

Elena Di Giovanni
(ed.)

Diálogos intertextuales 5:
Between Text and Receiver:
Translation and Accessibility

Entre texto y receptor:
traducción y accesibilidad



PETER LANG

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The volume brings together up-to-date contributions on translation and accessibility, with a major focus on audiovisual texts, their translations and receivers across languages and cultures. Featuring studies of dubbing, interlingual subtitling, subtitles for the Deaf and Hard of hearing (SDH), audio description and other translation techniques, as they are employed and developed across Europe, the book also covers all the major issues related to the reception of translated and accessible texts. Five essays focus on children as unique viewers and receivers of translated audiovisual texts, thus providing a valuable contribution to the development of research in audiovisual translation for children.

El volumen recoge las últimas contribuciones sobre traducción y accesibilidad, con un enfoque mayoritario en textos audiovisuales, en su traducción y en sus receptores en diversos sistemas lingüístico-culturales. Además de ofrecer estudios sobre doblaje, subtitulación, subtitulación para sordos, audiodescripción y otras técnicas de traducción tal como son empleadas y desarrolladas en Europa, el libro también cubre aquellos temas centrales en la recepción de textos traducidos y accesibles. Cinco de los artículos se centran en los niños como receptores de los textos audiovisuales traducidos, por lo que se puede considerar esta obra como una valiosa contribución al desarrollo de las investigaciones en traducción audiovisual para un público infantil.

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Connecting the dots in audiovisual translation research: Translation, reception, accessibility and children

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1. Preliminary reflections

Translation, reception, accessibility, children.

These are the key words which emerge from a survey of the papers gathered in this volume. Three of them appear in the main title and a fourth is easily inferred by taking a look at the book index. These four words highlight a common core, a thread which runs through all fourteen contributions, despite their diverse nature and focus. Moreover, each of these four words points to a vast domain, a wide territory made of theories and practices which willingly lowers its barriers to let in theoretical reflections and practical experiences from other, not necessarily bordering domains.

Encountering the universes these four words evoke is perhaps only possible within the multidimensional, multifaceted and multidisciplinary realm of translation studies, whose ever changing face is reflected in the extremely varied and eclectic publications available on the subject. To mention but one, here follows a short excerpt from *Changing the Terms. Translation in the postcolonial era*, by Sherry Simon and Paul St. Pierre:

The internationalization of networks of translation studies has led to new conversations among scholars from a wide variety of countries. This sudden diversification and true globalization of the field is exciting (2000: 12).

If it is true that the internationalization of translation studies (TS) has given way to unprecedented diversification in terms of research, and its worldwide diffusion has made it a truly global discipline, it is perhaps not so true that such an expansion has been sudden, having roughly occurred over a twenty-year span. However, it has to be noticed that remarks on the internationalization and thematic expansion of TS are often to be found in publications like the one by Simon and St. Pierre, whose conceptual framework is strongly interdisciplinary. It is very often the case, though, that nowadays such remarks appear in most books which offer an overall view of TS and its state of the art. In the very first lines of his recently reviewed version of *Introducing translation studies*, Jeremy

Munday states that TS is by (its) nature “multilingual and multidisciplinary” (2008: 1), a fact, he claims, that makes it difficult to control and survey the amount of publications and reflections devoted to such a discipline.

Over the past decade, translation studies has been passing its multidisciplinary essence onto its offspring, i.e. the sub-disciplines which have stemmed out of it and developed somewhat independently. Among them is audiovisual translation studies (AVTS), undoubtedly one of the fastest developing research areas under the huge umbrella of TS, whose constant growth reflects a parallel, unrelenting increase in the practice of audiovisual translation worldwide. In fact, one of the great merits of research and researchers in audiovisual translation is their observing, discussing, questioning and testing real practices, with meetings and conferences enlivened by a fruitful mixture of professionals and academics.

Having inherited an interdisciplinary dimension from its parent discipline, AVTS has opened up to new inputs from the market but also from a large number of fields of study, thus enhancing its very expansion and establishing strong ties with such areas of research as cognitivism, sociology, cultural studies, and the like. It has also come to encompass new practices and their scientific investigation, as is the case for accessibility and all the language-related activities that it implies. And if accessibility in the USA is studied within psychology, or occasionally engineering¹, in Europe it has carved an increasingly important niche within AVTS, leading the discipline towards unforeseen expansions. The study of accessibility at the European level, to which this volume provides a meaningful contribution, has also had the merit of awakening the conscience of national and supra-national bodies entrusted with the enhancement of accessible services, but also of the national associations gathering people with visual and hearing impairments.

