16

Audiovisual translation: Subtitling and revoicing

Alejandro Bolaños-García-Escribano and Jorge Díaz-Cintas

INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the main particularities and challenges that, from a didactic perspective, characterise audiovisual translation (AVT), with special emphasis on subtitling and revoicing. It sets out to report on the main ontological challenges encountered in the teaching and learning of AVT, charters the evolution observed in this field and explores the potential instructional benefits that teaching paradigms such as socio-constructivism and situated learning can bring about in the AVT classroom. After an introduction to AVT, a discussion ensues on the main research approaches that have been articulated in this area and some of the key findings are foregrounded. We then offer a general depiction of how the topic has traditionally been taught in academic institutions and complement it with a research- and experience-based account of some of the pedagogical innovations currently taking place. We conclude with a prospective outlook on potential developments in the near future.

AVT is a professional activity that involves the localisation of audiovisual media content by means of different linguacultural transfer practices. As programmes are received aurally and visually at the same time, translators need to be familiar with the specificities of these communication channels as well as the imbrications that are established between the verbal and the nonverbal signs.

The various types of AVT practices are normally subsumed under two main groups: revoicing and subtitling, the latter also known as timed text and titling in the industry. Whereas the former consists of substituting the original soundtrack with a newly recorded or live soundtrack in the

target language (Chaume 2006 p. 6), subtitling operates by maintaining the original speech and images, which are accompanied by written stretches of text that correspond to synchronised translations or transcriptions of the original dialogue. Both revoicing and subtitling are hypernyms that include several sub-practices, and they can be used to bridge linguistic and cultural barriers or to facilitate access to audiovisual productions for audiences with sensory impairments such as the deaf, the hard-of-hearing, the blind and the partially sighted.

Revoicing includes the following categories:

- Lip-sync dubbing: implies the substitution of the dialogue track with a new one containing the exchanges in the target language that fit into the mouth of the onscreen characters.

- Voiceover: consists in orally presenting the translation of the original speech over the still audible original voice.

- Partial dubbing: entails the lip-synching of the leading characters of a programme and the voiceover of the secondary ones.

- Narration: is the replacement of the original dialogue track by a new one in which only the voice of the target language narrator can be heard.

- Interpreting: can be either simultaneous or consecutive and entails the transfer, orally or in the form of sign language, of the words of a person speaking a different language.

- Audio description (AD): is an aural translation of some of the pictorial and aural elements of a recorded programme or a live performance for the benefit of visually impaired and blind people.

Subtitling, on the other hand, encompasses:

- Interlingual subtitling: is the rendition in writing of the translation in a different language of the original dialogue of an audiovisual production, as well as of the verbal

- Surtitling: is the translation or transcription of dialogue and lyrics in live opera, musical shows and theatre performances.

- Captioning or subtitling for the deaf and the hard-of-hearing (SDH): is usually done intralingually and consists of presenting on screen a written text accounting for the dialogue, music, sounds and noises contained in the soundtrack, for the benefit of audiences with hearing impairments.

- Live subtitling: is the production of subtitles for live programmes or events. The most current approach is respeaking, a practice in which a professional listens to an original utterance and respeaks it, including punctuation marks, to a speech recognition piece of software that then displays subtitles on the screen (Romero-Fresco 2011).

In the following sections, we focus on the teaching and learning of the three most traditional practices, namely, interlingual subtitling, voiceover and dubbing.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

The invention and popularisation of the talkies in the early 20th century brought about a major difficulty for the international distribution of films as the dialogue had to be translated into different languages. The first dubbed films were produced in the 1930s and they rapidly became highly popular. With the passing of the years and the advancement of technology, in the form of television, DVD, Blu-ray and internet, the production and distribution of audiovisual programmes has grown exponentially, and with it the need for AVT, thus leading to a well-established industry that historically has played a fundamental role in the exhibition of theatrical releases and audiovisual

entertainment worldwide. More recently, the societal influence of AVT has expanded its remit as the nature of the programmes that are translated is virtually limitless, whether for commercial, ludic or instructional purposes: films, TV series, cartoons, sports programmes, reality shows, documentaries, cookery programmes, current affairs, edutainment material, commercials, educational lectures and corporate videos, to name but a few.

Paradoxically, and despite its far-reaching cultural influence, AVT as a research domain only started to gain momentum and visibility as part of the wider discipline of Translation Studies (TS) in the late 20th century, under myriad denominations such as film, cinema, screen, (multi-)media, constrained and multidimensional translation among others (Chaume 2013a). The academic potential of AVT had already been identified in *Babel*'s special edition on cinema translation published in 1960, though it will not be until the 1990s that the start of a real flurry of activity can be witnessed. As chronicled by Díaz-Cintas (2009 p. 2), many of the pioneering works "adopted a distinctively professional perspective, focussing on the figure of the audiovisual translator, on the different translational stages, as well as on the differences between dubbing and subtitling". Discussions on the concept of constrained translation by scholars like Titford (1982) and Mayoral Asensio et al. (1988), and on the semiotic nature of the audiovisual production (Delabastita 1989) also proved seminal at the time.

