revoiced by Italian voice actors, when spoken by the same characters who also speak Hebrew, and then subtitled into Italian.

## 6 Conclusion

This chapter has explored the different ways devised by audiovisual translators to deal with the presence of different languages in films. When dealing with dubbing, several factors are involved in the overall homogenising attitude which seems to characterise all the dubbed versions, namely textual elements (bilingual characters, use of second languages either for creating suspense or for humorous purposes), technical constraints (casting dubbing actors able to revoice secondary languages), economic factors (cost-effectiveness in revoicing secondary languages plus subtitling them). Another crucial element is the ideological stance taken by each national dubbing industry not only to overtly censor linguistic diversity, but also (and foremost) to protect its core business from the aggression of a new competitor in the field, namely the more cost-effective subtitled agencies.

The latter consideration brings to light an important point up for discussion, the paramount role of external factors that may influence, and sometimes even “force”, the audiovisual translation process, namely the distributor of the film. This is an aspect that has not been considered until recently in audiovisual translation studies (exceptions being Romero-Fresco 2013 and de Higes 2014a, see also the contribution by Romero-Fresco in this volume), but that certainly deserves more attention as it may shed more light on how contextual elements may considerably affect the decisions taken by dubbing professionals. At the end of the day, the decision to entirely dub a multilingual film does not depend on the project manager responsible for the dub—let alone the translator—but rather on the distributor of the film in each country. This distributor may know very little about the complex audiovisual translation process and the delicate questions that multilingualism raises on screen.

To conclude, combining dubbing with other screen translation modalities such as subtitled would undoubtedly demand greater economic efforts by each national audiovisual translation industry as well as new synergies between different agents working in the field. However, “[a] version which had subtitles and dubbing built into it would place greater demands on the audience but would correspond more closely to the cultural diversity presented in the film” (Heiss 2004: 215–216) and it would avoid some gross alterations of a multilingual film as happened with the Italian dubbed versions of both *Le mépris* and *Babel*. At the same time, when it comes to subtitled a multilingual film, some much more innovative solutions seem to be advisable in place of those adopted so far, such as the use of different colours and/or fonts to match the presence of different languages.

If it is true that “[a]t the heart of multilingualism we find translation” (Meylaerts 2010: 227), we also have the impression that at the heart of contemporary cinema we find multilingualism. The production, the distribution and the consequent translation of multilingual audiovisual products is constantly on the rise, and studying the different ways of “fictionalising multilingualism” (Delabastita and Grutman 2005) as well as the solutions adopted by professionals to deal with it, is a crucial aspect for both practitioners and scholars working within the domain of audiovisual translation.

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# 34

## Music and Accessibility

Lucile Desblache

### 1 Introduction

Media accessibility has developed at remarkable speed in the last two decades. It has been provided globally and across a number of services with the aim of maximal inclusivity. In 2005, for instance, only a handful of mainstream films offered audio description, both on DVD and in the cinema, while audio description is now expected on digital television, in DVDs and in a wide range of cinemas. The case of accessibility in music is more complex, as will be discussed in this chapter, primarily because music permeates most media products in very different ways. In some respects, music pioneered accessible provision and provided models for media accessibility more generally. As popular music gained large bodies of audiences, and as opera, an expensive genre to fund, receded in popularity in the 1970s, opera houses were asked by public funders to find ways of broadening their access. After a short period of experimentation, from 1980s onwards, a wide range of services, from surtitles to touch tours, from audio introductions to sessions with specific users such as children or blind listeners, bloomed. While this transformed the landscape

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of classical music globally, and showed what was possible in a short span of time and sometimes with limited funding, these services have not extended widely to popular music, and overall, progress in accessibility provision for music has been less comprehensive than in media overall.