What seems particularly relevant about the recent developments in the study and promotion of accessibility is that it has drawn the attention of a number of countries where accessible audiovisual entertainment was only an occasional luxury until recently (Italy, Poland, Greece) and also that it more and more frequently comes to reflect on, and act in favour of, important sections of the viewing population like children and teenagers.

Children are indeed important, although their approach to the media and their contents are very often neglected. If the output and translation of audiovisual material for children is on the increase, with a proliferating amount of dedicated TV channels as well as animated films in cinemas, when it comes to studying the viewing habits and the needs of this segment of the audience hardly

1 With reference to the technology that is designed and employed to provide accessibility.

any contribution is to be found. And yet it is certainly true that more attention is needed, as Eithne O'Connell points out:

In view of the long hours spent by most children in front of the television screens, in particular, studies of translations produced for children must broaden their scope to include the analysis of screen translation for children as it is currently practised (2006: 22).

This lack of attention is, in all probability, to be ascribed to the stereotyped and superficial view which sees the world of children as simple, one sided and generally unworthy of “serious” investigation. This seems to be especially true of audiovisual products for children, regardless of their increasingly complex nature, narrative structure and ultramodern, computer-generated contents. This lack of attention on the part of the academic community, especially within audiovisual translation studies, seems to recall the carelessness which is at times to be found in the practice of cartoon translation for television in certain countries (see Di Giovanni, 2010), whose observation often highlights a non-systematic, hasty and too literal approach to translation, resulting in an inconsistent and incoherent use of language.

In order to dismantle the superficial, clichéd views described above and, perhaps more significantly, to raise awareness on the inadequacy of certain translation practices for children, I am inclined to believe that a joint effort from academics and practitioners would be the ideal although probably utopian solution. However, embarking on a systematic observation of the strategies and trends applied to the translation of audiovisual texts for children, from different angles and in different countries, would certainly prove a valuable starting point to foster awareness, even on the professional front. Fostering awareness would imply not only attributing the right value to young viewers and the audiovisual products conceived for them, but also bringing to light other important issues related to the growth, education and integration of children within society.

Five of the papers presented in this volume address several of the issues hinted at above, all of them laying a brick towards the foundation of an integrated, multidisciplinary study of audiovisual translation for young viewers. Bringing to the fore the practices of subtitling for the deaf, audio description and dubbing for children, as well as minority language translation of animated products, these papers provide food for thought to all scholars who have considered turning their attention to this very special segment of the viewing population.

Turning attention to the viewers, a basic requirement for all analytical enquiries with a claim to exhaustiveness, is as important when studying texts for children as it is when dealing with those for the general audience. After all, can the audience ever be considered “general”? Can we really generalize when re-

flecting upon the impact of audiovisual texts and the appropriateness of their contents? Can we possibly make comments on translation strategies without having a clear picture of the audience which an original and a translated text appeal to? And can we ignore the fact that the media shape their own audiences but are, in turn, also shaped by the viewers themselves?

Questions like these immediately draw our attention to the notions of reception and receiver, whose importance is more or less evident in all the papers presented in this volume, offering inputs as to how different segments of the viewing population (children, adults, individuals with visual or hearing impairments, etc.) appreciate and understand audiovisual texts. Nonetheless, even though issues of reception are said to be a priority for most scholars in this field, audiovisual translation studies focusing primarily on them are still scanty. In most cases, remarks on reception are to be found towards the end of papers and books, as a sort of exhortation to proceed with further research without really providing any sound reflection or insight. This is all the more paradoxical if we consider the strong ties between reception studies and the observation of the media, their communicative power and their consumption, which is very often mediated by translation. A reason for this lack of a consolidated research path bringing together AVTS and reception studies lies in the undeniable difficulty to identify media audiences². However, difficult though they may be to identify and explain, media audiences are indeed the driving force behind the success or decline of the media themselves; they are a dynamic, increasingly diverse and demanding force, whose specific identity and requirements are also extremely relevant for the translation process.

If no comprehensive investigation of the links between reception studies and AVTS has yet seen the light, a good starting point in this direction is, indeed, provided by studies which encompass socio-cultural reflections, questions of identity and cross-cultural relations in their investigation of audiovisual translation, as is the case for some of the papers in this volume (see Rodríguez; García González and Veiga Díaz). Even more promising are the opportunities which are opened up by research on accessibility, which almost by default requires a thorough consideration of the audience and their needs. On the whole, we could say that boosting reception-oriented approaches would prove beneficial to all areas of investigation within AVTS, as the identity of the audience and the way it is shaped by the *mediation* (Schroeder et al.: 2003) exerted by the media between people's lives and their viewing experiences, is of outmost importance, regardless of the analytical approach or case study which is selected.