Essentially, AVT is the translation of audiovisual texts, which are multimodal in nature, and, as defined by Chaume (2004a p. 30, our translation), convey:

> information through two different communication channels that transmit coded meaning
> simultaneously: the acoustic channel (acoustic vibrations through which we receive words,

paralinguistic information, soundtrack and special effects) and the visual channel (light

waves through which we receive images, but also posters or signs with written text, etc.).

When it comes to the teaching and learning of AVT, the first instructional courses used to focus

almost exclusively on the translation of cinema productions, mainly feature films, as these were the

most prominent works being translated in the entertainment industry and enjoyed a canonised status

that could be said to run parallel to the translation of literature. In fact, for influential scholars like

Bassnett (1980/2002) and Snell-Hornby (1988/1995), subtitling and dubbing were practices

subsumed within the larger area of literary translation, as they were understood to deal exclusively

with the translation of feature films. Yet, as argued by Chaume (2004b), one of the recurrent early

misconceptions in the siting of AVT within TS was the assumption that this domain was a genre,

i.e. films, rather than a text type, i.e. audiovisual, that encompasses a plurality of genres as

exemplified above.

The slow evolution of AVT throughout most of the 20th century, both from a pedagogical as well as

a research perspective, was dramatically reverted towards the end of the century, during the so-

called "golden years of AVT" (Díaz-Cintas 2012 p. 280), when the field experienced a phenomenal

surge that continues to this day. In terms of social visibility, the international conference

Audiovisual Communication and Language Transfer was held in June 1995 in Strasbourg to

commemorate the centenary of cinema, and the following year, the first edition of the renowned,

and still running, international conference *Languages & the Media* (www.languages-media.com)

was held in Berlin. The European Association for Studies in Screen Translation (ESIST,

www.esist.org), a non-profit making association of higher education teachers, practitioners,

academics and students in the field of AVT, was also set up in this incubation period, with part of

its remit to facilitate the exchange of information and to promote professional standards in the

training and practice of AVT. These developments came accompanied with the completion of the first doctoral theses fully focused on topics related to AVT, such as the ones written by Tomaszkiewicz (1993), Zabalbeascoa (1993), Machado (1996), and Díaz-Cintas (1997); pioneering works that opened the floodgates to a fast-growing body of academic literature on AVT. The number of doctoral projects produced in this field has since grown exponentially and the compilation works by Martínez-Sierra (2012, 2017) offer an extensive overview. The British EThOS (https://ethos.bl.uk) platform is another welcome initiative, whose aim is to maximise the visibility and availability of British doctoral theses, by making them freely available for all researchers in an open access repository. A similar project is Tesis Doctorals en Xarxa (www.tesisenred.net), a digital cooperative repository of doctoral theses presented at some Spanish universities. The end of 2018 saw the launch of the inaugural issue of the *Journal of Audiovisual Translation* (JAT, www.jatjournal.org), the first international journal dedicated entirely to audiovisual translation studies, as well as the publication of *The Routledge Handbook of Audiovisual Translation* (Pérez-González 2018).

The increased visibility and importance of audiovisual communication in society has been foregrounded by Shetty (2016, online), who claims that digital video has been in hyper growth mode over the last few years, "with a projected 80% of all Internet traffic expected to be video by 2018. This is because of improvements in video technology, wider viewing device options, and an increase in content made available online both from television broadcasters and from other video services". At the same time, giants like YouTube estimate that more than 60% of a YouTube channel's views come from outside its country of origin (Reuters 2015), clearly pointing to the pivotal role played by translation in cross-cultural communication. Alongside these developments in the user-generated sphere, the parallel commercial upsurge of translation activity in the audiovisual industry has been corroborated by research conducted on behalf of the Media &

Entertainment Services Alliance Europe (MESA), underlining that audiovisual media content localisation across Europe, the Middle East and Africa is expected to increase from $2 billion in 2017 to over $2.5 billion before 2020 (MESA News 2017). The mushrooming of channels and video on-demand platforms, driven partly by so-called over-the-top (OTT) players like Netflix, Amazon Prime, Viki, Hulu, iQiyi or Iflix, who specialise in the delivery of content over the internet, has opened up more opportunities for programme makers to sell their titles into new markets. To attract wider audiences, most audiovisual productions come accompanied by subtitled and dubbed versions in various languages, with many also including SDH and AD for the hearing and visually impaired respectively. The provision on television of these two access services is usually regulated by legislation and, in the United Kingdom for instance, the Communications Act 2003 stipulates the minimum number of hours of accessible content that the various broadcasters have to schedule in their programming (Ofcom 2017).

A collateral result from this fast-growing global demand for content that needs to be translated is the perceived critical talent crunch in the industry when it comes to professionals in dubbing and subtitling (Estopace 2017). Given the lack 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. Yet, what is certain is that the demand for AVT is here to stay, as companies and organisations around the world continue to recognise the immense value of adapting 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.

RESEARCH APPROACHES AND KEY FINDINGS

Reflection in academic and professional settings on AVT-related issues has led to the building of a substantial body of literature that has helped demarcate the potential and the boundaries of the

discipline. According to Ramos-Pinto and Gambier (2016), AVT specialists seem to have focused

on several pivotal inquiry clusters, which include its historical foundations, translating processes,

language policies, media accessibility, and descriptive studies of linguistic challenges and

difficulties.

