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The position of audiovisual translation studies

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In the last 20 years audiovisual translation (AVT) has come into its own as a recognized form of translation and also as an academic field of research. It is mainly concerned with the transfer of multimodal and multimedia speech (dialogue, monologue, comments, etc.) into another language/culture. While two to four years are needed to produce a film (from scriptwriting and the search for financial support through to release and broadcasting), very often only a few days are given to provide the translation. Thus, it is hardly surprising that most people consider AVT as a 'problem', or as a 'loss', rather than as a creative solution to the problems of international distribution.

A rather short story, an expanding field

AVT has become more familiar and more frequently discussed in translation studies since the 100th anniversary of the cinema (1995), which also coincided with the booming of the so-called new technology. However, translation has always been a challenge in the history of cinema, in opposition to the myth of universality of films, defended by J. Renoir, Ford, S. Eisenstein, R. Clair, K. Vidor, Murnau, Chaplin, etc. Even silent movies were not silent: there were sounds (piano music, sound effects, a narrator[1] behind the curtain telling a story, translating intertitles, etc.). Then came the talkies, between 1926 and 1931. Because cinema was perceived right from the very start as an art and a business, very quickly the issue of languages was raised. How does one export, and where to, if audiences do not understand French, English, etc. (Vasey 1997)?

In 1928–30 all the film industries adopted a soundtrack, hence changes in the shooting script, in the way of directing and in framing. To satisfy the new demands, film directors made second versions where actors performed in their own language, sometimes including different shots in order to better target a certain audience (Barnier 2004). This anticipates the current final cuts, adapted to specific viewers. In the beginning the different versions were shot in the same setting in the USA: local actors were imported from France, Germany, etc. With the accumulation of monolingual versions, especially between 1929 and 1932, language differences and translation were concealed, but because of the costs of so many different yet similar versions, the shooting was outsourced; Hollywood built

studios in Germany, France, Italy, England, etc. In the 1930s dubbing (see Chaume, this volume) appeared. From then on the linguistic challenge was not taken up by the production companies but by the distribution firms and the importing countries (Higson and Maltby 1999).

Another solution was also developed in the 1930s: the remake – a kind of appropriation by changing the language and also to a certain extent the plot, with all its values and assumptions, the characters and the cultural context. If, during the years 1930–50, most of the remakes were US *films noirs* recontextualized in and for Europe, since the 1980s the move has been reversed: successful European films are remade in the USA.

Multilingual films (performed in several languages) are not completely new in the history of cinema: from *Allô! Berlin? Ici Paris! Hallo Berlin? Hier Spricht Berlin!* (J. Duvivier, 1931–2) to *Socialisme* (J.L. Godard, 2010), cinema has repeatedly been able to represent language diversity, language contacts and conflicts, language identity, and also to represent translator and interpreter as characters, in direct opposition to the cliché that Hollywood would create only a monolingual universe (Cronin 2008). Multiple monolingual versions and multilingualism in films are two different strategies to face language 'problems' in cinema.

Very early on (1934), subtitling (see Díaz Cintas, this volume) and dubbing became opposed, though with different arguments. It is not always clear why one was selected in one case while the other was preferred in another. Selection between the two forms was determined by various economic, ideological and pragmatic factors but not necessarily rapidly and permanently: for instance, the long and hard competition between France and Hollywood explains the hesitation between the two forms that took place in France for more than two decades (Danan 1994). One relevant feature of the AVT landscape is that most of what are called 'subtitling countries' have a so-called less-used language, whereas most of the 'dubbing countries' have an 'international' language (English, French, etc.) and a bigger audience. However, today the digital technology blurs this opposition.

The terminology used to discuss AVT reflects partly the changing situation, especially with the contribution of technology, and partly the expansion and increased specialization of AVT practice and research. Initial publications on AVT, from the mid-1950s and 1960s, were placed under the label *film translation*. The term failed to cover television and then video, and types of programmes other than feature-length films (e.g. talk shows and documentaries). In the 1980s–90s *language transfer* became common, but by focusing on language it ignores the complexity of audiovisual (AV) texts – using audio, visual and verbal signs. The introduction of the term *audiovisual translation* around 20 years ago brought to the forefront the multisemiotic dimension of all broadcast programmes (TV, cinema, radio, DVD). It is today the most commonly used term in the field. It has to be said here that within the profession, *versioning* is sometimes preferred as a generic term that encompasses subtitling, dubbing, etc. *Screen translation* is also used in academic circles, covering all products distributed via a screen (TV, cinema or computer screen): it does not include surtitling for the stage, but includes localization, which is not a form of AVT. *Translation for the media* was used sometimes for both AV and printed media. As for *multimedia translation*, it refers explicitly to the multitude of media and channels now used in global and local communication for different purposes (information, entertainment, education, advertising, etc.). Clearly, the list of terms is not closed because of the developments within technology, the vitality of the research domain and the diversity of practices (see 'Impact of technology', below). In fact, this variety of terms reflects the difficulty in delineating the AVT domain.