## 2 Definitions

Both music and accessibility have poorly marked boundaries. Music refers to different socially constructed realities in different countries and at different times, as I have shown elsewhere (Desblache 2019a). In Western societies, music primarily refers to entities of constructed sounds composed and/or performed for an audience, but this is not a universal concept. In most African languages, for instance, there is no generic term for music: varying musical events are linked to specific social occasions and to other forms of expression such as dance or story telling (Stones 1998). Even within European confines, the use of the term varies and evolves considerably. In Bulgarian, *muzika*, a word borrowed from the Greek, refers to instrumental music only, and not to the overarching concept of vocal and non-vocal music established by the Greek. In other words, in this case, the lexical item was borrowed, but the concept was left behind. Sound and music can also be created and experienced differently by different human groups: for instance, deaf or hearing-impaired people enjoy music through physical vibrations or touch, rather than through the sense of hearing which is not available to them. Although music is universal in the sense that it is found in every human culture and experienced by most humans, the forms it takes are extremely varied. Terminological confusion concerning music is still common today. For example, while hip-hop is one of the twenty-first-century genres most listened to in the world (Richter 2018), some consider it as a form of poetry rather than music, since it relies primarily on rhythmic patterns and word utterances, and minimises the use of elements usually associated with music such as melodies or timbres. The fact that music has always been linked to other forms of expression such as dance, and to visual or verbal content, also contributes to blurring definitional borders between musical and non-musical substance. Finally, texts about music or musicians, such as concert reviews or performers biographies, are also musical texts. They usually interpret music with verbal language, and for this reason, belong to a category which the musicologist Lawrence Kramer (2011: 247) has named ‘musical hermeneutics’.

In the context of translation studies, the notion of accessibility has been largely understood as cultural accessibility, and concerns the provision of

cultural goods or services to the widest possible audience, primarily through verbal language. It is intended to ensure that deaf people can enjoy a play thanks to sign-interpreting for instance, or that a physically disabled music lover can attend a music festival live along with other concert-goers. More specifically, in translation studies, accessibility refers to media accessibility, which aims to make digital, web and broadcast content, including musical content, available to users who need special support to access it. Media accessibility aims primarily to make content available for the deaf or hearing impaired, and the blind and visually impaired. This requires translating meaning across different modes, so that sound can be described verbally, or so that images are mediated verbally. For translators working in this field, it is key to be aware of different users' needs and to find a balance between different modes of expression. This means adopting a multimodal approach, so that the meaning inferred in non-verbal texts is conveyed, but also making sure that texts in different modes do not interfere with each other. For instance, translators must ensure that the visual description of a scene needed for the blind and visually impaired does not clash with music or verbal information present in that scene. They have to play skilfully with the different audiovisual modes, so that meaning can be gained without intrusion or obstruction.

This understanding is tied to the notion of accessibility as 'a proactive principle for achieving human rights' (Greco 2016: 22). As Greco (*ibid.*) argues, while most disability scholars consider media accessibility in relation to a specific disability, such as blindness, translation scholars who work in this field are keen to explore the many groups that can benefit from a provision primarily intended for one group. One of the most convincing example of this approach is how subtitling for the deaf and hard of hearing benefits foreign language learners, or can be used in situations where visual content needs to be shown without sound, such as news in a public building, for instance. This focus on the widest inclusion largely applies to musical texts, such as texts about music or musicians, and songs. However, the accessible provision of music content can be haphazard: first, for several reasons, musical texts, and songs in particular, are not as widely translated for the purpose of accessibility as non-musical texts; second, the notion of accessibility in music has a different meaning from that in translation studies, which can complement the latter, but can also hamper it. Historically, making music accessible has always meant engaging the widest possible audience, but not necessarily catering for a wide range of users, as is discussed in the next section.

### 3 A Historical View

For most audiovisual translators, media accessibility dates back to the late twentieth century, and is primarily linked to making mass media products and services available through intralinguistic and intersensorial translation. In music, though, the notion of accessibility tends to connote how music is perceived, received and engaged with in social and cultural contexts, not in relation to any disability or special needs. This understanding of music accessibility links aesthetic dispositions of listeners towards different musical genres to their social class (Bourdieu 1979/1984). It considers exclusion and inclusion in relation to *habitus*, the set of habits and skills that shapes the aesthetic experiences of individuals. It also shows a singular lack of awareness of audiences and music makers with a sensory or other impairment. In the perspective outlined above, opera, for instance, is not accessible to working class audiences, even though the price of an opera ticket might be cheaper—and easier to obtain!—than that of a football match. This view of music accessibility is rooted in the development of Western modern classical music and to the emergence of professional musicians. From the Renaissance onwards, a growing difference between the listening public and virtuosi instrumentalists contributed to a perception of music as inaccessible to most people, at least as music makers. While until the third decade of the twentieth century, amateur music making was part of society on a large scale, the availability of recorded music, at home first, and then, on the move, has led to a decline in music practices and an increase in music consumption.