2 “Audiences are hard to analyze because, in the first instance, they are difficult to define.” (Ruddock, 2001: 8)

Thus, by drawing attention to reception and its great relevance within the study of audiovisual translation, the circle has been closed around the four concepts which have been said to be at the core of this volume. Concepts which, as outlined above, can enter into countless associations with each other, in research as well as in everyday life. The latter also lend themselves to generating different chains of thought, different lines of investigation, different reflections and analyses. As this volume shows, there is no limit as to how they can be drawn together and tackled by researchers, providing heterogeneous reflections, making use of different methodologies and observing very different case studies, but ultimately (and constructively) contributing to the reinforcement and growth of research activities within a domain which is “acting as a microcosm” (Neves and Remael, 2006: 11), attracting multiple stimuli and adjusting to the ever-changing face of media consumption worldwide.

And if research cannot but follow the development of practice in every context, hard though it may be in situations of rapid, almost uncontrolled expansion, the future of AVTS lies precisely in promoting multifarious (multidisciplinary) approaches like those which are gathered in this volume. They are the only ones which can help define new research avenues and contribute to the building of a solid theoretical framework to support the ever-growing, ever-changing face of media production, translation and reception.

2. The volume

Now that the main concepts at stake have been introduced, I shall proceed to outline the volume’s structure and rationale behind each chapter. Before doing so, however, I wish to point out that the Spanish and English papers have been intentionally juxtaposed in the book’s two sections. This has been done in order to emphasize the thematic rather than linguistic and cultural connections among the contributions; to identify a continuum among them, which leads from comprehensive reflections to more specific analyses.

2.1 Translation and receivers

The first section in the volume is the largest and most eclectic: it features one contribution on the translation of contemporary literary works whose structure recalls that of film narratives, two papers on screen translation, one on film translation, two on dubbing and one on subtitling. It follows a path which covers the most important issues, strategies, methodologies and techniques relevant for

the study and practice of translation for and beyond screens. Moreover, all contributions make reference to the *receivers* of the translations they discuss; be they children or adults, within a specific cultural setting or virtually anywhere.

The first paper, by José-María Bravo, reflects on “Las nuevas tendencias de la traducción cinematográfica”. The author evokes some of the most relevant aspects of contemporary audiovisual translation, giving the reader a theoretical and industry-related overview of the state of the art. After recalling the relatively new nature of audiovisual translation research, he surveys the most common techniques and focuses especially on two aspects: the audiovisual adaptation of literary material as intersemiotic translation and the new tendencies in subtitle translation. In relation to the first, Bravo draws on Roman Jakobson’s theories of the intersemiotic nature of translation to arrive, by way of Umberto Eco and George Steiner, at the most current and promising tendencies in studies of film adaptations of literary texts and other intersemiotic transfers (“novelizations,” adaptations of television series, comics and graphic novels, remakes, etc.). As regards subtitling, Bravo provides a comprehensive account of the new tendencies that have emerged in the last decades. These include multicoloured subtitling, DVD subtitling, subtitling on special screens, subtitles for the deaf, real time subtitling, fansubbing, and automatic subtitling.

In the second essay entitled “Traducir para la pantalla: el traductor entre el texto y la imagen”, José Yuste Frías also looks at audiovisual translation as a multisemiotic phenomenon and outlines its vast reach in the contemporary context. Most significantly, in his paper Yuste Frías unpacks the inadequacy of the concept of “subordinate translation” to refer to the process of linguistic transfer which makes audiovisual texts travel from one language/culture to another. In particular, Yuste Frías argues that the intersemiotic nature of the word/image pair leaves no space for subordination: the audiovisual text reflects the perfect blend of the two codes and the translator’s creative effort has to go towards the re-creation of this blend. The author’s remarks and claims are accompanied by an example of translation of paratexts: the cover of the French film *À la folie... pas du tout* (Laetitia Colombani, 2002). Yuste Frías analyses and compares the verbal-iconic changes made by the translators of the Spanish, German, English, Portuguese and Italian versions. Through theoretical reflections and comments on the translations, the author’s aim is to suggest a change in translation pedagogy, to reflect the specificity of audiovisual translation and the translator’s role as first agent of the gaze, first interpreter of the multisemiotic word/image pair.