A complex object of investigation

An AV product or performance consists of quite a number of signifying codes that operate simultaneously in the production of meaning. The viewers, and the translators, comprehend the series of codified signs, articulated in a certain way by the director (framing and shooting) and the editor (cutting). The way all these signs are organized is such that the meaning of the film, documentary or series is more than the simple addition of meanings of each element or each semiotic code. All the non-verbal and verbal means are used to achieve coherence, intentionality, informativity, intertextuality, relevance and the maxims of conversation (avoid ambiguity, be orderly, be informative as much as necessary, etc.): different semantic models and different models of interaction can be applied to moving pictures – from those proposed in text linguistics, in pragmatics, to those proposed in discourse analysis and semiotics (Mason 1989, 2001; Hatim and Mason 1997; Perego 2003).

One of the key challenges for AVT research is to identify the types of relationships between verbal and non-verbal signs. In AVT many scholars carry out their analysis as if the different signs were running along parallel lines, almost independently. First they claim that a film is a multisemiotic entity and then they analyse the linguistic data separately – forgetting the complexity and the dynamics of the meaning process. Different factors might explain this attitude, which reflects why subtitling and dubbing were sometimes not regarded as translation since it was felt that translation 'must' or 'should' deal exclusively with words! The situation is changing, but there are still strong methodological problems regarding how to tackle the multiplicity of signs – the multimodal approach (Taylor 2003) being one possible solution.

So, how does one define the term audiovisual? In other words, what can be the way of mapping the object of study of AVT? There are at least two main clines: verbal and non-verbal and audiovisual (Zabalbeascoa 2008). The importance and amount of certain signs are always relative: the importance of sound can outweigh visual semiotic forms in certain sequences; the film code can outweigh language signs in other sequences. Film genres and types of AVT can be classified according to this flexible scheme (Chaume 2004). Table 3.1 sums up the 14 different semiotic codes that are active to different degrees in the production of meaning.

How can we describe AV communication and the functions of language in this type of communication? The answers to these questions have an impact on what will be translated and on the translation strategies. For instance, in subtitling, since one needs to condense and select the linguistic material, would one translate or omit terms of address, swear words, cultural items, etc? It all depends on their function at a given time, in a specific shot, in relation to other semiotic signs. The answer cannot be that terms of address must always be omitted!

In AV communication characters speak to each other, with side participants listening and able to interfere at any moment. To these people others are added (bystanders), at a certain distance (in a street, a coffee house, an office); they have an effect on the speaking characters: the volume of their voices, their pauses, their gazes, their gestures, etc. Sometimes there are hidden people, such as the use of canned laughter in sitcoms. Then we have all the viewers (eavesdroppers); in fact, the characters and the bystanders 'speak' indirectly to those viewers who cannot interact but are both the first and the final addressees (Bell 1984). The scriptwriter, the producer, the film director, the actors and the editor all act with a certain target audience in mind. Nevertheless, one certain type of viewer is not necessarily addressed at this stage: the foreign one who will need a translation. Two

Table 3.1 The semiotic codes in the production of meaning

	Audio channel	*Visual channel*
Verbal elements (signs)	*linguistic code:* dialogue, monologue, comments/voices off, reading *paralinguistic code:* delivery, intonation, accents *literary and theatre codes:* plot, narrative, sequences, drama progression, rhythm	*graphic code:* written forms such as letters, headlines, menus, street names, intertitles, subtitles
Non-verbal elements (signs)	special sound effects/*sound arrangement code* *musical code* *paralinguistic code:* voice quality, pauses, silence, volume of voice, vocal noise such as crying, shouting, coughing, etc.	*iconographic code* *photographic code:* lighting, perspective, colours, etc. *scenographic code:* visual environment signs *film code:* shooting, framing, cutting/editing, genre conventions, etc. *kinesic code:* gestures, manners, postures, facial features, gazes, etc. *proxemic code:* movements, use of space, interpersonal distance, etc. *dress code:* including hairstyle, make-up, etc.

worlds conflict in movies: the diegetic one created by the fiction and the 'real' one. Most of the viewers are not fooled by the 'illusion' and representations offered by the art of filmmaking, but they do not want this illusion to be shattered because of crude editing, poor dubbing or irrelevant subtitling – the latter because the subtitles are barely intelligible, demand too much cognitive effort or are poorly legible.

