

Subtitling Today

Subtitling Today:

Shapes and Their Meanings

Edited by

Elisa Perego and Silvia Bruti

Cambridge
Scholars
Publishing



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This book first published 2015

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

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ISBN (10): 1-4438-8035-3

ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-8035-0

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INTRODUCTION

ELISA PEREGO AND SILVIA BRUTI

Subtitling, a well-known, established and widespread form of audiovisual translation, nowadays comes in many forms and accomplishes many purposes. It enables viewers to access, understand, enjoy, interpret and remember an audiovisual product, but it can at times guide or limit the viewer's interpretative options or achieve a decorative function. It can be invisible and easing—as most manuals desire—or intrusive and taxing but still adored especially by niche film fanatics.

Given its many forms, functions and audiences, subtitling has lately been studied from several evolving perspectives. This collection of contributions wishes to show at least some, and it does so assembling papers that analyse aspects of subtitling in several audiovisual genres (ranging from TV series and variety programmes to operas and operettas, including feature films and live conferences) and combinations of languages (Chinese, English, Finnish, French, Italian, Japanese and Polish), and welcoming both traditional and descriptive frameworks and novel methodological approaches in the field of Audiovisual Translation (AVT).

The volume includes papers reporting case studies on language transfer strategies in specific situations, e.g. when the source text is challenging because it heavily relies on multilingualism and it requires to tackle the issue of translating sociolinguistic varieties or because the subtitler has to render irony, culture-specific references, comic nuances in peculiar genres, source language specificities in very distant target languages. It includes descriptive papers that offer a state of the art overview on cutting-edge subtitling methods, such as telop, real time subtitling for the deaf and hard of hearing, subtitling status and policy in a given European and non-European country. It also includes papers reporting on and empirical research assessing subtitle reading in particularly challenging situations or assessing the effect of specific subtitle features on comprehension. It tackles the issue of teaching translation for subtitling and the importance of corpus data to make the teaching process more focused and effective.

The empirical papers offer an invaluable perspective on the changes subtitling research is undergoing. They both resort to eye tracking methodology thus following a research path that has recently flourished in

AVT and that is ever more interested in the viewer's reaction to, and comprehension of, subtitling vs. the translator's problem-solving processes. Such papers emphasise the lack of a solid empirical methodology in a discipline that has long been mainly descriptive and they raise methodological issues that need to be tackled in future empirical research in AVT.

Acknowledgments

This research was partially supported by the University of Trieste Research Fund FRA 2013 ("Towards an empirical evaluation of audiovisual translation: A new integrated approach") awarded to Elisa Perego. The authors would like to thank Francesca Bozzao for her initial typesetting work, and Christopher Taylor and Serenella Zanotti for their support throughout the editing work.

CHAPTER ONE

SUBTITLING TODAY: FORMS, TRENDS, APPLICATIONS¹

ELISA PEREGO² AND SILVIA BRUTI³

1. Recent Developments in Subtitling

When subtitling began to be practiced (1909 at the cinema, and 1938 on TV according to Ivarsson 2004 and Ivarsson and Carroll 1998), the main concern of practitioners was to convey the dialogue of the actors to the audience. Technical and translational problems—e.g. how to place subtitles on the distribution copies or how to distribute the same film in different languages—soon arose. This paved the way for scholars to tackle them in the attempt to offer solutions or to perform systematic analyses on the evolution of subtitles from intertitles, on their economics, distribution, principles and conventions. The first manuals for subtitlers started to appear much later (e.g., Ivarsson and Carroll 1998) along with in-house unpublished guides outlining specific rules and company policies.

The proliferation of audiovisual media, the need to access original versions of AV products as soon as possible and the newly-acquired flexibility of dubbing countries have recently led to an increase in the volume and the nature of such activity. Furthermore, the idea that subtitles accomplish a mere translational function and that they are simply “a translation [appearing] at the bottom of the screen during the scenes of a motion picture or television show in a foreign language” (Merriam-Webster Online) is nowadays outdated, or at least too restrictive. Currently, subtitles come in several forms and their applications are manifold, and they have further contributed to the recent growth in

¹ Elisa Perego is the author of paragraph 1 and of the overview on the articles by Arma et al. in paragraph 2. Silvia Bruti is the author of the remainder of paragraph 2.

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subtitling volume all over the globe. The papers collected in this special issue illustrate such a varied and fluid situation very well.

A first addendum to the traditional definition of subtitling, one which describes standard interlingual subtitling written in a language different from the language of the original audiovisual product, would highlight the presence of a parallel and equally common subtitling form, i.e. intralingual subtitling, written in the same language as of the original audiovisual product.

Traditionally, same language subtitling was thought of as a tool to enable deaf and hard of hearing viewers to access audiovisual products. Indeed, intralingual subtitling is able to render the dialogue in the same language along with additional information on the auditory elements of the soundtrack. As some of the papers show, however, besides being an invaluable accessible film service (Szarkowska et al. and Muller), nowadays intralingual subtitling takes different forms and labels, and it can accomplish several new functions. If produced live, on the fly, through respoken techniques, it can be exploited to make AV products other than films, e.g. conferences (Arma), accessible. If superimposed in post-productions, especially in Japanese variety programmes, it is known as *telop* (Maree) and it accomplishes a peculiar entertaining function for hearing viewers—it mainly highlights comic hints but at the same time it contributes to manipulating the source intended meaning and to leading viewers towards a univocal interpretation of such.