In “Una historia del doblaje en España”, José Manuel Sande García presents a comprehensive overview of the development of the dubbing industry in Spain. He considers the early introduction of Spanish audiences to dubbed cinema to be

in line with the state-level measures to protect national film industries put into place by most European countries after the Second World War. Nevertheless, he emphasizes the singularity of the Spanish case where, after the end of the Civil War, a repressive nationalist ideology was the principal driver behind the promotion of dubbing as the only means of translating audiovisual texts. Sande García observes that, ironically, and despite the apparent protectionism of these measures, one of the direct results was the inability of national cinema to compete with popular US productions – free of censorship, rich in creative talent originating in postwar Europe, and supported by a stable and prosperous production system. While dubbing allowed the censors to control and modify the ideological content of Hollywood films, it also inevitably familiarized the spectator with this cinematography. Tracing the historical development of dubbing, Sande García notes that the end of the dictatorship and the consequent disappearance of censorship did not diminish the dominant position of dubbing, in part due to its industrialization and the decentralization of cultural competition with the advent of the autonomous communities. He concludes that the same factors that maintain the privileged position of the voice-over industry – which create a stable employment infrastructure for voice-over artists in the process – make it impossible to question the aptness of this mode of translation.

The fourth paper in this section focuses on a special segment of the audience of dubbed films, i.e. children. “The use of explicit translation in dubbing for children. Two case studies by Luis Alberto Iglesias Gómez and Ariza Mercedes addresses the issue of explicitation in screen translation, made all the more delicate by the reference to young viewers as principal receivers of the translated texts. The analysis is based on examples taken from the Spanish adaptations for the dubbing (and re-dubbing) of *Dumbo* (1941) and *Bambi* (1943), which are revealing of the translators’ and commissioners’ intentions. Explicit translation is analysed both in terms of the advantages it offers (enhancing informativity, bringing the texts closer to its very special receivers, etc.) and with reference to its potential side effects (neutralization, overinterpretation, etc.). The paper comes to its conclusion with a series of open questions, which are to be taken as stimuli for further research in the virtually unexplored realm of audiovisual translation for children.

The section continues with another paper on dubbing, with special reference to animated films dubbed in Galician: “Screen translation as a language planning tool: An analysis of Galician dubbed animated films” by Marta García González and María Teresa Veiga Díaz. The paper indirectly places children at the forefront again, as main receivers of the translations under analysis and also, more significantly, as receivers of the language planning policies which inform and direct the dubbing of animated films in Galician. Calling into play the no-

tion of “status” of a language, with reference to the amount and quality of translations into that language which is produced, the authors argue that the so-called “minority languages” (Cronin, 1995) rely on quality subtitling and dubbing to ensure that their status is enhanced and well perceived beyond regional or national boundaries. They also provide a detailed survey of the amount and type of dubbed animated films and TV series which have been released over more than ten years, focusing especially on the DVD distribution and analyzing some of the most meaningful strategies employed to support the language planning policy. They conclude by stating that, although the output of Galician dubbed animated products is on the increase, the government has recently switched the interest of their language policy to the Internet, which is considered a more immediate, widespread and easily accessible audiovisual medium for the Galician population (both children and adults).

Issues of translation and language policy are evoked also in the sixth paper by Beatriz Rodríguez, entitled “Current literary translation: Analysis of the Spanish and Galician translations of Paul Auster’s *The Brooklyn Follies*”. Although focusing on literary translation, the paper is very much in line with the others presented in this section and the overall book: it focuses on a literary work whose very structure recalls those of most present-day films and, more importantly, it zooms on issues of reception and receivers. It does so with reference to the Spanish and Galician translations of the same book, which are analyzed in terms of the different translational approaches they display. In an attempt to clarify the overall effect produced by two target versions whose audiences partially (or potentially) overlap, the authors reflect upon the different transpositions of intertextuality, cultural references and humour, concluding that the slightly more domesticating approach displayed by the Galician translation is paired with greater accuracy and attention to the needs of the receivers.

The final paper in this section, by Karen Barlow (“Can political correctness interfere in translating? On the Spanish subtitles of “Class” and “Mama Morton” in *Chicago*”), brings the focus back to audiovisual translation, more specifically to subtitling as a secondary technique employed alongside dubbing in the overall process of linguistic adaptation of musical films. In Italy, France, Germany and Spain, where dubbing is the norm, it has recently become common practice even though dialogues are re-voiced in the target language, to leave songs unchanged and accompany them with subtitles in the new version. Delving into the realm of translation studies in search of a renewed definition of “equivalence” which can serve the purpose of analyses of multisemiotic texts and their multifarious translations, Barlow then proceeds to discuss examples of the Spanish “mistranslation” (lack of equivalence) of two songs in the films. The cause is to be possibly found, according to the author, in a politically correct attitude

adopted by the translators, although the reasons for such an attitude are not clear. However, as Barlow argues, the very acknowledgement of mistranslation should lead researchers as well as practitioners to take into consideration all the possible effects of deliberate, and probably unjustified, political correctness.