The massive expansion of popular culture since the late twentieth century revitalised music making to some degree, as people felt less inhibited to play an instrument than in the classical sphere. Nevertheless, the perception that music is available to a few competent musicians is still widespread even now. For most musicians, the fight for more inclusivity in music takes place at this level. In his book on *The accessibility of music*, Jochen Eisentraut (2011: 28), for instance, identifies three levels of accessibility: the physical level, the personal reception level and the participatory level. Yet he makes no reference to deaf, blind or users with other special needs in his plea for more inclusivity in music. This example illustrates the lack of intersection between the translation, the music and the disability disciplines, and how connexions between them would benefit audiences, music makers and music in general.

The access of disabled people to music making and their relationship to it have, however, been investigated in depth by musicologists and still are (see e.g. Lubet 2011; Straus 2011; Ockelford 2013). These investigations have

been primarily focused on music making and disability (which is often paired up with a special musical ability, with blind or autistic musicians for instance), or on music therapy (e.g. the role that music can play in helping Alzheimer's sufferers). Unlike research taking place in translation studies, they have not been centred on how people of different abilities can consume music and the two areas of study have not yet met substantially.

Yet music has always played an important part both in the content of most cultural products and in the construction of their meaning. This is particularly true of films, in which music can be crucial to meaning even if it is not at the heart of its genre, such as in musicals for instance. Among the earliest films made were excerpts from operas which tried to reproduce sound recordings of opera in synchronisation with their filming (Fawkes 2000: 6–9). *The jazz singer* (1927), considered to be the first talkie, is also famous as the first feature film offering a synchronised recorded music score and synchronised songs, and, unlike opera, musicals became amongst the most popular films between the 1930s and the 1950s. In this early period, a variety of methods was used to make sure that, when they were essential to the film narrative, songs could be understood by viewers from different countries. Oral summaries of narrative plots between musical items, intertitles and even embryonic forms of surtitles were used in the first three decades of the twentieth century. These methods could have inspired support for the benefit of viewers with special needs. Yet communicative efforts were intended for reaching and pleasing the majority.

With the exception of musicals, most films used instrumental music as accompaniment and it was rare to use songs as a substantial part of the soundtrack until the late 1960s. It remains relatively unusual today to use an existing song as a main component of the soundtrack. In musicals, different methods of language transfer were experimented upon in different countries throughout the twentieth century (see Di Giovanni 2008), which could be useful for different audiences such as foreign and hearing impaired, but no strategy of what is called today media accessibility was in place.

Paradoxically perhaps, it is from the musical genre which is considered the most elitist that accessibility in music emerged: opera. In the USA, opera was among the first genres to be broadcast on television, from 1949, mostly in abridged form and primarily in English, but some TV studios introduced singing in the original language with subtitles from the 1950s (Smolov Levy 2014: 271). In the UK, subtitles were available for televised opera in the original language from the 1960s (Georgakopoulou 2003: 60). Opera was promoted on television with the aim of introducing the masses to high culture, not very successfully it seems since it remained associated to the privileged

few. In most European countries and in America, as soon as television became established, ‘public service broadcasting would provide the high arts for the viewing public whether they wanted them or not (and there is considerable evidence that early audiences did not want classical concerts and certainly did not want opera)’ (Fawkes 2000: 156). Although nothing was stated on the matter, it seems that in order to ingratiate themselves to a wide public and make the operatic performances more attractive, producers often chose to showcase new, attractive technological features through the medium of opera. This was the case for the first televised broadcast in colour, in October 1953, for which an abridged version of Bizet’s *Carmen*, sung in English, was chosen. The association of opera with technical developments continues to be visible in the twenty-first century. In Greece, a technique used by SPK provided in and out fades in subtitled at the beginning of the century (Georgakopoulou 2003: 31); multilingual subtitles in High Definition video streamed live, the use of virtual reality and 3D live broadcast are other examples of how opera houses, and not only the prestigious international ones, use new technologies innovatively and experimentally. The 3D live capture technique used in 2012 by the Royal Opera House, for instance, was later used for the Wimbledon Championships (Arts Council England 2013: 68).