Although very creative uses of intralingual subtitles are possible, this is certainly best known for its socially relevant and didactic applications—or at least it has until very recently. Not only do same language subtitles serve as an aid for deaf or hard of hearing people, but they can also have a major impact on literacy and reading abilities (making the reading practice an incidental, automatic, and subconscious part of popular TV entertainment) (Kothari 1998, 2000; Kothari and Takeda 2000), and on second language learning and acquisition (d'Ydewalle and Pavakanun 1995; d'Ydewalle and Van de Poel 1999; Kuppens 2010). Standard subtitles are no less important: beside accomplishing their primary role (i.e., providing a written translation of the original dialogue), they can be exploited to “teach, revive and maintain minority languages” (Ivarsson and Carroll 1998, 7), to distribute art house films from small countries, and to make AV material accessible before official release. This latter aspect is very much appreciated in the Chinese world (Wang), which heavily relies on amateur subtitles (i.e. fansubs, “subtitles made for foreign audiovisual products in a non-professional environment”, Lepre) to overcome media censorship often imposed by the government on dubbed productions.

Overall, subtitling has evolved and some of its forms have developed from necessary aids to extra layers added to the original AV product. In particular, telops (Maree) along with fansubbing (Lepre) are very particular forms of subtitling which most of all show the extent of subtitling evolution in terms of functions and conventions. Telops stretch the traditional idea of same language subtitles to the extent that they no longer only render what is being said for a deaf audience but they reproduce part of the dialogue disambiguating it for a hearing audience, emphasizing it and making it redundant thanks to the graphic conventions used. Telops do not enable viewers to access, enjoy and interpret an AV product but they are added to limit the viewer's interpretative options by directing his/her attention and by ruling out ambiguity. They also achieve a decorative function, thus going against the chasteness which has always been typical of SDH (subtitling for the deaf and hard of hearing) and of standard subtitling, whose primary feature should be invisibility. Fansubs can be intrusive and taxing, and they often resort to unconventional stylistic features which would be unacceptable in professional practice, which is still more concerned with usability criteria.

Besides coming in different forms and accomplishing several functions, subtitles have recently been studied from different, new perspectives. Research on subtitling—just like its forms and uses—has evolved. From a purely technical and translational perspective, from in-depth linguistics studies it nowadays includes more modern and interdisciplinary ways of approaching this subject. The different aspects of subtitling have been studied via eye tracking and empirical methods, and aspects of subtitling that are related to its reception, usability, and effectiveness have attracted the attention of several scholars. This special issue is representative also in this respect. It includes traditional descriptive papers reporting case studies on language transfer strategies in specific situations, e.g. when the source text is challenging because it relies heavily on multilingualism or the issue of translating sociolinguistic varieties (De Rosa) needs to be tackled or because the subtitler has to deal with and render irony (De Meo), culture-specific items (Lepre), comic nuances in certain genres (opera and operetta, Tortoriello), source language specificities in a very distant target language (Wang). It includes descriptive papers that offer a state of the art overview on cutting-edge subtitling methods, e.g. telop (Maree), real time subtitling for the deaf and hard of hearing (Arma), subtitling status and policy in a given European (Muller) and non-European (Wang) country. It tackles the importance of subtitling corpora to diagnose the competence of subtitle trainees and to prepare teaching materials (Bączkowska). It also includes papers reporting

on empirical research assessing subtitle reading in particularly challenging situations, e.g. when subtitles are displayed over shot changes, or assessing the effect of specific subtitle features, such as internal cohesive structure, on comprehension (Lautenbacher).

The empirical papers offer an invaluable perspective on the changes subtitling research is undergoing. They both focus on eye tracking methodology thus following a research path that has recently flourished in AVT and that is increasingly concerned with the viewer's reaction to, and comprehension of, subtitling vs. the translator's problem-solving processes. Such papers emphasise the lack of a solid empirical methodology in a discipline that has long been mainly descriptive and they raise methodological issues that need to be tackled in future empirical research in AVT.

To conclude, the audiovisual genres tackled in each paper and the languages involved in the analyses involve a number of languages. AV genres range from TV series and variety programmes to operas and operettas, including feature films and live conferences. The languages examined, as either source or target language, are (in alphabetical order) Chinese, English, Finnish, French, Italian, Japanese and Polish.

2. The Contributions to the Present Volume

Given the variety of themes tackled by the authors, ordering papers has not been easy. We have decided to arrange them according to the main themes they explore, starting from those that deal with more general matters in translating audiovisual texts and then delving into more specialised topics.

Gian Luigi De Rosa investigates one of the thorniest problems in translation, i.e. the rendering of different varieties of language and of socio-pragmatic elements. His specific focus of attention is on two Brazilian TV series, *Mandrake* (2005-2007) and *FDP* (2012). The former was broadcast on Sky TV in Italy in 2009 in its dubbed version in Italian and the latter was subtitled by the students of Portuguese in an MA course at the University of Salento. The two case studies offer ample material for extending the reflection to all the texts that share these properties.

De Rosa aims to analyse a series of issues related to the audiovisual translation of mixed-language texts, i.e. texts that are strongly characterised by the presence of different varieties and of socio-pragmalinguistic elements. The investigation focuses particularly on the two aforementioned TV series, *Mandrake* and *FDP*. Both of them partly conform to the Brazilian Portuguese neo standard, but they also contain a

“strongly connoted spoken language with elements from sub-standard varieties belonging to popular varieties of BP which are used in less monitored contexts and situations and in order to characterize characters”.

This is possible, the author contends, because TV language tends to use exaggerated sociolinguistic features in order to more precisely connote some of the characters. When marked texts need to be translated, a main strategy seems to emerge, especially in dubbing: choices that are marked in the original are turned into either a neutralised non-standard or, at best, into monitored informal speech. Markedness powerfully reflects the relativity of sociolinguistic situations that are couched in very different linguistic forms across different lingua-cultural pairs. In this regard, De Rosa shows that the main difficulty in translating the two Brazilian TV series revolves around the frequent overlap of the diastratic and diaphasic dimensions. Choosing popular varieties of Italian cannot be a palatable solution, in that popular varieties correspond to dialects or regional varieties of Italian and their use would thus be diatopically marked and, as such, unacceptably domesticating. A compromise solution needs to be pursued, i.e. one that combines both neutralisation of markedness and consequently a standardisation of the text, and the dislocation of markedness from one dimension of variation to another or from one level of analysis to another.