The relationship between sound, pictures and verbal content can be of:

- redundancy (one sign repeats or emphasizes another one);
- complementarity (the music announces a certain tension);
- autonomy (a zoom on an ashtray has nothing to do immediately with the current utterance);
- contradiction (a certain gesture can be opposed to what is said);
- distance (in order to be humorous or to create a sign of complicity);
- criticism (forcing the spectator to take a stand);
- help (the picture aids understanding of why things are said in a given way).

As to the verbal element in the AV process, it can have different functions:

- explicative (offering, adding a piece of information, not shown in the pictures);
- performative (helping to do something);

- allocative (giving linguistic features in order to identify a character);
- demarcative (organizing the film narration, facilitating the progression of the plot, differentiating between dream and real, past, present and future);
- selective (directing the interpretation of a shot, a sequence).

With this complexity of signs and functions in mind, we can now turn to the different types of AVT.

Types of AVT

What was challenging a few years ago, e.g. audio description, could be today's current practice, at least in some TV channels or AVT companies. Therefore, the different types of AVT are classified here according to two main groups: translation between codes (oral/written codes, picture code), mostly within the same language; and translation between languages, which also implies changes in codes. Certain types can be intra- and interlingual and could be placed within either of the two groups.

Between codes, within the same language

Intralingual subtitling (see also Díaz Cintas, this volume), sometimes called same language subtitles (SLS), is a shift from the spoken mode of the verbal exchange in a film or TV programme to the written mode of the subtitles. There are two main different purposes in using intralingual subtitles:

- For language learning (young people, migrants): TV5 in French, BBC4 in English, STV4 in Swedish are examples of channels that make it possible to learn a new language or to improve the command of it, and to reinforce the reading skills of all the viewers.
- For accessibility, defined as the right for certain groups to have access to AV texts, in this case the deaf and hard-of-hearing.

Intralingual subtitling is often a teletext option on TV. It is also called, particularly in the USA, 'closed captions', as opposed to 'open captions' (i.e. subtitles that cannot be turned off). However, closed captions are not quite synonymous with intralingual subtitles, since such captions also can be used on DVDs and TV channels for interlingual subtitles.

The two types of intralingual subtitling are partly different in the way they are processed: the first one (for language learning) does not mention signal noises, telephones ringing, doors slamming, angry voices, shouting, etc. This a tool for social, or better sociolinguistic, integration. Such subtitles tend to translate everything (verbatim) while interlingual subtitles select, condense and reformulate.

The second type (for the deaf or hard-of-hearing) usually renders verbal and non-verbal audio material into text. It is, like interlingual subtitling, subject to norms of exposure times, reading speed constraints and subtitle density. However, in contrast to interlingual subtitling and closer to dubbing, it respects a certain degree of synchronization, following to a certain extent the lexis and syntax of the original speech – because many hard-of-hearing people use lip-reading as an additional source of information. The hearing-impaired are not in fact a homogeneous group: the extent, type and the age of onset of deafness varies widely among individuals. The language and communication needs of the congenitally deaf are not the same as the needs of a deaf viewer because of a degenerating process or age.

Live subtitling, sometimes called respeaking, is commonly used for intralingual transfer, but it can also appear in interlingual form. Carried out in real time, for live broadcasts (e.g. sporting events, TV news), it needs technical support: sometimes a special 'Velotype' keyboard (with syllables and not letters) to speed up typing, and more often today the use of voice recognition software. The subtitler repeats or rephrases what is said on screen and the software 'translates' the short utterance into written lines. The time lag is very, very short. An interpreter might also translate and cue what is said and his or her shortened sentences become subtitles. Obviously, such work is stressful, and the quality of the end product is questionable, since there is hardly the time – or resources – to proofread the output of the software before it is broadcast.