## 4 Twenty-First-Century Context

The two understandings of accessibility mentioned above, as facilitator of access to cultural products for persons with special needs, and as barrier breaker of social stereotypes, should ideally come together for the largest number of people to engage with and enjoy music. However, music holds different roles and creates meaning in diverse ways, which makes it challenging to mediate efficiently: the same song may be played in a film and be crucial to its story, or it may just be background music. Its meaning may depend on interaction with other modes of expression such as visual content. This multiple usage makes it challenging to mediate music in a meaningful way for different types of users. Moreover, today, music permeates three main types of cultural products: music which contains no extra musical content that is important to a narrative, such as a concert, a radio broadcast or a recording intended to be played on a listening device; texts and events where the music is integral to the narrative of a piece, such as an opera, a musical or a music video; and fiction or non-fiction films and videos which include music but are not based on it.

In the first instance, visual and verbal content may enrich the musical performance, but is meaningful without its input. Describing how a concert is staged and lit, how its performers are moving, how they are dressed, providing context on songs or even their lyrics, usually adds to the concert enjoyment but does not compromise it. It is with respect to music intended to be listened to in concerts or on sound devices that the widest differences appear between popular music and classical music. The former offers very scant accessibility provision, while the latter is rich. Classical music has a strong tradition of textual provision as support for its public: transcriptions and translations of songs in the case of vocal concerts, programme notes on the composers and performers, contextual information on performances, have long been provided for and expected by audiences, be it in live events or recorded products. While in the twenty-first century, many of these products are purchased in electronic form, music providers continue to offer textual support on companion websites. In classical music, at the end of the twentieth century, the provision of audio description, audio introduction, surtitles, and even signing for the deaf, which is less frequent, was therefore seen as the extension of an existing support that could be useful to ordinary listeners and to listeners with special needs. Although they had been pioneered in theatre in the late twentieth century (Raffray and Lambert 1997), audio descriptions and audio introductions started to appear regularly in the early 2000s in opera houses, at the same time as they became emergent commercially in film. In 2009, the BBC piloted a project on synchronised subtitles, planning to make the lyrics of songs visible on the display of radios, in translation when they were not sung in English. The project was stopped for financial reasons, as the BBC was forced to reduce its budget drastically after the 2008 recession. Nevertheless, it led to the current practice of most digital radios to show the title of the piece broadcast, and sometimes, the name of the composer or performer on the radio display. Music has pioneered other areas of accessibility too. In 2017, the Proms audio description commentary originally made for the blind were used for all listeners for the first time. The BBC recognised that audio describers are the most skilled and experienced mediators of visual information and that their commentary would benefit not only blind and visually impaired listeners but all music lovers.

By contrast to the classical sphere, accessibility provision is limited in popular music, and people of all abilities have to gather the information that they require from musicians' websites, from fan's forums or from applications on their phones as they listen to a concert. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, popular music, which is largely vocal, was the first internet sector in which social media, and not platforms such as YouTube as might be expected,

frequently used to provide interlingual translation of lyrics or discussions related to songs and performers. Both in live and recorded situations, audiences have relatively few expectations as far as information delivery and textual support is concerned. More provision is emerging though: several platforms offer catalogues of song lyrics transcriptions and their interlingual translations provided by fans and volunteers; The YouTube Music application started to offer closed captions for songs in 2018, and YouDescribe, a software application, has been made available for sighted volunteers to audio describe YouTube videos, including music videos and music educational programmes. These services are born of collaboration between application providers or streamed services, who offer the framework and volunteers who populate the content. Although limited, and still nonexistent in live concert streaming, these services are growing and more provision based on this model is expected to emerge. Today, the main song translation platforms such as Musixmatch, Genius and Lyrics Translate, consulted by music lovers with or without special needs, and in some cases integrated into streaming services such as Spotify, depend entirely on the input of volunteers. The key words 'lyrics', 'lyrics translation' and related words are so common in search engine requests that Google now displays lyrics automatically when the search for a song title is made (Southern 2016).