The heterogeneous nature of the discipline justifies the application of interdisciplinary

methodologies and analytical approaches, but exploring the many research avenues that AVT can

accommodate falls outside the scope of this chapter. Our main focus lies on interlingual practices

and the pedagogical implications posed by competence-based approaches, translation conventions,

technological developments and process-oriented research.

The competence-based approach has a long tradition in translator training research (Schäffner and

Adab 2000), as the use of sets of competences is "common in vocational and technical education"

(Biggs and Tang 2011 p. 5) and is in close relation with outcomes-based approaches. Translation

practices, including revoicing and subtitling, are no exception. Scholars who have theorised about

the application of competences frameworks on translator training settings, like Hurtado-Albir

(2001) and Kelly (2005), define translation competence as the ability that enables an individual to

carry out the cognitive operations required in successful translation practice, which in itself

"integrates various types of capabilities and skills, and declarative knowledge" (Hurtado-Albir 2007

p. 167).

In the particular case of AVT training, the main difference with other translation specialisms, be

they literary or non-literary, lies in its multimodal and multimedia nature, which calls for

transversal abilities closely related to digital technology and audiovisual literacy. Despite some

pioneering works, like those by Zabalbeascoa et al. (2005) and Díaz-Cintas (2008), little attention

has been paid to unravelling how translation competence intertwines with the various AVT modes. What is more, scholars seem to have overlooked the pivotal role that technology- and profession-related issues play in the teaching and learning of AVT, which would correspond to the so-called occupational and instrumental competences as conceived by the PACTE (2003, 2005) group.

Of the different sub-competences highlighted by PACTE, the instrumental competence seems to be particularly relevant in the case of AVT courses as it entails the mastery of AVT-specific software and the ability to work with a plethora of multimedia files and technologies. Likewise, occupational competence, which refers to the abilities necessary to operate appropriately in the translation labour market, seems highly important in an industry subject to substantive time and financial pressures and regulated by high competition and idiosyncratic working conditions. In this respect, the most recent classification of AVT competences is the one drafted by Cerezo-Merchán (2018), whose work draws on previous literature on translation competences, particularly on Hurtado-Albir (2015), and distinguishes between the following competences: contrastive, extralinguistic, methodological and strategic, instrumental, and translation problem-solving.

Among the main works written by AVT practitioners and academics are the first manuals that included basic guidelines for the revoicing and subtitling of audiovisual texts: Laks (1957), Luyken et al. (1991), Ivarsson and Carroll (1998), Karamitroglou (1998), Pommier (1998), Díaz-Cintas and Remael (2007), and Chaume (2012). Of a predominantly applied nature, these works discuss the conventions that have become well established in the industry and have informed training in the field. Given the dynamism and ever-changing nature of the market, and to avoid the risk of perpetuating outdated conventions in the classroom, it is paramount that works of this nature are regularly updated to take into account new workflows and practices as well as the results from reception studies centred on viewers' consumption of audiovisual productions.

It tends to take a long while before technical innovations instigated by the industry, such as the development of specialist subtitling/dubbing systems, or the more recent migration to cloud-based ecosystems and the embedding of subtitling apps in translation memories, are fully incorporated in the curriculum offered by training centres (Bolaños-García-Escribano 2018), thus creating an undesirable imbalance between profession and academia. Despite the odd study assessing the functionality of some of the available tools from a didactic perspective (Roales-Ruiz 2014) or the potential opened by machine translation in the field of subtitling (Georgakopoulou and Bywood 2014), the uptake on this front is still very limited.

One of the reasons behind this state of affairs is the fact that collaboration between trainers and the industry has been traditionally minimal. A more advantageous relationship should be explored among the interested parties, whereby trainers could be granted wider access to cutting-edge professional tools and platforms for their own interest and technical preparation. Opportunities of this calibre could also 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. 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.

In recent years, we have witnessed a boom of experimental approaches in AVT research that rely on traditional methods like questionnaires, surveys and interviews as well as devices like eye trackers to explore the process of translation from the point of view of the translators. A pioneering pilot study in AVT education is the one conducted by Massey and Jud (2015), in which they report on

the product-oriented teaching of interlingual subtitling with screen recording and eye-tracking.

Another forerunner in the field of subtitling is the study by Beuchert (2017), in which she adopts a situated cognition approach to investigate subtitling processes focused not only on the subtitlers' internal, cognitive translation processes, but also on the external, contextual factors surrounding the subtitlers and their tasks, including the work environment and the role of technology. In the field of revoicing, Hvelplund (2018) has carried out an experiment focused on the process of translating for dubbing, during which professional translators' and trainees' gaze was monitored while translating an excerpt of an animated television show. Scrutinising the professionals' and trainees' distribution of attention and their cognitive effort during the translation process can prove most valuable if one is to implement new and innovative methods in the teaching of AVT.

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. As already mentioned, 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. 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.

PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES AND METHODS

According to scholars like Pym (2012), the teaching methods adopted in translation degrees in general – and we would argue in AVT curricula in particular – are oftentimes out of date as they mainly rely on the transmission of theoretical translation premises and trends rather than on current, never mind prospective, professional practices. This does not preclude, however, the existence of a

substantive number of experience-based accounts on the teaching of AVT, ranging from descriptive course descriptions (Díaz-Cintas and Orero 2003) and multimodal pre-translation analysis (Taylor 2009) to the development of virtual teaching environments (Dorado and Orero 2007; Bartrina 2009), the didactics of AVT (Díaz-Cintas 2008; Cerezo-Merchán 2012, 2018), and the exploitation of AVT for foreign language learning (McLoughlin et al. 2011; Talaván-Zanón 2013).