Olli Philippe Lautenbacher discusses the results of a small scale pilot study to ascertain how comprehension takes place when watching a subtitled film, submitting the same sample with different types of subtitles (L1, L2 or no subtitles) to three different informant groups. The author aims to evaluate the combined impact of filmic cohesive structures and interlinguistic (L1) or intralinguistic (L2) subtitles on the comprehension process of the audience, presupposing, in line with the main literature on the topic, that bimodal input, i.e. input deriving from both dialogue and subtitles (but also from image and subtitles), is profitable for recollection and comprehension corroboration. The experiment is carried out with a short excerpt from a French film, which was shown to three groups of Finnish university students who were asked to answer limited response items in a questionnaire. Their viewing experience was also recorded by means of eye tracking measures. The best results were obtained by the students who watched the extract with Finnish subtitles, with almost 75% of the answers being satisfactory, against slightly less than 60% for those who watched the clip with French subtitles and some 40% for those who watched it with no subtitles. Differences in results between the groups that were shown intra- and interlinguistic subtitles are actually confined to just a few questions. Careful multimodal analysis of the various questions

suggested that the outcome of the experiment strongly depends on the kind of cohesive links that are exploited. The types of cohesion can thus be: minimal cohesion, in which subtitles support the dialogue alone; narrative cohesion, when several expressions in the excerpt develop the same theme and thus cohesion may be in the form of more or less explicit redundancy; and multimodal cohesion, when dialogical elements are sustained by image and sound. In the first case subtitles in Finnish seem to be helpful, whereas in the case of narrative cohesion both subtitles produce comparable results. When multimodal cohesion is involved, a distinction needs to be drawn, i.e. when an expression is completely supported by the audiovisual mode, so much so that the images repeat the content of the utterance, both the L1 and L2 subtitles strongly support the viewer's understanding; when, instead, cohesion is only partial, the understanding hinges more on the linguistic utterance, so the students who could access the L1 subtitles had better results.

An equally challenging topic, the translation of irony, is the object of Mariagrazia De Meo's contribution. Translating irony is always problematic in that it is a phenomenon that aims at producing an emotive response in the audience, who need to be actively involved. De Meo chooses an inductive and descriptive approach to investigate the translation of verbal irony in the English subtitles of the detective TV series *Il Commissario Montalbano*, a successful series based on the eponymous novels by Sicilian author Andrea Camilleri. Much of the fortune of both novels and TV series rests on the main protagonist, Montalbano, a fractious Sicilian detective who works in the police force of Vigata, an imaginary Sicilian town, lives a single life, is a gourmet, and a long-distance swimmer with a wonderful ocean-front house. He is often confronted with puzzling crimes that necessitate his wits, stamina and a special ability to deal with bureaucratic and political pressures that in most cases require him to close the case quickly, without stepping on the wrong toes. Salvo Montalbano's speech, in line with Camilleri's own literary jargon, is a mixture of standard Italian and Sicilian dialect, heavily imbued with ironic remarks and tones.

After reviewing the main approaches to irony in translation studies, De Meo opts for a dynamic and pragmatic approach and underlines the double role of the translator as interpreter and ironist, whose main task is to re-codify and re-contextualise the ironic triggers for the target audience. The analysis highlights the fact that both metafunctional and structural ironic triggers are generally translated, included the case of echoic utterances. Repetitions, which are usually avoided in subtitles as redundant elements, are instead retained also when they are not the main ironic triggers, but

simple ironic cues in the unrolling of dialogue. The subtitler pays careful attention to guarantee maximum effect with minimum effort, relying in part on the support of the paralinguistic and prosodic features of the text and on the audience familiarity with Montalbano's patterns of behaviour (e.g. the target of his ironic remarks are more or less always the same characters).

Specific types of subtitles and some related problems are investigated in the contributions by Lepre, Tortoriello and Maree. Lepre takes a close look at fansubs, an increasingly popular and globally spread type of amateur translation and aims to observe whether the strategy adopted by fansubbers in translating cultural references differs from that of professionals; Tortoriello is concerned with DVD subtitles for operas and operettas, a genre which was in the past destined for connoisseurs, but which, thanks to better availability, now reaches the more general public; and Maree reports on the use of telops in Japanese television.

Adriana Tortoriello aims at analysing the distinguishing features of a rather new product, i.e. operas that are filmed during a live performance in order to produce a DVD which is later subtitled, intra- and/or interlinguistically. This novel type of opera subtitling is distinct both from live opera surtitling and from more conventional types of subtitling for DVDs.

The starting point of the contribution is a careful account of the nature of opera subtitles for the DVD: if opera surtitles are not available either before or after the opera itself is staged, DVD subtitles can rely on better viewing conditions and can be read several times, as the DVD can be stopped and replayed according to the viewer's liking. Furthermore, they seem to be more similar to fansubs than to both traditional subtitles and opera surtitles, thanks to their length, the use of repetition and the tendency to repeat the features of the source text especially in the rhyming pattern of the lyrics. Tortoriello also explores another sub-genre, the operetta, or light opera, which developed around the middle of the 19th century, with different themes and different language features. Operettas can be produced in two alternate ways, i.e. in the original language with surtitles, or having the libretto translated and adapted and then producing the opera in the language of the audience, as happens with the English National Opera, to which DVD subtitles could be added as a third, compromise solution. They provide a written and thus more permanent text but at the same time they allow the audience to follow the opera in the language in which it was written. In the case of operettas, whose content is light and includes humour and satire, longer subtitles are more helpful in making sure the audience captures the gist of the message.