In recent years, charities have been actively working with music organisations, music lovers with special needs and performers in order to make popular music as accessible as possible. In 2019 for instance, Attitude is Everything (n.d.), a UK-based association set to make music more accessible to deaf and disabled people, published live music accessibility guides, for artists, bands, promoters, festivals and venues, in 11 languages. More information is also made available so that music lovers of different abilities know which events are most appropriate for them (European Disability Arts Festival n.d.).

The second type of text identified earlier concerns events where the music is integral to the narrative of a piece. This involves mostly opera and its relatives, such as operetta and musicals. As mentioned earlier, opera offers the widest range of products and services to support audiences: surtitles have accompanied most performances since the 1980s, intralingually if the opera libretto is in the main language of the audience, interlingually if it is not, sometimes bilingually, in bilingual countries such as Belgium for instance, where the *Théâtre de la Monnaie* provides titles in French and Flemish. Surtitles can even be multilingual in some theatres, where individual devices allow opera goers to choose titles in the language of their choice. This generous provision is due partly to the fact that opera houses are places of prestige relatively well funded, and partly to the fact that, since the dawn of the twenty-first

century, they have had to increase their efforts to be accessible in order to retain this funding. Accessibility provision in opera has been examined in detail by translation studies scholars (see e.g. Low 2002; Mateo 2007; Burton 2009; Palmer 2013), although usually more in the context of general accessibility than accessibility for audiences with special needs. Relatively few performances are offered for deaf patrons for instance. Personal conversations with both the Head of Surtitling at the Royal Opera House and with the employee in charge of accessibility at the English National Opera confirmed that both theatres found difficult to justify investment for a section of patrons that represented less than 1% of attendees. This is a recurrent story in accessibility, and not limited to opera: disabled users are excluded because no provision is made for them, but organisations do not provide the services that would make it possible for them to be included. Breaking this vicious circle is challenging.

In opera and musical theatre, support for the blind and visually impaired primarily takes the form of audio introductions, as members of the audience can listen to description of the production, costumes and other visual elements in their own time before the show starts, or at intervals. Theatres, including operas, also frequently offer touch tours, which allows blind or visually impaired opera goers to touch costumes, props and scenery. They also have the opportunity to talk to people involved in the production.

Musicals usually offer good accessibility provision. In the last two decades, they have become popular in translation, which means that, unlike opera today, they are now usually sung in the language of the country in which they are performed. For this reason, they tend to be intralinguistic, even if musicals can be performed in English in non-English European countries, in which case they tend to be surtitled interlinguistically. By contrast with opera, where the theatre provides an in-house service, subtitles and audio descriptions/introductions are usually not available for every performance in the case of performances in the language of the country where shows are held. More generally, accessibility provision tends to be made by external sources. In the UK for instance, Stagetext ([n.d.](#)) specialises in provision for the deaf and hearing impaired for plays and musicals. In some theatres, one performance is also signed for the deaf, and this applies to musicals and to operas that are not performed in a main opera house, such as touring companies.

The last group concerns fiction or non-fiction films, videos and video games which include music but are not based on it. Instrumental music, in subtitles for the deaf and hard-of-hearing, is usually identified with a note or sharp symbol ♪ or #, but it is labelled in a range of ways, from the title of the piece played to information about the genre (i.e. classical music) or its style (fast