This perceived mismatch between real professional practice and what is taught in the classroom is particularly 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 meet the consumption and viewing needs of a changing audience (Díaz-Cintas and Neves 2015). At the end of the 1990s, James (1998 p. 255) was already discussing the difficulties of embarking on the training of AVT, especially subtitling, due to its many complexities, and most notoriously because: "the cost of equipment and technical assistance is often a disincentive for many institutions". Indeed, the high financial investment required to source the right commercial tools has been traditionally blamed for their absence in the lecture room, although the situation has been mitigated to a large extent with the availability of dedicated freeware available to anyone. Yet, the economic imperatives have resulted in a two-tier system in which only a few translation departments with the financial means have been able to expose students to up-to-date, commercial software, whose cost is beyond the reach of most institutions, whereas most of the rest have taught the topic from a theoretical perspective and some have resorted to the use of freeware.

Finding instructors with the right expertise to teach highly specialised modules has also been an exacting pursuit. It is generally agreed that the ideal AVT trainer is a scholar-professional with dilated teaching practice and experience in the industry, who is knowledgeable in the academic

study of audiovisual texts and willing to continue professional practice occasionally (Chaume 2003 p. 288). As desirable as this can be, the reality is that, as highlighted by Kelly (2008 p. 100), "the majority of those involved in translator training are full-time university lecturers", overwhelmed with current demands of academic quality agencies and bodies, entrapped in meandering administrative mazes, under pressure to publish or perish and, consequently, with little or no spare time for extracurricular work. The end result is that AVT trainers are often either practitioners with professional experience but little research or pedagogical background, who occupy part-time positions, or academics with limited professional experience and much scholar research behind them, as practice is often undermined in academic circles and, when it comes to gaining stable positions, priority tends to be given to research over teaching. As bemoaned by Englund-Dimitrova (2002 p. 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.

Closely related to this state of affairs, James (1998 p. 255) argues that subtitling training is not just an academic pursuit and highlights the fact that it "demands close collaboration with the commercial sector, particularly regarding issues such as subtitling conventions, national practice and professional standards in general". To bridge such gap between academe and industry, some translation departments have endeavoured to establish fruitful links with professional partners, not only with the aim of licensing appropriate specialist software but also of increasing internship opportunities, organising workshops and company visits, and promoting real-life professional experiences that can be offered to translators-to-be and members of staff. Initiatives of this nature

are exemplary of how beneficial socio-constructivist and situated learning approaches can be when applied to the translation classroom (González-Davies and Enríquez-Raído 2016, 2018). Yet, they continue to be relatively scarce in today's educational landscape.

Despite the multiple challenges encountered when teaching and learning AVT in the context of higher education, the reality is that training in this field has developed substantially in recent years, shifting from the margins to the centre and gaining visibility and prominence in the curriculum of numerous translator training programmes around the world. As in other areas of translation specialisation, the first pioneering programmes in AVT were at postgraduate level, aimed at undergraduate students with a foreign languages background or prior translation skills.

Nowadays, the teaching of the various AVT modes seems to be well-rooted and established in academic circles, as can be seen in the large number of undergraduate and postgraduate modules currently on offer at European universities and beyond. Quite frequently, entire postgraduate programmes are devoted to the exploration of the manifold audiovisual translation practices carried out in the industry. Mayoral Asensio (2001) is one of the first scholars to have offered detailed information on the AVT courses at undergraduate and postgraduate levels available at universities in Spain, and to a lesser extent in Europe. In this respect, the first AVT-specific courses appeared in Europe in the late 1980s and early 1990s, such as the postgraduate diploma on film translation offered at Lille 3 University (Bréan and Cornu 2014) and the more professionally-oriented screen translation course delivered by the University of Wales (James 1998), both now discontinued. Interestingly, undergraduate courses on AVT took generally longer to be incorporated into the curriculum, with the first modules appearing in the mid-1990s.

As for the nature of these courses, there was a tendency in the beginning to design more general, overarching modules on AVT that covered all the various practices, whereas in more recent times the approach is to offer discreet, individual modules focused on each of the various modes, e.g. dubbing, subtitling, or audio description, thus allowing for greater granularity and specialisation.

The expansion of AVT tuition in tertiary institutions seems to have coincided with the graduation of the first generation of AVT trainers, whose doctoral theses were read during the 1990s, along with the creation of associations like the already mentioned ESIST in 1995, and the impact of the digital revolution in communication. The design and development of AVT-related tuition as part of the translator training programmes of numerous universities, both at undergraduate as well as postgraduate levels, have been instrumental in awakening the interest among the academic community and the would-be translators, thus firmly recognising AVT as an academic discipline and area of study (Gambier and Ramos-Pinto 2016). By way of illustration, there are currently over 15 postgraduate courses in UK universities, and more than 12 in Spanish universities, that offer specific modules, or study routes and pathways focused on AVT (Bolaños-García-Escribano 2016). This surge in academic provision has subsequently triggered an interest in research concentrating on the didactic dimension of AVT, which often pays attention to a concrete AVT mode or is concerned with a specific country's educational ecosystem.