Audio description (AD) gives access to films, art exhibitions and theatre performances, etc. to the blind and visually impaired. It can be intra- or interlingual. It involves the reading of information describing what is going on on the screen (action, body language, facial expressions, costumes, etc.), information that is added to the soundtrack of the dialogue, or to the dubbing of the dialogue for a foreign film, with no interference from sound and music effects. Making the visual aural is only possible if films do not contain too great a load of aural information, e.g. rapid dialogue, frequent sound effects, etc. This kind of sight interpretation or double dubbing is more effective for certain genres, such as drama, movies, wildlife programmes and documentaries, than for news or game shows which in any case have sufficient spoken content to be followed by the vision-impaired. AD can be live for operas and drama plays, or recorded for domestic and foreign films, audio-guides in museums, etc.

Like the deaf, the community of the blind is not homogeneous: people born blind have no visual memory to draw upon, whereas elderly people with visual impairment or sick people with a progressive degeneration of sight remember TV and films, and may even know some cinema terminology. The former have little or no interest in the colour of someone's hair, description of clothes; the latter might understand terms like long shot or back angle.

Audio subtitling is useful for dyslexic people, elderly people, the partially sighted and anybody who cannot read fast enough. A text-to-speech software 'reads' the subtitles out loud. It is a service that could improve the accessibility of AV media.

Between languages

Seven types of AVT will be briefly described here. These are in a way more conventional or better known. However, their practice is changing, too.

Script/scenario translation is needed in order to obtain subsidies, grants and other financial support for co-production, or for searching for actors, technicians, etc. In the first case the translated text must be short and to the point. In the second case the readers want to know, for instance, the content of the plot or the originality of the characters in order to be able to decide whether to spend a few months, somewhere, with what might end as a possible success story or a fiasco (Cattrysse and Gambier 2008).

Interlingual subtitling (see Diaz Cintas, this volume) involves moving from oral dialogue in one or several languages to one or two written lines. The task is more and more frequently carried out by the same person: translating, spotting (or cueing, time-coding) and editing, thanks to *ad hoc* software. The work used to be divided between a translator, responsible for the written translation from a post-production script or a dialogue list, and after watching the film (or not), and a technician spotting and timing the subtitles,

with or without a command of the source language. Interlingual subtitling adds a semiotic channel of information, whereas dubbing (for instance) replaces an existing channel.

Within interlingual subtitling, bilingual subtitling, as practised, for instance, in Finland and Israel, is usually offered in movie theatres, but not on TV. Simultaneous or sight translation, from a script or another set of subtitles already available in a foreign language (pivot language), is used during certain film festivals and in film archives (cinematheques).

Dubbing (see Chaume, this volume), or adapting a text for on-camera characters, cannot be reduced to lip-synchronization. It may be also time-synchronized or isochronic (the length of the dubbed utterance should match the length of the original one). Not all viewers have the same degree of tolerance towards visual/lip dischrony and gesture and facial expression/voice dischrony. Where subtitling is dominant, dubbing can be found in films, TV programmes for children, cartoons and computer-animated feature films.

Dubbing is also sometimes intralingual: for example, the Harry Potter films have been dubbed in the USA, or films shot in Italian dialects (from Palermo or Bari) have been dubbed or subtitled into standard Italian. Intralingual dubbing can also take place after the filming of the scenes – in this case, it is more appropriate to talk about post-synchronization – the 'replacing' of dialogue, otherwise identical to the 'replaced' dialogue recorded in a noisy environment, ensures a better sound quality: there is neither language transfer nor change of code.

Free commentary is one of the oldest forms of revoicing. It is clearly an adaptation for a new audience, with additions, omissions, clarifications and comments. Synchronization is done with on-screen images rather than with a soundtrack. This is used for children's programmes, documentaries and corporate videos.

Interpreting takes several forms on screen. It can be consecutive (usually pre-recorded), simultaneous (the original voice being turned down to a low level of audibility after a few seconds), or using sign language. Important elements in media interpreting are voice quality and the ability to keep talking. A major distinction can be made between interpreting in a TV studio-based communicative event, with or without the presence of an audience (interviews and talk shows), and interpreting for broadcasts of events occurring in a faraway location (political speeches, press conferences, royal weddings, funerals, etc.). The psychological pressure, especially when working in bidirectional mode, the unusual working hours, recruitment at short notice (e.g. for live coverage of disasters and sudden crisis situations) are rather typical of media interpreting.

Voice-over or 'half dubbing' takes place when a documentary, an interview or a film is translated and broadcast approximately in synchrony by a journalist or an actor who can half dub several characters. The target voice is superimposed on top of the source voice, which is almost inaudible or incomprehensible.