music, sad music), or a combination of these. For vocal music, on the other hand, lyrics are not always transcribed, and provision does not seem to have improved since the beginning of the twenty-first century. Television programmes do offer provision for the deaf and hard-of-hearing, which includes the subtitling of song lyrics, more so than they do in interlingual translations. The lyrics of theme songs for instance are transcribed for the hearing impaired but usually not translated for foreign audiences. However, the situation is more complex in cinema or in video-on demand contexts. In 2015, Netflix, Disney, Fox, Universal, Warner Bros and Paramount were accused of violating the regulations according to which deaf and hard-of-hearing people are given equal access to entertainment products. These global companies claim that songs are not always vital to the narratives and therefore give inconsistent access to it. But how crucial a song is to understanding the story of a film, or the action in a video game, can be left to interpretation. In their specifications on SDH (Subtiling for the Deaf and Hard-of-hearing), Netflix ([n.d.](#) § I.13), for example, ask for ‘all audible song lyrics that do not interfere with dialogue’ to be subtitled, but in their 2018 update ([2018](#) § II.17), recommend that translators should ‘only subtitle plot-pertinent songs if the rights have been granted’, leaving much to interpretation and implying that it is also the translator’s responsibility to check rights. In an era when media companies continue to merge with one another—Disney is acquiring twenty-first Century Fox as this chapter is being written—less competition is likely to lead to less emphasis on diversity.

Video games thrive on music and can be grouped into two categories: those in which the players’ interactions are determined by instrumental music and/or songs; and those in which music supports the actions and the narrative. In music games such as *Guitar Hero* or *Rock Band*, lyrics are usually not translated interlingually: songs are either used in their original version or replaced with equivalents successful in the target culture. Neither type of game is made available to the deaf and hard-of-hearing, but as Carmen Mangiron ([2013](#)) has noted in her descriptive study of game localisation, few games altogether, be they music games or not, are inclusive of hearing-impaired players or players with other special needs. The subtitles of lyrics, for example, are only available in some cases, and usually in non-interactive scenes. Games manufacturers are gradually opening up to the notion of universal design, discussed in the next section, and adding options that allow more choice on how to set up games. For instance, it is now possible in some games—for instance, *Mortal Kombat XL* (2016)—to change the size and font of subtitles, and to select the volume of different auditory content, so that the existing lyrics can be viewed more conveniently, and music listened to separately, a useful feature for

hearing-impaired players. Progress is undoubtedly being made in many aspects of accessibility provision. As Lopez et al. (2016: no page) have stated, ‘audio games, that is, games in which audio is the main way of communication and entertainment, [are] at the forefront of developments in the use of sound design for accessibility, while also incorporating notions of inclusivity from the start of the design process’. NGOs such as RNIB (Royal National Institute of Blind People) (n.d.) are increasingly consulted and involved in this design process.

## 5 Theoretical Foundations

The theorising of music accessibility varies fundamentally according to the (inter)disciplinary lens from which it is considered. As discussed above, there are established differences between theoretical approaches in disability studies, which primarily aim to support users with special needs and combat the stigma that impairs these users’ interactions in mainstream society, and media accessibility studies, which focus essentially on providing the widest possible access to cultural products and services to all users, including users with special needs. Recent developments in disability studies focus on the cultural and linguistic de/construction of disability. They also question the dualism of impairment/advantage and that of dis/ability, encourage more interdisciplinary approaches and query the legitimacy of normalised borders in disability. Music can unveil ‘unfixed, dynamic and even unsettling relationships to normal and disabled senses, bodies, and minds’ (Sunandan Honisch 2018: 1). The theory of ‘social confluence’, which emphasises the changing role and abilities of an individual at any given time, has been used in the context of music, to suggest that a subject’s relationship to disability was fluid and changed according to situations, places and time. Alex Lubet (2011) thus has a two-fold argument: first, anyone who lives long enough will be disabled in some respect and at some stage; second, what is perceived as a disability by someone may not be for another. For instance, deafness is only considered a disability by hearing people, while members of the deaf community experience it as a different culture. Equally, a small impairment such as nodules on vocal chords may render a singer disabled but may not be significant for someone who does not sing. For Lubet, the natural fluidity of music, which can move instantly across geographical borders and time through mass communication and the internet, makes it ideal to rethink the notion of disability.