For many years, as is still the case within certain institutional programmes, AVT has been understood as an ancillary component within the broader field of specialised translation. Its teaching is usually conceived in the form of a series of seminars dealing with the translation of film dialogue, in which students are educated on how to shift their attention towards the information being communicated on screen (Nornes 2017). Traditionally, and on account of their close links with film studies, revoicing and subtitling have been almost exclusively centred on the translation

of fictional productions and, to a much lesser extent, on the versioning of documentaries or corporate videos (Chaume 2004a). Though the film and entertainment industry may once have been the only career prospects available for trainee audiovisual translators, the situation has changed dramatically in recent years, to the extent that film productions represent only a small percentage of what is being localised nowadays (Esser et al. 2016), and such evolution ought to be reflected too in the curriculum being taught in the classroom.

To adopt a pedagogical approach that takes AVT developments into account, we consider it paramount that students are exposed not only to language-related activities but also to project management tasks that will equip them with some of the professional skills required by the employers and will give trainers an opportunity to draw on the socio-constructivist paradigm as an integral part of their teaching.

One of the key learning outcomes of modules focused on the teaching of AVT is to enable students to gain a sufficient understanding of how the analysis of the various semiotic layers that give shape to audiovisual texts can help them determine their translational approach when transferring the dialogue into other languages and cultures. Emphasis is thus laid on learning how the different meaning codes – i.e. linguistic, paralinguistic, musical and special effects, sound arrangement, iconographic, photographic, planning, mobility, graphic and editing – coalesce in the creation of complex semiotic constructs. Making the most of film analysis, in the form of pre-translation phases that are conducted prior to the actual subtitling or revoicing of a given clip, goes hand in hand with the multimodal discourse analysis advocated by scholars like Taylor (2003, 2004, 2016) and Kress (2011). As further explained by Chaume (2004b p. 23):

16

the relationship between image and word, the interplay of the signification systems of audiovisual texts, shows itself in terms of cohesion and coherence between the two simultaneous narratives, the visual and verbal, in such a way that the translator finds himself/herself obliged to put into practice translation strategies capable of transmitting not only the information contained in each narrative and each code.

As discussed, traditional AVT lessons used to be conceived from a rather theoretical standpoint, generally consisting of group seminars in which students were taught how to analyse and translate films, as well as become familiar with basic film editing and script writing. The ultimate aim of the majority of courses of this nature was for students to be able to then translate dialogue lines without necessarily adapting the output to the spatio-temporal limitations and constraints of the different AVT modes or resorting to the use of specialist software (Nornes 2017). Rooted in the fundamentals of semiotics and closely related theories, with a clear bias towards comparative linguistics, this initial approach to the didactics of AVT covered little of what was actually being done in the industry but set training institutions on the right track. Research studies published in those early years, focusing on how meaning is constructed in audiovisual texts, helped to set the grounds for linguistic-based approaches that have deeply configured today's AVT research and training landscape. As in other areas of translation, the technological dimension has grown in importance in today's digitised world, with the ready availability of dedicated commercial and free software as well as the swift development of subtitling/revoicing cloud-based platforms and the first initiatives to integrate video within translation memory tools to speed up the localisation process (Georgakopoulou 2018). To be at the forefront and make sure that they remain socially significant, programmes of study must grant students the opportunity of familiarising themselves with these dedicated technologies.

In some programmes of study, notably at undergraduate level though not exclusively, AVT is taught as a general module that touches on all the various translation modes, including accessibility. Such an approach can certainly whet student's appetite for the field, but it falls short of equipping them with the comprehensive knowledge and instrumental skills that are needed to operate successfully in the profession. Ideally, we argue that the curriculum ought to contain discreet modules that focus on the various AVT practices, which are usually part of the staple diet of postgraduate programmes centred on AVT. Time permitting, these individual modules may be made up of theoretical core lectures, including profession-oriented topics, and hands-on practical seminars in which students are exposed to translation tasks of increasing linguacultural and technical complexity.

When it comes to the aims and objectives, modules are often designed following an outcomes-based educational approach. Thus, rather than including a list of topics to be covered across the curriculum, a set of expected learning outcomes is highlighted, which in translator training is often determined by societal and/or market needs (Kelly 2008 p. 115). The learning outcomes must be constructively aligned with the module aims and objectives so that students' performance can be satisfactorily monitored and assessed, while the quality of the teaching and learning methods is also upheld. Teaching is therefore conceived as a scaffolding process that aims to increase the students' likelihood of achieving those outcomes by taking part in targeted learning activities.

The aims of an AVT module, regardless of whether it focuses on subtitling or revoicing, ought to be to develop translation skills in a variety of registers and styles, by translating a wide array of audiovisual texts and programmes that epitomise the media world. Through a range of carefully chosen examples and tailored exercises (e.g. analysis of the semiotic relationship between image and text, scriptwriting, working with and without dialogue lists, creating transcripts and templates,

producing gist translation, getting familiar with specific software, focusing on spotting and text segmentation, adapting translation for lip-synching, etc.), students will not only develop confidence and skills in the theory and practice of subtitling and revoicing, but will also broaden their awareness about the idiomatic and syntactic features of their working languages as well as their knowledge and handling of humour, wordplay, taboo language and sociocultural references, for instance.