The author offers examples of how an operetta, *The Mikado* (1885, Sullivan and Gilbert) was both intra- and interlingually subtitled for a DVD release based on its Australian staging. The various subtitlers (Tortoriello was responsible for the Italian subtitles) worked together to give the final product a certain consistency despite language differences. The analysis of various examples point to some characterising elements: first of all DVD subtitles for the opera/operetta need to take into account the so-called “musical constraint”, entailing issues of rhyming and rhythm requirement; secondly, they are produced for a different kind of audience, with better viewing conditions and higher reading speed, and aim to render the text more closely; but perhaps, more importantly, they need to consider the presence of the theatre audience in the filmed text, which leaves traces in terms of reactions to both the performance and to the surtitles that were projected (to which the subtitler may also have no access). As for the content, the nature of the examples analysed proves the necessity of carefully considering the farcical nature of the plot, which needs to be understood, and the tendency to update content whenever possible but to leave out very specific cultural (Australian) references that, given the Japanese setting of the operetta, would probably puzzle the audience. Also of relevance are the metareferences to the act of translation, which testify to the rather “subversive” nature of these subtitles (Nornes 1999).

Still devoted to a form of subtitling that was, and still is, considered abusive and subversive, is the contribution by Ornella Lepre, who deals with fansubbing. Fansubbing developed out of a practice that fans adopted to translate and spread Japanese *anime*, but it was soon extended to all genres (with a special preference for TV series, which are the object of investigation of this article) and soon acquired gigantic proportions. The growth of the phenomenon—Lepre argues—brought about a decisive improvement in the quality of translations, as communities of amateur subtitlers became more organised and devoted more attention to quality control. In particular, Lepre investigates, both quantitatively and qualitatively, how cultural references—adopting Pedersens’ (2005: 2) definition of “extralinguistic culture-bound reference” (ECR)—are rendered in both fansubs and official translations of two non consecutive seasons (for a total of 43 episodes) of the US comedy series *30 Rock*, one which is particularly rich in cultural references (with an average of 45 per episode). Cultural references were first identified, then classified into eleven categories, drawing on previously proposed taxonomies; their translations were also classified as either source language- or target language-oriented and examined for frequency by using statistical instruments, e.g.

“regression models that estimate how one or more independent variables affect a dependent variable, by estimating the parameters that define their relationship”.

For example, the category of *measure* has the largest positive coefficient, which means that, quite expectedly, ECRs referring to this topic are usually adapted for the target language. Conversely, categories such as *people*, *fiction* and *geo* display the largest negative coefficients, which means that they are less likely to be adapted than other categories.

In order to compare the translating strategies used by fansubbers with those adopted by professional translators, Lepre used the translation of the same ECRs in the dubbed version of the series, as it has not been subtitled in Italian. Results for dubbing are on the whole in line with those of fansubs, yet there is variation in time, from season 1 to season 3, in the direction of an evident decrease in target language procedures. Although more data are needed to corroborate the emerging trend, the research has highlighted that, as SL-oriented procedures appeared in fansubs first and only later in official translations, fansubs are very likely to provide guidelines and preferable trends in audiovisual translation.

Another recently emerged form of subtitles, i.e. telops, is the object of Claire Maree's paper. As the author makes clear, heavy use of texts and graphics of a variety of colours, sizes and fonts, which may slide into view diagonally or also pop up from a celebrity's talking mouth, is a major characteristic of Japanese variety programming. Telops are thus a form of inscription of text onto the screen, which derives from *television opaque projector*.

Although applied linguistics research has evidenced that text on screen common to Japanese TV serves the purpose of summarising, framing, highlighting or also embellishing the action which is taking place, telop seem to have taken on the more specific function of the tabloidisation of news broadcasts and the highlighting of comic content in entertainment broadcasting, by selecting only some of the talk enunciated on screen. They tend in fact to capture and maintain the viewers' attention through engaging their gaze. In the course of time they have expanded from sporadic text in white lettering with a black edge to more varied forms that exploit a vast array of animations, orthographic variants, colours, symbols, special effects and graphics, including pictures and emoticons.

By analysing a set of examples coming from different genres, Maree shows how text-on-screen successfully constructs salient “media personas anchored in identifiable social identities” and gets rid of those which are not in line with the favoured ideological scheme. The exaggerated use of

non standard orthography and non-normative speech forms are instrumental to depicting language ideologies.

The contribution by Wang also offers an interesting and up-to-date account of the fortunes of subtitling in China, a country where both the production and interest in audiovisual translation and in subtitling in particular are rocketing to meet the ever-increasing demand of the audience to access the latest productions of world cinema. Domestic productions have also increased dramatically, at the expenses of Hollywood films, mainly because of the strict censorship the government imposes. Yet, this strict control has largely favoured audiovisual piracy, both because it eschews the lengthy process of approval and also because the products are much cheaper. The author reports that one of the most popular ways of accessing audiovisual material is downloading it at Internet cafés, which may or may not be legally authorised. Fansubbing was born in 2003, but it is by now a well-established phenomenon that often turns into a real business: YYeTs, the largest Chinese fansubbing group, is turning from a fansubbing group to a sanctioned provider of translation services. Before the growth of fansubbing, however, dubbing was also used, but contemporary viewers often find it at odds with the visuals and prefer subtitling, despite the many difficulties involved by the linguistic fragmentation and the still high rate of illiteracy among the masses, especially in rural areas. Other complications arise from the Chinese writing system, in which each character is semantically independent but can also combine with other characters to form words and sentences.