Surtitling is a kind of subtitling placed above a theatre or opera stage, or in the back of the seats, and displayed non-stop throughout a performance. The surtitle file is not released automatically since actors and singers do not perform twice in the same way, or at the same rate. The surtitles appear when the translator, also a member of the audience, inserts them during the show.

To sum up: the various types of AVT do not translate in the same way, using the same codes. Some emphasize the oral dimension (dubbing, interpreting, voice-over and free commentary); others are a switch from oral to written (interlingual, intralingual, live subtitling and surtitling), or from written to written (scenario translation), or from pictures to oral (audio description), or from written to oral (sight translation, audio subtitling). This raises the interesting question of whether we can say that certain types of AVT are more

domesticating modes of translation than others. It is true that dubbing, free commentary, even interpreting and audio description, allow the manipulation of the linguistic material in order to please dominant expectations and preferences, sometimes censoring dialogues or changing parts of the plot to conform to target culture ideological drives and aesthetic norms. The history of AVT sheds light on the use of those types of AVT as instruments of linguistic protectionism and language purism, violating ethical principles to some extent by erasing traces of the Other – including his or her voice and his or her speech. However, the powerful role of AVT is not only based on such assimilation or subordination; it is also, in its way, working to solve the problem of international distribution, of opening up cultures to each other, and of making possible a large circulation of AV products and performances. This, however, involves facing specific challenges.

Challenging issues

Three aspects will be tackled in this section, namely professional practice, technology and training.

Professional practice

AVT applies not only to fictional products but also to non-fictional ones: all sorts of documentaries (history, science, nature, archaeology, etc.), current affairs, investigative journalism, docudramas, reality shows, talk shows, sports events, etc. In addition, we have infomercials or promotional materials, advertising, corporate videos and websites, etc.

Whatever the nature of the product to be translated, working conditions and constraints are of prime importance to obtain quality. We must notice first of all that translation of a wide range of AV products is, in many places, outsourced to an AVT company which generally commissions the work to a freelance translator, selected (or not) according to certain criteria and through (or not) an examination or a test. The translator is given (or not) a script, a dialogue list, a tape or instead must download material from the Internet. The deadline is often very tight.

Cooperation with the commissioner (be it a private local or multinational agency, a public TV broadcasting company, a businessman, a non-governmental organization (NGO), an association, a festival organization, etc.), with the sound engineer and the actors (for dubbing), with journalists, and with domain experts varies widely: working traditions and preferences, quality expectations, modes of payment, technical tools, and the status and responsibility of the translator are all factors that determine such cooperation.

Working directly from screen, with only a script, or working from a script without the image are two different working situations. However, the difficulties in both cases are quite similar, though of different weight if one translates a film, a documentary or an interview: language rewording, difficult dialects, slang, translation of proper nouns, terminology, text-image synchronization, an actor's accent, speaker's errors, narrator's style, delivery speech, documentation process, etc. Of course, working exclusively from a script, i.e. the absence of visual reference, implies the necessity of solving different types of ambiguity. Proofreading and revision are seldom regularly practised.

One of the key problems in professional life is translators' rights, for instance when their work is reused in another support format, e.g. from cinema → TV → DVD → website, or it is broadcast or released on another occasion. Such rights are in turmoil now that digital technology has changed the situation so rapidly: economic and legal deregulation

still dominates the business; the AVT market is under ferocious competition; and fees have been cut heavily in the last few years. One of the first AV translators to raise the issue was M. Krogstad (1998), who then created one of the first *ad hoc* associations of AVT translators, in his own country (Norway).

Impact of technology

What about the impact of technology? Five interconnected aspects will be considered here.

First, digital technology has changed and is changing AV production (scriptwriting, production of sounds, pictures, costumes, as well as special effects, shooting, and editing, etc.), distribution and projection. This evolution will have consequences for the architecture of cinema theatres, the types of places in which one watches films, the quality of the takes, piracy, film archiving and restoration, even on investments and marketing, as well as the style and aesthetic of AV products. The relationships between producers, distributors, broadcasters, TV owners and public authorities have been radically transformed in the last 20 years. The exact role of languages and translation in determining the strategies of all these stakeholders is still unclear; it is not at all certain that the future of global media lies in the use of a lingua franca.