What follows is a set of potential learning outcomes that we consider should be observed when designing modules on subtitling and revoicing:

- being able to identify and exploit the semiotic relationships established between original soundtrack, images and written text when translating audiovisual programmes;

- gaining an understanding of the linguistic and cultural issues involved in audiovisual translation;

- developing the linguistic and technical skills required for producing a subtitled, dubbed or voiced-over version of an audiovisual programme;

- making informed translation choices based on genre, purpose, and intended audience for subtitling and revoicing commissions;

- being able to apply the appropriate conventions for good subtitling, dubbing and voiceover practice;

- developing specific dubbing and voiceover skills in areas such as lip-synch, phrase-synch and isochrony;

- developing specific timing, cueing or spotting skills for producing subtitles, using specialist software;

- honing technological skills with the use of software specifically designed for subtitling,

  dubbing, and voiceover; and

- being familiar with the professional practice, and the resources and links for audiovisual and

  media translators that are available on the internet.

In the next two sub-sections, we examine the specificities of interlingual subtitling and revoicing

and their presence in the translation classroom.

Subtitling

Subtitling can be defined as the rendition in writing of the translation in a target language of the

original dialogue exchanges uttered by the different speakers appearing in an audiovisual

programme, as well as of all other verbal information that is transmitted visually (letters, banners,

inserts) or aurally (song lyrics, voices off). From a linguistic point of view, this practice can be

intralingual – traditionally aimed at deaf and hard-of-hearing audiences, though not exclusively, and

known as captioning in American English – and interlingual.

When compared to other modes, the fact that subtitling is relatively fast and inexpensive to produce

makes it the perfect ally of globalisation and "the preferred mode of AVT on the world wide web"

(Díaz-Cintas 2012 p. 288). In this sense, subtitling can be said to contribute to and to go hand in

hand with the current processes of internetisation, digitalisation and audiovisualisation of

communication (Díaz-Cintas 2015).

In a nutshell, subtitles do not usually contain more than two lines, each of which can accommodate

a maximum of some 35 to 42 characters (16 in double-byte languages like Chinese, Japanese, and

Korean), and are displayed horizontally at the bottom of the screen. In respecting national and/or

company-specific conventions, subtitles appear in synchrony with the dialogue and the image and remain on screen for a minimum of one second (or 20 frames) and a maximum of 6 (or 7) seconds. The assumed reading speed of the target audience dictates the display rate of presentation of the actual subtitles, with 12 to 17 characters per second being standard ratios in Latin, Cyrillic and Arabic alphabets and 4 to 5 in the case of double-byte languages. It is the preferred audiovisual translation mode in Belgium, Croatia, Greece, the Netherlands, Portugal and the Scandinavian countries, among many others, and it has known an exponential growth in recent years inasmuch as DVDs and today's video-on-demand services make use of an extensive range of multilingual subtitles to reach wide audiences throughout the world.

In standard subtitling practice, it is common for dialogue, narrations and text on screen to be partly or completely reduced (i.e. condensed or omitted) in order to adhere to the variegated spatial and temporal constraints. This need for condensation and reformulation of the source text is one of its main pedagogical challenges and a substantive number of classroom activities targeting this strategic competence should be designed in the early stages of learning and before moving on to the teaching of the technical aspects, so that students do not lose sight of the importance of the linguistic dimension.

Part of this training can focus on the use and translation of templates, so that students can concentrate on the actual language transfer rather than the technical aspects. These documents contain a list of master subtitles, with the in and out times already spotted, usually in the same language as the audiovisual production, and are widely used in the industry as the starting point for the translation of the audiovisual production into as many languages as necessary (Georgakopoulou 2012; Nikolić 2015).

When subtitling, one of the salient technological tasks that students should master is spotting (aka timing, cueing and origination), which consists of setting the in and out times of each subtitle so that they are synchronised with the audio and the images of the clip, while respecting a series of conventions (Díaz-Cintas and Remael 2007). As a rule of thumb, subtitles start and finish as prompted by the beginning and end of an actor's utterance or by the appearance and disappearance of text on screen; they are self-contained units of meaning; they read naturally and are divided up so that they are syntactically sound; they follow the rhythm of speech and avoid crossing over shot changes. In addition, subtitles need to be configured so as to abide by national and/or company conventions and stylistic norms, including layout, colour, positioning, justification, and display rate.

Of all the various modes within AVT, subtitling is arguably the most demanding in terms of familiarisation and dexterity with specialised technology. Acquiring a comprehensive command of both freeware – e.g. Aegisub (www.aegisub.org), Subtitle Edit (www.nikse.dk/subtitleedit), Subtitle Workshop (http://subworkshop.sourceforge.net) – and commercial programs – e.g. EZTitles (www.eztitles.com), Spot (www.spotsoftware.nl), Wincaps Q4 (https://subtitling.com/products/subtitle-create/create/wincaps-q4-subtitling-software) – is a quintessential prerequisite of any subtitling course, and working with more than just one program will also allow students to be prepared for the real workplace, where companies often operate with different subtitling software packages. These days, knowledge of dedicated cloud-based platforms – e.g. Ooona (https://ooona.ooonatools.tv), SubtitleNEXT (https://subtitlenext.com), ZOO (www.zoodigital.com) – is also becoming pivotal and a wise addition to any training programme geared to prepared professionals for the future rather than the present (Bolaños-García-Escribano 2018). Likewise, with machine translation making inroads in the subtitling arena, the figure of the post-editor is becoming a new reality in the industry (Georgakopoulou and Bywood 2014) and students should be given the opportunity to learn about these developments in the classroom.