In order to widen the availability and the quality of subtitling, the author advocates more scholarly attention to audiovisual translation from Chinese researchers and possible contacts with foreign academics to establish common terminology and procedural rules, especially for subtitling.

Three contributions in the volume deal specifically with different aspects and applications of intralingual subtitling, and one deals with audio subtitling, i.e. all forms of accessible translation.

In her paper, Saveria Arma gives a detailed account of quite a new and very interesting type of real time subtitling for the deaf and hard of hearing, i.e., conference respaking generated by speech-to-text (STT) technology. STT refers to the translation of spoken words into text. The spoken words are those uttered by a conference participant or by a professional operator, the respeaker, who listens to the source text and re-narrates it, condensing and rephrasing it. Such vocal input is then transformed into written words which take the form of subtitles and make the event accessible to a specific audience (persons with hearing

impairments) which is also a very heterogeneous one in terms of background knowledge, education, reading behaviour, and language competence. The paper illustrates the technical, linguistic and professional aspects of respoken-based live subtitling for the deaf and the hard of hearing in a conference setting—although this technique can be used in a wide array of different contexts—and it shows that the job of the respeaker shares a number of aspects with that of the interpreter and of the subtitler. However, it is quite particular and much more based on the ability to know and communicate with the target audience without patronising them.

Tia Muller offers a French perspective on subtitling for the deaf and hard of hearing. In particular, the author thoroughly describes a document (*Charte relative à la qualité du sous-titrage à destination des personnes sourdes ou malentendantes*, that is, in English, the *Charter relating to the quality of subtitles addressed to the deaf or hard of hearing*) and all the 16 rules for good subtitling it includes, and she evaluates them

“in relation to SDH addressees’ opinions captured in a 2010 survey, other European guidelines, and empirical studies, in order to assess the validity of the components it sets out for all the stakeholders involved”.

Each of the *Charte*’s 16 rules is analysed resorting to Arnáiz-Uzquiza (2012)’s typology. On this basis, the author considers pragmatic parameters (which include the addressees’ characteristics, SDH production’s aim, the production date, and its authoring), technical parameters, aesthetic-technical parameters (e.g., those which pertain to the visual aspects of subtitling and that are a direct consequence of the production process and of the configuration of the finished product, such as reading speed and delay in live subtitling), purely aesthetic parameters (which refer to the purely visual aspects of subtitles, e.g., number of lines, subtitle placement, box usage, shot changes, font style and size, number of characters per line, subtitle justification, line spacing, synchrony with the image), linguistic parameters (editing and segmentation) and extralinguistic parameters (aspects that represent non-verbal information included in the audiovisual text, e.g. sound effects, music, paralinguistic elements and character identification). After the thorough analysis which places France on the European audiovisual map, the author concludes that much work is still needed to improve the real effectiveness of the rules that govern French SDH even after their implementation in 2011.

Szarkowska, I. Krejtz, Łogińska, Dutka, and K. Krejtz present a preliminary eyetracking study on the influence of shot changes (i.e. cuts) on reading subtitles. The aim of the study is to demonstrate empirically whether the presence of a shot change really forces viewers to re-read the

subtitles—as maintained in literature—or not. The study has been conducted in Poland with deaf, hard of hearing and hearing participants watching two-line subtitles for the deaf and hard of hearing (SDH). Participants were exposed to short excerpts from various audiovisual material: a feature film (*Love actually*, 2003, Richard Curtis) and two documentaries (*Super Size Me*, 2004, Morgan Spurlock and *Roman Polanski: Wanted and Desired*, 2008, Marina Zenovich). The results, although preliminary, are counterintuitive and show that, overall, reading subtitles is effective also in challenging situations, and that the type of programme being watched and its structural complexity can influence the subtitle reading behaviour of viewers.

The paper by Bączkowska shows instead some applications of interlingual subtitling in language teaching. The work illustrates some of the results of the Learner Corpus of Subtitles (LeCoS) project developed by the author and some collaborators at Kazimierz Wielki University, Bydgoszcz, Poland, whose participants are students of English Philology (MA level) and Modern Languages with an English major and a Russian minor (BA level). The project aims to identify the preliminary subtitling competence of modern language students, to prepare materials to be used to teach subtitling, and develop a complete subtitling module for translation students. As the name of the project reveals, one of the steps is the compilation of a corpus of interlingual subtitles produced by Polish students of Modern Languages, which is structured as an increasable database. The contribution focuses however on one corpus component, namely a stand-alone subcorpus (Corpus B), which is qualitatively analysed. Discussion of data provides ample evidence of overreliance on the source text, which often results in literal translations and calques, and excessive lexical and syntactic precision. Students very often take little notice of the typical diamesic shifts required in subtitles and reproduce many features of orality, such as interjections, expletives and backchannel cues. Apart from interesting hints as to the areas where students need more guidance and training, the paper also shows that corpus data can provide valuable insight into the translation difficulties and pitfalls that subtitling trainees are likely to meet, and could thus prove to be beneficial for the design of subtitling courses.

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CHAPTER TWO

AUDIOVISUAL TRANSLATION AND SOCIOLINGUISTIC ADEQUACY

GIAN LUIGI DE ROSA¹

1. Introduction

The language of TV fiction is created and organized (Nencioni 1983) through a process of reconstruction and representation of language in context. The language of TV fiction may be intended both as a reproduction of a face-to-face dialogue (Bazzanella 1994, 2002) and as a variety transmitted with Multiple Senders – Heterogeneous Receivers (Pavesi 2005; Rossi 1999, 2002). The dialogues of the Brazilian contemporary TV series show a number of features of Brazilian Portuguese (hence BP), which reveal, as can be seen from the structure of the BP language (Fig. 1-1), an advanced process of re-standardization (Bagno 2005, 2012, De Rosa 2011, 2012, Lucchesi 2004, Perini 2007, 2010).