Second, new technology (video-streaming, video and TV on demand, podcasting and portable players such as the mobile phone and portable video) is modifying the meaning of broadcasting and the usual concept of audience. New demands and needs are emerging, such as new formats, e.g. very short films, such as 'mobisodes', a series made for mobile phones lasting for one or two minutes. These new formats give greater emphasis to the role of close-ups and sound tracks, and thus more importance to dubbing. Two quite different processes are happening. On the one hand, technology offers a better and more versatile range of services and programmes. The diversity of TV channels, through cable and satellites and via relay and networking (pay TV, transfrontier and local TV, and thematic TV channels on history, sports, finance, geography, cartoons, etc.) indicates the end of a centralized model of the media (mass media) – from broadcasting to narrowcasting: more viewers with more varied educational and language backgrounds switch from non-specialized to specialized channels and have different kinds of expectations and needs. On the other hand, in a globally connected world the audience is becoming global: a video on YouTube or a film on the Internet are available for all. It seems to be nonsensical to wait more than a few days to watch something that in other parts of the world is already being viewed. As a result, TV broadcasters and film distributors are reducing the time difference in release in order to avoid a reduction of potential audience because a number of fans are downloading, for instance, the TV series and/or looking for the subtitles in their own language. Translation meets more and more speed (see Chaume, Díaz Cintas and O'Hagan, this volume)!

Third, thanks to technology, Internet communities have appeared with the aim of creating (Italian, Spanish, Finnish, etc.) subtitles for American AV productions in order to allow them to have immediate access to new episodes of popular series or new films. Two kinds of groups can be distinguished:

- 'Fansubbers' who translate various Japanese anime productions for non-Japanese viewers (O'Hagan 2006; and also this volume). These fans have been in existence since the late 1980s, despite their dubious legal status. They usually continue beyond one production, improving their translation skills and gaining experience in a non-profit perspective.

Many fansubbed products contain a warning message, asking the viewers to destroy them once the official version becomes available.

- Amateurs who can subtitle want to popularize recent film productions, making them accessible to local viewers who can watch illegally copied films in a language other than English. They may do subtitling once and disappear. The quality of their work is conditioned by how much they understand of the original[2] and by how well they know the freeware or shareware computer program in order to create subtitles and to superimpose them on the film. In such subtitling there is no strict limit as to the number of lines per subtitle, of characters per line, and the font size can be large. Amateurs tend to be closer to the original, wordier, more word-for-word, making the reading time shorter, breaking norms and conventions applied to professional subtitling. Text files with amateur subtitles for many recent cinema releases are relatively easy to find on the Internet. The question remains whether movies available online can compete against the big screen and DVDs, in other words pose a threat to professional subtitlers.

'Fansubs', 'fandubs' and amateur subtitling use methods that challenge not only how we think about subtitling, but the very process of AV translation itself, defined as a loss with very little intervention by the translator. They are a part of communities of activists, 'non-translators' ('fantrad') engaged in networking and exploiting their collective intelligence (crowdsourcing), despite some legal implications. The new technological platforms, the open source software, could have a formidable impact on translation (not only in AVT), on professional ethics and norms, and the formal training of future translators.

The fourth aspect of digital technology is the emergence of certain forms of AVT, such as audio description, surtitling, live subtitling and audio subtitling (see 'Types of AVT', above).

Finally, the last aspect worth mentioning is that automation is changing the working process. With digital subtitling software it is now possible to pre-cue, translate subtitle by subtitle, and simultaneously view the video file; cueing is easier and more effective. The next step would be increased digitization.

With regard to dubbing, digitization would improve sound quality and allow analysis and re-synthesis of the actor's voice. Today, certain software programs can clone original voices, so the dubbed voice is assimilated to that of the original actor, irrespective of the source language. This raises an important and new issue: voice rights.

With a combination of software, one can automatize the making of interlingual subtitles – using software for voice recognition in order to obtain a written transcription, another program for automatic compression to generate condensed utterances, and possibly a translation memory program or a statistical machine translation system to produce subtitles. Thus, it is easy to consider cost and productivity from another perspective, to see revision and editing in another way.

Two questions must then be asked here: does the future of translation lie between full (or almost full) automation and amateurs transferring words through different e-tools with free access? Where can the job satisfaction lie if the work is merely to replace words mechanically, in a more verbatim approach to translation?

