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#### **AUDIOVISUAL TRANSLATION. WHEN MODALITIES MERGE**

##### ***Audiovisual Translation. When Modalities Merge***

Anna Matamala & Pilar Orero

Audiovisual Translation (AVT) has for some time enjoyed a special place in Translation Studies (TS), with many conferences, monographs and special issues in prestigious journals devoted to the many specialities within the field. An effort has been placed at bridging the two traditionally isolated realms of theory and practice, and recently a multidisciplinary approach has been identified as the way forward when dealing with research and training in AVT. The world of AVT is indeed a natural interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary habitat which mirrors the many audiovisual translation modes that nowadays merge in the very complex scenario of media formats and their broadcast. The ever changing world of technology is leading a new direction where people continuously interact with electronic devices. In the many available platforms (cloud, smart, connected, hybrid, etc) and formats (television, DVD, web, mobile, cinema, opera, theatre) several translation modes sharing and making available the information within are to be found. Traditional modalities such as dubbing, voice-over or subtitling are used next to newer media accessibility modalities such as audio description, sign language and subtitling for the deaf and hard of hearing, which entail intersemiotic transfer processes that go well beyond traditional linguistic or even cultural definitions of translation. Concerning research, traditional methods in the field of AVT, mainly based on case studies and descriptive approaches, are giving way to more experimental and applied studies that use methods drawn from Psychology, Communication and Social Science studies. In this fast-changing scenario, this Special issue aims to survey the present state of affairs, and more importantly to offer a window into the future in AVT, mapping a very dynamic field within the realm of TS. It includes five contributions by authors from three different continents who tackle issues such as evaluation of text chunking on live respoken subtitles by means of eye-tracking, subtitle reading in a second language, game localisation, subtitles in speech-language therapy, and interlingual subtitling for the deaf and hard-of-hearing (SDH). Despite the willingness of the editors to create an issue with an extensive array of topics, subtitling seems to concentrate most of the interest in this volume, albeit with various approaches.

The two first contributions make use of eye-tracking to investigate effects of text chunking on subtitling and reading second language subtitles, respectively. In their article, Rajendran, Duchowski, Orero, Martínez and Romero-Fresco evaluate subtitles created with different chunking systems to determine, by means of eye-tracking, if segmentation influences the viewing experience. Four subtitle styles are evaluated in the study: no segmentation, word-for-

word, chunked by phrase, and chunked by sentence. Data from 24 participants are quantitatively analysed in terms of mean fixation durations, proportion of gazepoints and fixations in the subtitles, and saccadic crossovers, and questionnaires for testing both comprehension and preferences were answered by the participants. The results show no significant variation in comprehension and preferences, but some relevant differences in eye-tracking data which are discussed in detail in the article.

On the other hand, Hefer commences with the situation in South Africa, where subtitles are predominantly received as second language text, to ask herself if, and how, second language subtitle reading differs from reading L1 subtitles. Hefer starts by describing subtitling practices in a multilingual country such as South Africa: despite the fact that English is the first language of less than 10% of the population, English is the predominant language in subtitling. She then moves to describe the experiment, in which 47 participants were tested using an eye-tracking when watching either a foreign-language film with native (L1 Afrikaans or L1 English) or English L2 subtitles. The variables researched include duration parameters (fixation time total and dwell time total) and count parameters (fixation count) in the subtitles. The results for each of the selected variables are presented in the article differentiating between one-line and two-line subtitles.

The third article, by Carmen Mangiron, moves to a thriving field of research: that of videogames. Mangiron explores current subtitling practices in video game localisation, both intralingual and interlingual, and compares them to more established types of subtitling such as TV, DVD and cinema subtitling. After a brief introduction on the state of the art of game subtitling and a description of the types and levels of subtitling to be currently found in video games, Mangiron analyses a number of subtitle parameters in game localisation, namely subtitle length and duration; font type, size, colour and background; character identification; sound effects and emotion display, as well as reduction and segmentation. Her analysis highlights the lack of standardisation and the differences between game subtitling as compared to TV and DVD subtitling. This compels her to propose that detailed guidelines for game subtitling are needed in order to enhance readability, comprehension, playability and accessibility.

Minia Porteiro is the author of the fourth innovative contribution to this Special issue, in which Speech Language Therapy and AVT meet to propose a new field of specialisation: "therapeutic subtitling", as denominated by Porteiro. After a brief summary of the main speech language disorders and an overview of the application of subtitles to language learning, Porteiro, inspired by the works of Herold (2008), proposes to resort to subtitles when treating children with difficulties in producing two fricative phonemes in Spanish. Using the BBC children's cartoon *Charlie and Lola* as her corpus, Porteiro proposes a new methodology to focus children's attention on specific sounds. In her prototype a set of verbatim synchronic intralingual subtitles where the targeted linguistic information is highlighted by means of different colours is proposed. Although the article does not present the results of the implementation of this new approach, it presents an innovative concept at the cross-roads of two disciplines.

Finally, Agnieszka Szarkowska deals with interlingual subtitling for the deaf and hard-of-hearing, a rather underexplored territory in which two well established AVT modalities merge: regular interlingual subtitling and intralingual SDH. This Polish researcher tries first of all to find common ground among these three modalities in terms of specific subtitling constraints (spatial, temporal) and then concentrates on relevant issues such as text reduction, redundancy and editing. The article also presents three case studies where intra- and interlingual SDH, regular interlingual subtitling and voice-over are compared, to conclude that interlingual SDH has specific features which vary on whether subtitles are broadcast on TV or released on DVD.

The five articles in this special volume present innovative approaches in audiovisual translation which often incorporate either concepts or methods from other disciplines and where modalities and technologies merge in what may be considered as a marriage of convenience. In the same

way as television and the internet started to merge in 1990, AVT will have to mirror the technological evolution in the world of media communication and offer new translation solutions. New translation modalities merging human and machine components, will be the answer to a fast growing industry which is less linguistic and more technological giving rise to a new term, “Intelligent Translation”, rather than the existing Automatic or Machine Translation.