However, despite the presence of recurrent features, the language used in TV fiction—such as sit-coms, serials (including costume serials) and soap operas—shows to be less homogeneous and more varied than film language. This is due to the fact that each fictional subgenre has different communicative aims and textual and dialogic features. In fact, texts characterized by formal to highly formal registers with a tendency towards standard and/or neo-standard language (mainly in TV fiction) can be found together with texts which show (sometimes excessive) tendencies towards sub-standard varieties and features. On the basis of the verisimilitude agreement between sender and receiver, the process of writing dialogues should not have external constraints with reference to the text or to the context, nor should they have external pressures. If this is only partially true

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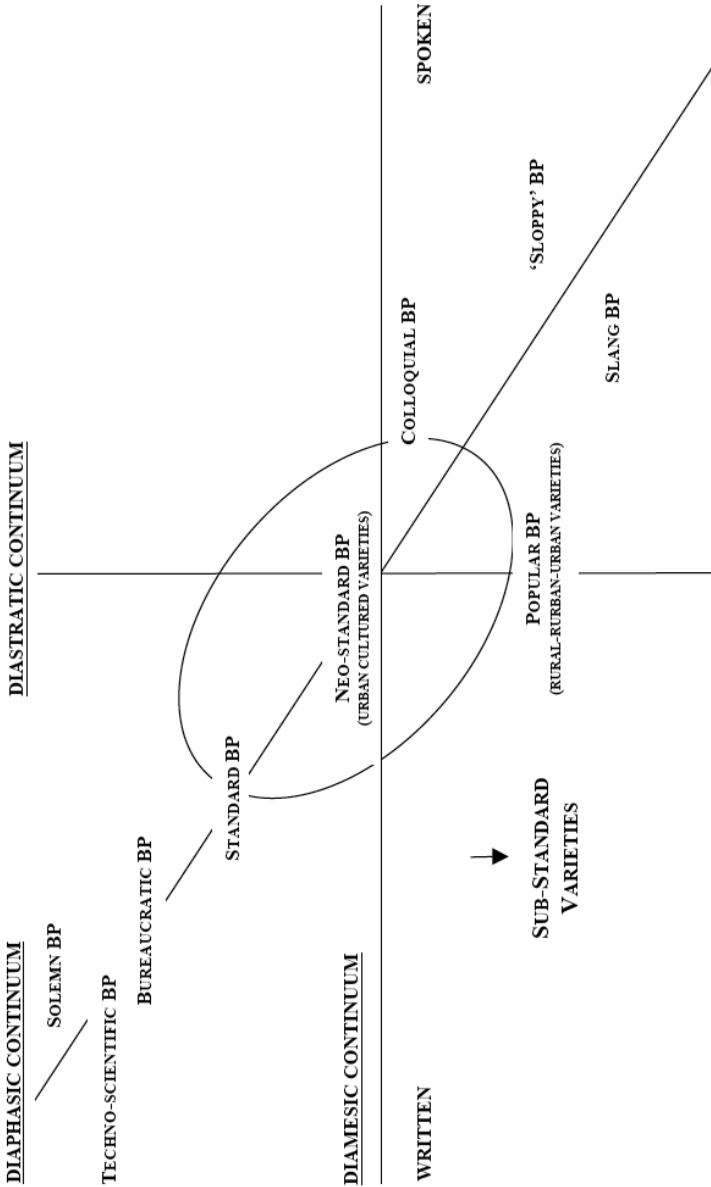


Fig. 1-1 Architecture of Brazilian Portuguese

for the creation of film language, it is even less true for the language of TV fiction, where the excessively concentrated use of sub-standard (stigmatized or non-stigmatized) features is possible because of the hyper-connotation and hyper-characterization of fictional characters.

Both TV series chosen for analysis use elements and oral varieties which tend towards the neo-standard BP but they also show a strongly connotated spoken language with elements from sub-standard varieties belonging to popular varieties of BP (hence PBP) which are used in less monitored contexts and situations and in order to characterize characters.

In the series *Mandrake*, the scriptwriters José Henrique Fonseca, Tony Bellotto e Felipe Braga, have freely adapted the character created by the novelist Rubem Fonseca. The series focuses on Mandrake, a criminal lawyer from Rio de Janeiro and most of the series' characters speak a sub-standard variety which makes the original linguistic and stylistic choices of the writer even more characterized. The second series chosen for analysis, *FDP*, tells the vicissitudes of a soccer referee. The original screenplay has been written by Adriano Civita, Francesco Civita and Giuliano Cedroni and the series is directed by Katia Lund (among the others), who is also co-director of *Cidade de Deus* (2002). The language used is a neo-standard variety of BP and the use of PBP varieties is only sporadic.

Despite the presence of some limits due to the strong characterization of characters, the language of TV Brazilian fictions makes use of neo-standard, non-standard and sub-standard varieties and elements with the aim of showing the contemporary diamesic variation which is, consequently, recognized by the audience as the reproduction of language in context. The features of the spoken language used can be distinguished according to those elements which show the existence of a grammar of spoken language which is different from the grammar of written language². However, text types, genres and the features of the target audience (which in the case of networks such as HBO—where the two TV series are broadcast—is large and heterogeneous) represent two further extra-linguistic variables which are to be added to the diamesic variation

² Textual and interactional features of spoken language are frequent hesitations, interruptions, false starts, editing, repetitions, paraphrases, overlaps, etc. Syntactic features of spoken language are short sentences, juxtapositions, non-clausal units, ellipsis; discursive markers are: *então*, *ora* at the beginning of a turn or of an utterance; textual or pragmatic connectives such as *isso*, *aí*; attention getters such as *olha*. In the lexical domain, there is a wide use of slang and present-day slang (*calão*, *gíria comum* or *gíria de grupo*), and also of obscene and offensive words, which are frequent elements of colloquial language.

of language and account for the presence of highly marked elements from sub-standard language, as in the case of the detective fiction, *Mandrake*, or of the “mixed genre” TV series set in the world of soccer such as *FDP*.