Training

The last challenging issue is training. We need to acknowledge that the profile of the translator is changing quite rapidly. What are the competences of an AV translator? In addition

to the basic skills of any translator (translating skills, information mining competence, aptitude for work under pressure, language skills, etc.), we can mention:

- the ability to analyse the needs of the intended audience, to match the verbal to the visual;
- the ability to comply with deadlines, commitments, interpersonal cooperation, team organization;
- the ability to express oneself concisely and succinctly and to write with a sense of rhythm (in order to provide an accurate AVT one must understand the rhythm of the actor's speech, the rhythm of the images as defined by the shot changes, and the audience reading rhythm);
- the ability to adapt to and familiarize oneself with new tools; and
- the ability to self-evaluate in order to revise and assess the quality of the output.

Opening the training of the AV translators in a direction towards the training of journalists would be appropriate. Both professions work on oral and written forms, have a sociocultural responsibility that exceeds the immediate production of texts, develop strategies for documentary and terminological research, need to work with other people, and must have a strong aptitude for making rapid decisions. Knowing how to know is more important than accumulating knowledge. In any case, journalists are more and more frequently requested to sight translate (mostly from English), to summarize, whereas AV translators need to draft, rephrase, restructure, condense and edit rapidly and well within time and space constraints.

What has been discussed above about non-professional translators adds to the challenge: training is becoming further complicated by technological advancements resulting in new types of content and in new tools to facilitate the translation process. Fan translation forms a potentially highly effective learning environment.

Implications of AVT for translation studies

Certain concepts of translation studies should be revised, extended and rethought when they are applied to AVT. For example:

- The concept of *text*: 'screen texts' are short-lived and multimodal; their coherence is based on the interplay of the images and the sound (see 'A complex object of investigation', above). From the conventional text as a linear arrangement of sentences, or as a sequence of verbal units to the hypertext on the Internet (with hyperlinks), the concept becomes ambiguous, if not fuzzy. Do literary translators, subtitlers, conference interpreters and localizers refer to the same concept of 'text'?
- The concept of *authorship*: in literary studies and translation studies the author is often perceived as a single individual. In AVT the issue cannot be overlooked, since a number of groups or institutions are part of the process (screenwriter, producer, director, actors, sound engineers, cameraman, editors, etc.).
- The concept of *sense*: in AVT sense is produced neither in a linear sequence nor with a single system of signs. Moreover, there is interaction not only between the various agents involved in creating the AV product, but also between them and the viewers, even between different AV productions (visual references, allusions). The organization into a hierarchy between original and translation, between production and reproduction, between initial broadcasting and a rerun, is damaged in AV, knowing that a film, for

instance, can be edited for different purposes and in different ways (final cuts), for TV, DVD, a flight or specific audiences (politically correct projection, versions, bowdlerization of swear words, etc.). The globalization of the film industry does not necessarily mean the standardization of meanings, narratives and public feedback.

- The concept of *translation*: the very concept of translation highlights a lack of consensus, overlapping as it does those of adaptation, manipulation, transfer and remake. Above, we saw that translation encompasses changes in codes and in languages.
- The concept of a *translation unit*: the issues of text, authorship and sense entail questions regarding the translation unit in AVT.
- The concept and types of *translation strategy*: strategy varies at the macro- and micro-levels, and with respect to the sociopolitical and cultural effects of AVT.
- The links between translation *norms* and technical constraints: amateurs (see 'Impact of technology', above) are introducing typographic variations, adding glosses or commentaries, or changing the position of lines, etc. To what extent does technology imply certain new norms?
- The relationships between *written and oral* (Gambier and Lautenbacher 2010), between written norms, and between ordinary speech and dubbing are another relevant issue. What is the sociolinguistic role and responsibility of the subtitler, for example?
- *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 a variety of features, including:
  - acceptability, related to language norm, stylistic choice, rhetorical patterns, terminology;
  - legibility, defined (for subtitling) in terms of font, position of the subtitles, subtitle rate;
  - readability, also defined for subtitling in terms of reading rates, reading habits, text complexity, semantic load, shot changes and speech rates, etc.;
  - synchronicity, defined (for dubbing, voice over and free commentary) as appropriateness of the speech-to-lip movements, of the utterance in relation to the non-verbal elements, of what is said to what is shown (pictures), etc.; and
  - relevance, in terms of what information is to be conveyed, deleted, added, or clarified in order not to increase the cognitive effort involved in listening or reading.