Revoicing

As already discussed, two of the main interlingual practices within revoicing are voiceover and lip-sync dubbing. Voiceover consists in orally presenting the translation of the source text speech over the still audible original voice, usually allowing the speaker to be heard for a few seconds in the foreign language, after which the volume of the soundtrack is lowered, so that the original speech can still be heard in the background and the translation in the target language is then overlaid (Díaz-Cintas and Orero 2010). The translation typically concludes whilst the speaker continues talking for a few more seconds, so that the audience can hear the foreign language once more. As for its geographical spread and commercial usage:

> apart from most East European countries, where voice-over translation is applied to all genres, voice-over in West European, North and Latin American countries has usually been applied to the translation of programmes that belong to the so-called factual genre – be it represented by the news, documentaries, talk shows, political debates, etc. (Franco et al. 2010 pp. 24-25)

Dubbing, also known as lip-sync and famously referred to as *traduction totale* by Cary (1960) because of its many challenges, implies the substitution of the dialogue track of an audiovisual production with another track containing the new lines in the target language. It is widely used for the localisation of fictional programmes in countries like Brazil, China, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Spain, Thailand and Turkey, among many others, as well as for the translation of children's productions in most countries in the world. From a financial perspective, dubbing is much more expensive than voiceover or subtitling as it requires the participation of numerous stakeholders

(translators, dialogue writers, sound engineers, dubbing directors and actors) and the use of

dedicated dubbing studios.

The standard dubbing process starts with a client commissioning a project from a language service

provider (LSP) or dubbing company, which then outsources the translation to a (freelance)

translator. Once the translated script has been delivered, the dialogue writer adapts it to the images

and adds a set of symbols for synchronising the dialogue and the visuals and thus ease the task of

the dubbing actors. This is followed by a division of the dialogue into takes or loops, as discussed

below, which is then used by the dubbing director when recording the new soundtrack in the target

language with the assistance of a group of voice talents. The final stage is carried out by the sound

engineer, responsible for reassembling and editing the original and translated soundtracks, before

delivering the new translated programme to the client.

To make viewers believe that the characters on screen share the same language as themselves, three

types of synchronisation need to be respected: (1) lip synchrony, to ensure that the translated sounds

fit into the mouth of the onscreen characters, particularly when they are shown in close-up; (2)

isochrony, to guarantee that the duration of the source and the target utterances coincide in length,

especially when the characters' lip movements can be seen; and (3) kinetic synchrony, to assure that

the translated dialogue does not contradict the thespian performance of the actors, and that the

voices chosen for the new recording are not at odds with the personal attributes and the physical

appearance of the onscreen characters.

In dubbing, translations are divided into chunks of text known as takes or loops, whose length and

layout vary depending on national conventions (Chaume 2012), and which include the dialogue

lines that dubbing talents use for their acting. The impact that the various synchronies mentioned

above have on the translation materialises in the use of dubbing symbols throughout the new script, which "help dubbing actors imitate the screen actors' paralinguistic signs: sounds, pitch, tone, volume, primary voice qualities, etc." (Chaume 2012 p. 58). These symbols, again, differ from one country to another, so lessons should ideally be language-oriented and taught by tutors who have sufficient professional experience and skills in the practice of dubbing in language-bound markets.

In educational settings, where it is very common to teach both voiceover and dubbing as part of one and the same module, the trend is to start with activities in voiceover and then progress to more challenging tasks focused on dubbing. As for the content to be covered, the actual language transfer is just one of the multiple steps in the whole process of dubbing of an audiovisual programme and, as argued by Chaume (2013b), tutors involved in the teaching of a module of this nature should also incorporate activities that hone students' skills on areas such as dialogue writing, lip synchronisation, take segmentation, symbols annotating and even acting. Yet, training on revoicing, and particularly on dubbing, is often limited to translation and dialogue writing, with special emphasis on language- and synchrony-related challenges.

As debated by Baños and Chaume (2009), avoiding stilted expressions and achieving a translation that sounds natural when delivered orally is of utmost importance in the case of revoicing. To be successful in this field requires a thorough understanding of the defining characteristics of spontaneous and scripted discourse as well as of the differences that set apart written language from speech and their diegetic role in audiovisual texts. In the words of Bartrina and Espasa-Borrás (2005 p. 87, original emphasis), students have to be able to appreciate "the paradoxical 'ordeal' of having to (re)create realistic, credible *oral* texts, even though the source texts are *written*, as is the translation which is handed to the client". To be able to produce credible dialogue lines by echoing the characteristics of spontaneous oral register, students ought to be exposed to activities that

25

require the sensible exploitation of the flexibility of syntax, the expressiveness of colloquial language, the potential of word derivation, and the significance of features like style and rhythm. To achieve this, students can write their translations down to then read them aloud, or record themselves with audio and video editing software, to make sure that their sentences and expressions flow naturally, match the acting on screen and can fit in the mouth of the characters.