2. Audiovisual Translation and Sociolinguistic Adequacy

Translation is usually defined in terms of transposition from a (variety of) standard language to another (variety of) standard language and most of the problems which are object of discussion among translation theorists imply this default situation (Berruto 2010, 899).

However, if this default situation may be considered arguable in the domain of literary translation because literary language is more and more often being characterized by sociolinguistically marked elements and varieties, it is even more questionable in the domain of audiovisual translation (Díaz Cintas 2009, Díaz Cintas and Anderman 2009, Pavesi 2005, Perego 2005, Perego and Taylor 2012). In this domain, the transmitted language varieties, such as the spoken language used in the Brazilian audiovisual products, show a high degree of diastratic and diaphasic markedness which is even higher in TV products which tend to characterize and connotate sociolinguistically some of the characters by exaggerating factitiously their linguistic and expressive features.

In fact, in many Brazilian TV series (in this case, mainly in the series *Mandrake*) the tendency towards a factitious recreation of spontaneous spoken language is particularly visible in those characters who speak the PBP variety. The result is the presence of an excessive use of those features which usually have a lower frequency in spoken language.

From a translational point of view, problems related to the sociolinguistic adequacy of translation are due to the fact that in Brazilian TV fiction products, many spoken varieties of BP are used and that sub-standard elements and/or diastratic and diaphasic varieties are used alternatively with neo-standard³ language.

“Guardando alla traduzione dalla prospettiva sociolinguistica, il problema centrale è appunto quello dei testi sociolinguisticamente marcati per la compresenza di più varietà di lingua, ciascuna delle quali per definizione è portatrice di significati sociali intrinseci alla comunità linguistica della

³ The standard variety of BP is highly codified and acquired through formal teaching; it is used only in formal contexts and for some written genres (mainly academic writing). In practice, the diasystem of the BP has an overt prestige variety (standard variety), a covert prestige variety (neo-standard variety), and a sub-system of popular stigmatized varieties.

lingua di partenza. Si tratta quindi della traduzione del significato sociale associato agli elementi (forme, parole, costrutti) di una lingua che lo veicolano.” (Berruto, 2010, 900).

On the basis of what Berruto says, by sociolinguistic adequacy is meant the rendering of “the social meaning of linguistic signs” (2010, 900). The rendering of meaning implies the use of a number of different strategies because sociolinguistic equivalence may be hardly achieved due to the differences in the structures of source and target languages (Cf. Berruto 1987, 1995, 2006).

Indeed, a sociolinguistically equivalent rendering of marked elements would imply the identification of a similarly marked translation equivalent along the diaphasic or diastratic continuum or in the dimension of diatopic variation. This process which should tend towards the naturalization of the language of the sociolinguistically marked varieties—and not towards the neutralization—may lead, on the other hand, to the total neutralization of the degree and type of markedness of translation equivalents, which in this way, will result standardized in the target text. This latter solution is the most used in the Italian dubbing of TV series and has, as a result, a target language which may be seen as a type of dubbese tending towards a neo-standard or a monitored informal spoken language.

Besides the achievement of sociolinguistic equivalence and the neutralization of markedness, in the domain of audiovisual translation, other translation compensatory strategies can be considered and applied with reference to sociolinguistic adequacy, such as those proposed by Berruto (2010, 902):

“[S]i può (bi) rendere un elemento marcato nella lingua di partenza per una certa dimensione di variazione con un elemento marcato nella lingua d’arrivo per un’altra dimensione di variazione, o, (bii) rendere un elemento marcato a un certo livello di analisi con un elemento marcato per un altro livello di analisi, o ancora, (biii), rendere l’elemento marcato nella forma neutra standard e tradurre in altro punto contiguo del testo un elemento non marcato nella lingua di partenza con un elemento marcato nella lingua d’arrivo; con eventuale somma o combinazione di (bi), (bii) e (biii): resa di un elemento di un certo livello di analisi marcato per una dimensione mediante un elemento di un altro livello di analisi marcato per un’altra dimensione di variazione e/o in un altro punto del testo.”

The translation strategies discussed by Berruto propose to create and keep a variational opposition between the marked element and the rest of the text⁴.

2.1. *Mandrake* and *FDP*

The two TV series analyzed in this paper show a partially specialized language. In the *Mandrake* series, where the main character is a lawyer, the language of law is frequently used. In the *FDP* series the main character is a soccer referee and the use of the language of soccer is limited. Nevertheless, in both cases explanations and sometimes trivializing reformulations are used as a narrative strategy and in order to make the two specialized languages less opaque.

For this reason, the analysis will focus particularly—both in the original and the subtitled and dubbed versions—on a series of scenes and communicative situations from *Mandrake* and *FDP* where different varieties of language and situations of multilingualism with code-switching and code-mixing (BP/Spanish) phenomena are present.

In the first episode of *Mandrake*, titled *A cidade não é aquilo que se vê do Pão de Açúcar*, (TV transposition of *O caso de F.A.* by Rubem Fonseca⁵) different varieties of BP with a certain degree of diatopic, diastratic and diaphasic markedness are present together with code-switching and code-mixing phenomena, which are neutralized in the dubbed version.