This perspective allows strong links to be forged between disability studies and media accessibility. The overarching model in media accessibility has been

that of universal design. Inspired by architecture in the 1980s, it has functioned primarily as a practical model, as an adaptive concept of design that can meet the needs of all people. It has also been used as a critical instrumental that could be used to test the notion of universality through both knowledge and action. Nevertheless, for many, it remains a common sense paradigm more than a theory. For some scholars in disability studies, the concept gives ‘inadequate critical and historical attention to the concept of disability as it relates to discourses of “good design”’ (Hamraie 2016: 285) which engrain disability as a phenomenon to be eradicated rather than valued as part diversity.

These rifts are not helped by the fact that within the arts, music, and particularly popular music, tends to be the poor relative as regards both translation and accessibility provision. In a film, it is generally the songs that are not translated, and access of any type to live popular music events is still challenging to anyone with special needs, be they blind, deaf or with mobility restriction. Champions of inclusion, such as deaf percussionist Evelyn Glennie (Touch the Sound 2009), have made a difference in showing that music could be made and enjoyed by all and many musicians, in all musical genres, from hip-hop (Signkid) to pop (Maria Naffah, Cobhams Asuquo). The presence of multimodality in cultural products has also led artists to not only include music in a multimodal environment since the end of the twentieth century, but to value bridges between different forms of expression. So many popular singers now consider themselves as synaesthetes, from Lady Gaga to Lorde and Stevie Wonder to Pharrel Williams, that today, some see it more as a fashionable trend than a condition (Taylor 2017).

## 6 Research on the Topic

Translation studies scholars have actively engaged in practice-oriented research in the area of music accessibility since the first decade of the twenty-first century. This has tended to be confined to opera, and in particular, to surtitling, audio introductions, audio descriptions and to a smaller extent, audio-subtitling, to giving information on current practices, and to questioning the level of quality of services provided by opera houses (Matamala and Orero 2007a, 2007b; Orero 2007; Eardley Weaver 2015a, 2015b; Di Giovanni 2018). More interest is now being given to popular music or music more generally from the second decade of the twenty-first century (Neves 2010; Igareda 2012; Harrison 2013; Verberk 2016) but research in this area is still emergent. In the field of audiovisual translation, research tends to be confined

to accounts of practice. Efforts to broaden it theoretically, to consider how all can benefit not only from giving better musical access to people with sensory impairment but also to hear from them, are being made (Desblache 2018, 2019b). An ongoing map of media accessibility, still in beta form at the time of writing, has also been attempted by the MAP (n.d.) project and includes some resources on music and accessibility.

In addition, a large amount of research on disabled musicians is being undertaken, essentially from a disability studies perspective, and in particular, in the fields of autism and blindness studies (in addition to sources mentioned earlier, see Lerner and Straus 2006; Ockelford 2012; Bakan 2018). This field, straddling cognitive development and music psychology, investigates the contrasting ways in which people of various abilities make and perceive music, and how music can provide the basis of common understanding through difference. Broader research intersecting music, neurology and disability is also being undertaken, in the wake of the work of neurologist Oliver Sacks (2007) and others (Howe, Jensen-Moulton, Lerner & Straus 2015).

## 7 Implications and Future Prospects

Music's common perception as a form of art which is universal, discussed in the first section of this chapter, may paradoxically contribute to poorer accessibility than in other areas of media. This is because for many, in many contexts, and in spite of the fact that it is part of the majority of media products as well as a discrete product, music is still considered as separate from other forms of expressions, and best left to specialists. In some case, it is true. In opera houses, for instance, although surtitles are produced by translators, they are usually final edited and cued in by musicians who read the music and follow the conductor. But in most situations, basic knowledge about song form, prosody and musical genre suffices. Many audiovisual translators feel in awe of technical skills which they do not have, and worry that they are not qualified to undertake music translations. While most of them translate songs in various media products when they are required, or allowed to, they are often shy in this area, and do not raise their voice to demand more accessibility provision for musical content, be it in music programmes, programmes in which music plays an important role or live musical events. From the side of musical organisations, in spite of advances (the Music and Disability Studies group, at the American Musicological Society and the Society for Music Theory n.d., for example, is very active), there is still evidence of lack of awareness of disability issues and poor communication with the third sector. The