In contrast to the far-reaching technical developments witnessed in the field of subtitling, revoicing practices like dubbing and voiceover seem to have been bypassed by the latest technology (Baños 2018), both in the profession and the educational centres. In the industry, translators are not usually required to work with dedicated software and they can fulfil their tasks by using a simple text editor and a video player to watch the programmes. It is later, in the recording studio, where dubbing directors and sound engineers make use of specialist applications. As an exception to this rule, and in countries like France, translators who also take care of lip-synching are frequently asked to insert their translation in a track known as *bande rythmo*, which is added onto the working copy of the audiovisual production, at the bottom of the screen, and includes the target dialogue as well as the necessary symbols for the dubbing actors (Chaume 2012). To keep up with the current increase in the volume of dubbing and voiceover in the market, for young and adult audiences, as well as the technical advances in speech recognition (Green 2018), training in this area should expose students to new technologies like the freeware program Capella (www.cappella.tv) and the professional one VoiceQ (https://voiceq.com), which allow translators and those in charge of the synchronisation of the target dialogue to create the *bande rythmo* for the benefit of the voice talents.

Cloud-based systems focused on revoicing are also emerging – e.g. ZOOdubs (www.zoodigital.com/services/localize/dubbing), Ooona (http://ooona.net/dubbing-manager), STVHub (http://stvhub.com) – and translation trainees should become familiar with the potential of

these platforms to centralise, accelerate and globalise the dubbing process, as they allow for tasks like scripting, auditioning of future voice talents, casting, recording, editing and mixing to be conducted online, as opposed to the traditional approach of performing these activities locally, in soundproof recording studios. As previously mentioned, a pedagogical approach that takes these developments into account and exposes students to the latest advancements in the AVT industry, including common tasks and workflows, is essential if students are to gain the professional skills necessary to be more employable.

CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

As opposed to the *idée reçue* that translation programmes of study are saturating the labour market with graduates (Pym 2012), prospective careers in AVT seem to look brighter than ever. The exponential growth of programmes distributed in audiovisual format across the globe has led to a surge in the demand for highly experienced and well-trained localisers in such a fast-growing industry (Estopace 2017). To train the professionals of the future, 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.

Translators-to-be will need to be able to adapt to an industry in continual development, to an ecosystem on which new technologies such as machine translation, speech recognition and artificial intelligence are already having an impact. In this sense, careers on language engineering, text and subtitle post-editing, live respeaking, microtasking, transcreation and video editing are expected to grow exponentially in the upcoming years, thus demanding a set of add-on skills that higher education institutions will have to include in their existing curricula in order to boost graduates' employability. Training centres will need to re-examine and modify curricula and programmes of study – as much as AVT trainers may need to adjust the syllabi – so as to not lag behind technical

advancements and to be able to cater for the new needs of the industry. Yet, a balance will have to be found to nurture also the linguistic and creative aspects involved in the localisation of audiovisual material.

At a time when leading market players lament the fact that qualified translators are in short supply (Bond 2018) and bodies like MESA's (2016) Content Localisation Council set as one of their top aims to expand the talent pool in audiovisual translation, closer synergies must be established between educational centres and the industry to safeguard the wellbeing of the profession. Strengthening partnerships with LSP stakeholders and software developers can be instrumental not only in equipping universities with the right workstations, dedicated software and access to the latest cloud-based portals, but also in securing work placements, on-site visits and, ultimately, professional careers in the AVT world. The exploitation of situated learning experiences that showcase cutting-edge technologies is therefore of utmost importance as it contributes to boosting students' employability and resilience in a mercurial industry heavily driven by technological changes.

FURTHER READING

Chaume, F. (2012) *Audiovisual Translation: Dubbing*. Manchester: St Jerome.

This textbook offers theoretical and practical training in lip-sync dubbing. It is the most comprehensive textbook so far on the specificities of dubbing translation.

Díaz-Cintas, J. (ed) (2008) *The Didactics of Audiovisual Translation*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

This collective book offers a balance between theory and practice and is the first one to have been published on audiovisual translation training. It provides a wealth of teaching and learning ideas in the various AVT modes.

Díaz-Cintas, J. and Remael, A. (2007) *Audiovisual Translation: Subtitling*. Manchester: St Jerome.

This textbook provides a solid overview of the world of subtitling. While focusing on generally accepted practice it also identifies current points of contention, takes regional variants into consideration, and traces new developments in the evolution of the profession.

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Bolaños-García-Escribano, Alejandro & Jorge Díaz-Cintas. 2019. "Audiovisual translation: subtitling and revoicing". In Sara Laviosa and María González-Davies (eds) *Routledge Handbook of Translation and Education*. London: Routledge.

Pérez-González, L. (2014) *Audiovisual Translation: Theories, Methods and Issues.* London: Routledge.

This textbook discusses some of the methodological challenges raised by the multimodality of audiovisual texts and proposes a variety of theoretical frameworks to investigate this emerging text type.

RELATED TOPICS

screen translation, multimedia translation, media accessibility, localisation, translation technology, audiovisual reception, semiotics

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