AVT can thus 'disturb' translation studies. Translation studies could in turn help AVT research to develop more fully in the future. Although scholars have produced a wealth of material in the last two decades, they have tended to limit themselves to a small range of issues, with a certain degree of prescriptivism. Even if interdisciplinarity increasingly characterizes AVT research today, with methods and concepts borrowed from literary studies, sociology, experimental psychology, film studies, reception studies, history and didactics, the frameworks within which much AVT analysis has been and is being conducted remain mainly linguistics, including pragmatics, discourse analysis and cognitive linguistics, as if the verbal component of AVT were sufficient to describe and understand AVT as a process and a product, with its social and ideological impact. True, research is gradually moving away from case studies and specific issues towards corpus-based approaches and systematic theorization.[3] More generally, digitization and Internet access facilitate research by increasing the availability of AV products and their components (e.g. scripts) and furthering the circulation of affordable AV(T) software for training, production, analysis and publishing. However, at present, we have contributions focusing on:

- certain 'problems': how humour, swear words, terms of address, politeness, discourse markers, language register, cultural items are translated or must be translated;
- certain 'constraints': what is the specificity of AV texts according to its mode (oral, written, iconic, mixed)? What are the different 'genres'? Nevertheless, transcription and analysis come up against the semiotic complexity of such AV texts and their meaning constructed from the conjunction of images, sounds and words; and
- certain 'effects': what does the reading/watching of new genres and new types of text suppose for the target culture? This kind of research is shared by the studies of an historical perspective (political issues, reasons for censorship, e.g. in Spain under Franco).

For research based specifically on translation studies, and searching for what is at stake in AVT, we have works inspired by polysystem theory, functional approaches and descriptive studies (What are the AVT norms? What are the strategies when the translator is confronted by certain semiotic signs and/or certain linguistic features?). In addition, we can mention models and analyses in a didactic perspective: they are usually an attempt to describe the AV texts as much from a professional viewpoint as from the technical aspects, and from ideological and cultural frames (i.e. policies), all of which are aspects that condition the translation act. The didactic studies are also very often an opportunity to define competences.

Overall, we still have piecemeal research, with mainly fragmented studies on inter- and intralingual subtitling and isolated studies on other AVT modes. There is a long way to go towards achieving a coherent field of research, combining all the different semiotic codes, including the influence of those codes on the linguistic one. What is also needed is more experimental studies on the viewer's processing habits, reading strategies and reception patterns – differentiating between three types of reception (the three Rs), at least for the written types of AVT: *response*, or the perceptual decoding (lisibility), investigated so far by few experimental psychologists such as d'Ydewalle in Leuven in the 1980s–90s; *reaction*, or the psycho-cognitive issues (readability); and *repercussion*, understood both as an attitudinal issue (what are the viewers' preferences and habits regarding the mode of AVT?) and the sociocultural dimension of the non-TV context which influences the receiving process. Different methods are now available for such studies, e.g. keystroke logging and eye tracking (Gambier 2003: 184–7, 2008: 29–30).

The increasing ubiquity of screen-based texts in everyday life and the ongoing fragmentation of audiences call for a better understanding of the viewers' needs and the articulation of time-space correlation and mediation priorities for AV translators.

Conclusion

The AVT subfield is developing rapidly within translation studies, at least in terms of the number of monographs, articles and conferences. AVT can be characterized by:

- its semiotic composition, with more or less redundancy between the different systems of signs;
- audience comprehension and perception – making it difficult to change the dominant form of AVT, e.g. moving from voice-over to subtitling (people like what they are used to);
- the professional commission; and
- translation competence.

However, other subfields, such as localization of software, websites and video games, can be brought together. At least, they have four features in common. First, both types of translation are the results of team work. Second, the work is on volatile and intermediate texts (production script, dialogue list, online documents in progress, software under construction and texts regularly updated), exceeding the traditional dichotomy between source text and target text, and requiring the questioning of the concept of an original. Third, the criteria of quality are not only of acceptability, but comprehensibility, accessibility and usability are also to be taken into account. Then all these three features have implications for training, blurring to a greater and greater extent the gap between academia and working life, between written and oral forms, between the linguistic code and other semiotic codes. Such convergence may well change sooner or later both the name and the position of AVT.

Related topics

audiovisual translation (AVT); pluri-semiotic communication; AVT and translation studies; AVT and technology; training

Notes

1 A narrator called a *bonimenteur* in France, *spieler* in the USA, *benshi* in Japan, *byensa* in Korea, etc.
2 The amateur translator might lack linguistic competence in the source language, the source text might be incomplete, or the sound track might be of poor quality.
3 For an overview of the developments in AVT research and for references, see Gambier 2008.

Further reading

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