International Music Council Bulletin, Music World News, for instance, a diverse and vibrant publication, gives no information on matters of accessibility. In the last few years, progress has been made from the media side of accessibility too. Some translation studies scholars, such as Elena Di Giovanni who has worked for a decade with the Macerata Opera Festival to provide a wide range of accessibility services and increase inclusion, are undertaking remarkable work, improving services, raising awareness and developing provision which involves able and disabled audiences in socially cohesive and artistically creative ways (Di Giovanni 2018). Yet much more needs to be undertaken, particularly in the area of popular music and non-classical live events.

Music has led and is leading the ways in which we produce and consume media. It was the first to experience issues related to piracy and it developed audio streamed platforms as a response to it; it was the first to offer individual listening devices, which mirror ways in which people today consume media products overall; it has revived an interest in live events that no other art form has matched in the twenty-first century other than in sport. However, as regards accessibility provision, the industry is lagging behind: most songs are subtitled for the deaf and hearing impaired in audiovisual programmes, and the area of classical music offers good provision, but in most other areas, support for users with special needs, or even, for any user, is scant. While it is true that music fans provide extraordinary services as regards lyrics transcription and translation, and that they pioneered translation on social media platforms for the very beginning of the twenty-first century, these services depend on volunteers and, as such, are vulnerable. Sites can be closed down due to copyright issues and provision is made only in areas that volunteers are willing or able to populate, which renders delivery vulnerable and patchy by nature. In a book which reveals striking parallels between the post Second World War era and today's populist period, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Hanna Arendt (1951/1979), 70 years ago, argued that provision for the vulnerable needed to be made by public institutions rather than non-governmental organisations, as the latter risk closure due to lack of funding, but also because 'civil services as a permanent body of officials [...] serve] regardless of class interest and governmental changes' (Ibid.: 153, 154). Fast progress was made in the second half of the twentieth century as public services increased, but the twenty-first century is seeing a move towards largely private or voluntary provision. With the exception of mainstream programmes, cinema and classical music, music accessibility has been primarily provided, and is still being provided by volunteers. While this model, at a time of fast and continuous change, may provide information quickly and be suited to 'prosuming' (Toffler 1980) demands, it

does not guarantee an accessible provision and the relevance of Hannah Arendt's words is certainly acute today.

## 8 Final Remarks

In a recent book, Joseph Straus (2018) argues that modernist music, with its fragmented characteristics, deviations from conventions and dislocation of norms, echoed negative representations of disability. If musical modernists were harbingers of a eugenic movement that ostracised disabled persons as a threat to ideal views of the human, it can be argued that they have also given way to more denormalised approaches to physical, social and cultural ways of life beyond medical perspectives, a trend that has led to more positive attitudes and changes, such as the development of media accessibility. Jacques Attali (1985/2006: 4) noted in 1977 that '[m]usic makes mutations audible. It obliges us to reinvent categories and new dynamics to regenerate social theory'. And it does so more quickly than any other art form. Thus, as the philosopher Michel Serres (2011: 85) remarked, Woodstock preceded Facebook. Knowing that music can pre-empt social and cultural revolutions, audiovisual translation scholars are key to ensure that music is given the importance it deserves in the field of media accessibility. To do so, a holistic and interdisciplinary approach is necessary. First, holistic: more ties need to be made between 'able' and 'disabled' music lovers and makers. Moreover, while scholars in disabilities studies tend to focus on listening to and involving the disabled, those in translation put more emphasis on providing wider access to media services. Connections between the two approaches are highly desirable but still not commonplace. Second, interdisciplinary: as Lubet (2011) and others have shown, better accessibility to music involves changes in attitudes and the development of services which require understanding in range of areas from verbal and multimodal languages, physical impairment, cognitive processes to media technologies. In the twenty-first century, music is ubiquitous, transmitted globally in an instant and shared as a universal phenomenon. But it is also culture-specific in the widest possible sense. It is the role of translators to ensure that, in the media landscape, music is mediated to and from those who perceive it differently from those in the most dominant culture.

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