However, before considering the translation strategies used by translators in the adaptation and dubbing of the first episode of *Mandrake*, a series of closer analyses are needed. Scenes should first be analyzed through a macroanalysis of TV fiction conversation, through an analysis of the historical and geographical context (diatopic variation), and an analysis of a series of extralinguistic factors and their possible influence on characters, such as their level of education, job, social status, age and sex (diastratic variation). Scenes also need to be analyzed through a microanalysis of TV fiction conversation in order to identify details related to the situation where the interaction is taking place (socio-situational

⁴ The strategies indicated by Berruto can be referred to Nida's concept of dynamic equivalence (1964) even though they are oriented towards sociolinguistic adequacy.

⁵ *O caso de F.A.* is included in the collection of tales titled *Lúcia McCartney* (1967).

variation)⁶, which involves those pragmatic elements which occur in spoken language and generate contrasts such as proximity/distantiation, clarity/opaqueness, power/submission, together with other conversational strategies used by speakers during the dialogue (Cf. Orletti 2008, Preti 2004, 2008).

In the first segment analyzed, two lawyers are among the participants of the dialogic interaction: Mandrake and Wrexler, and Jorge Fonseca, who is the promoter of the girls of the Sun Shine, the place where Mandrake goes to meet Pâmela, the girl one of his clients is in love with:

Mandrake – Original version

<i>Mandrake:</i>	Como é que você me achou aqui?
<i>Jorge Fonseca:</i>	O problema não é como é que te achei aqui, é o que é que eu tô fazen(d)o aqui!
<i>Mandrake:</i>	Ê, o que é que cê tá fazendo aqui?
<i>Jorge Fonseca:</i>	Cê tá a fim da Pâmela, não tá?
<i>Mandrake:</i>	Tô!
<i>Jorge Fonseca:</i>	<u>Yo quiero la plata!!!</u>
<i>Mandrake:</i>	La <u>plata</u> é com esse aqui ó!
<i>Wrexler:</i>	Aqui não tem <u>plata</u> nenhuma...mas o que é isso aí?

The first thing to be noticed is that despite some differences in terms of status and role of the participants, the interaction can be defined symmetrical. The language spoken by Mandrake is gradually adapted to the language spoken by Jorginho through a series of conversational strategies such as the informal pronoun of address VOCÊ which is replaced by its aphaeretic form CÊ (which can be used only as a subject).

The language spoken by Jorginho reveals his low-intermediate educational level which reflects the diasystem of urban popular varieties. Furthermore, the presence of some slang words should be interpreted with reference to Jorginho's job and the place where he works and may be considered as a sort of a sub-code or a jargon.

From a morphophonetic point of view, besides the use of the aphaeretic form CÊ, it is interesting to notice the non-articulation of the dental voiced occlusive /d/, which is made agglutinated by the nasal consonant in the forms of the gerund <fazendo>vs<fazen(d)o>. Conversely, from a morphosyntactic point of view, the alternation between TU/(VO)CÊ in the

⁶ Relevant factors of the diaphasic variation are the level of formality or informality of the communicative situation and the speaker's degree of attention and control in the linguistic production.

language spoken by Jorginho, the use of the clitic forms for the direct second person TU (“O problema não é como é que TE achei aqui...”) associated to the (VO)CÊ may have the stylistic-expressive function of connoting the language spoken by Jorginho as sub-standard. However, the interpretation of this linguistic trait has radically changed over the last thirty years thus contributing to the restructuration of the forms of the pronominal paradigm with the implementation of the grammaticalized pronominal forms VOCÊ/VOCÊS and A GENTE. This restructuration has brought a number of grammatical implications at different levels. In fact, the neo-standard BP shows the alternation of the two indirect pronouns of address TU/VOCÊ but the pronoun TU with the verb in the third person is still considered a marked element. The alternation may occur both for the syntactic form of subject and object and for the other syntactic functions with the unstressed forms and with those forms introduced by a preposition (for example: Eu queria levar VOCÊ no show/Eu queria TE levar no show; Isso é para TI!/Isso é para VOCÊ). The way and the frequency this alternation occurs in the language spoken by Jorginho together with some lexical elements from the semantic field of sex (Preti 2010) are, obviously, to be considered as part of the process of characterization and connotation of the character through language. This process becomes more marked if the alternation is compared with the constant use of the pronominal form VOCÊ in the language spoken by Mandrake and Wrexler and when, later in the episode, the alternation will include the subject pronoun: “Agora se VOCÊ qui ser ficar 3 horas com ela dá pra fazer por 2.5. Mas o melhor mesmo é TU dormir com a mulher, entendeu? TU dorme com ela, 4 contos, passa a noite inteira CONTIGO, TE ama, TE dá beijo na boca, entendeu? Olha nos TEUS olhos e fala meu amor”. However, it needs to be said that although this alternation is considered marked, its markedness is now interpreted as a diaphasic variation and as a feature of the informal BP.

The situation radically changes in the Italian dubbed version, as visible from the dialogues reported below:

Mandrake –Italian dubbed version

<i>Mandrake:</i>	Come ha fatto a trovarmi?
<i>Jorge Fonseca:</i>	La domanda non è come ti ho trovato, ma perché sono venuto qui!
<i>Mandrake:</i>	Perché è venuto qui?
<i>Jorge Fonseca:</i>	Stai cercando Pamela, giusto?
<i>Mandrake:</i>	Giusto!
<i>Jorge Fonseca:</i>	E io voglio la <u>grana</u> !!!
<i>Mandrake:</i>	La <u>grana</u> ce l’ha lui!
<i>Wrexler:</i>	Qui non c’è nessuna <u>grana</u> ...e questo cos’è?