2.2 Accessibility

The second, more specific section of the book shines the light on receivers, focusing on two highly debated and researched audiovisual translation techniques: audio description and subtitling for the deaf and hard of hearing. The paper which opens this section, by Pilar Orero, presents a unique view on a unique scenario: the audio description of animated characters for blind and visually impaired children. In “Audio description for children: Once upon a time there was a different audio description for characters”, Orero surveys the scanty literature on the issues she confronts in her paper, as well as the regulations which apply (in Spain and in the UK) to the drafting of audio description (AD), but which make no mention of the special strategies to be put in place when describing for the young and very young. The author delves specifically into the all-important issue of character description for animated films, highlighting the extent to which incorrect information sequencing can hamper the overall reception of the film. She suggests further research, as well as the testing of audio description in the first person, when addressing an all-special audience like blind and visually impaired children.

Reception, accessibility, children and of course translation are at the core of the second article in this section: “Deaf children and their access to audiovisual texts: Educational failure and the helplessness of the subtitler”, by Lourdes Lorenzo and Ana Pereira. Setting off in search of guiding principles for the creation of subtitles for deaf children and pointing out, insightfully, that the young receivers of these subtitles are to be considered “individuals in training”, Lorenzo and Pereira move on to explore the bleak scenario of deaf children education in Spain. On the grounds of their preliminary reflections, the authors provide a series of well-grounded, comprehensive recommendations for subtitlers making audiovisual texts accessible to deaf children. Such recommendations are firmly grounded in their knowledge and awareness of the existing Spanish laws and have the ultimate aim of promoting true, effective integration through the thorough appreciation of audiovisual texts. They could, and indeed should, be of guidance for professionals in this field, as well as researchers in Spain and beyond.

In “La adaptación del subtitulado para personas sordas” Irene Pazó Lorenzo brings the focus back to the general audience of SDH (subtitling for the deaf and hard of hearing) in Spain. She focuses on the challenges posed by new initiatives for the social, cultural and political integration of the deaf, concentrating especially on a specific kind of subtitling and its application to the needs of the deaf community. She begins by drawing a distinction between traditional (almost verbatim) subtitling, which assumes the recipients have a standard knowledge of the language, and adapted (condensed) subtitling, which recognizes and attempts to compensate for the low communicative competence – grammatical, syntactical and lexical lacunae – in the language which pertains to a section of the deaf community. This group, known as the “cultural deaf”, has been educated and communicates in sign language and, as a result, is less inclined to receive and understand traditional subtitling. Pazó Lorenzo, who argues in favour of adapted subtitling, illustrates its advantages through examples of reduction, expansion or substitution. She also analyses instances of syntactic, semantic and verbal adaptation aiming to bring the subtitles closer to the characteristics of sign language.

The following paper, by Almudena Pérez de Oliveira, runs on a similar track by focusing on “El subtitulado para sordos en las principales cadenas de televisión en España”. The aim of the study presented here is to illustrate and discuss the offer of SDH on the main Spanish television channels, with reference to their adherence (or non-adherence) to the Spanish norm UNE 153010. The author takes into account vital issues such as subtitle position, use of different fonts, colours, segmentation and written transcription of auditory stimuli. She comes to the conclusion of her brief but meaningful overview by stating that there is a fairly high degree of homogeneity among most channels in the overall set of conventions (fonts, colours, positioning and segmentation) whereas no uniformity can be traced in the verbal (written) reproduction of sounds. At the very end of her paper, Pérez advocates in favour of increased interaction amongst the providers of SDH and more homogeneity in the criteria used by the main TV broadcasters. Finally, she goes as far as suggesting an undoubtedly fruitful cooperation between universities and broadcasters.

The following two papers in the accessibility section of this book are devoted to the exploration of country-based practices, principles and research. While Nela Justo Sanmartín explores the state of the art in the UK in “El subtitulado para sordos y personas con discapacidad auditiva en Inglaterra”, Maria Estrella Moreira zooms in on German television stations and their provision of SDH in “Subtítulos para sordos en la television alemana”. Both studies operate on the assumption that all citizens are entitled to equal access to information, culture and leisure, whatever their degree or type of sensory impairment. In this

spirit, Moreira criticizes the situation in Germany, which clearly lags behind other European countries in its path towards integration, while Justo applauds the notable progress made by public and private institutions in the UK and their efforts to include the entire population in the potential audience for television programming, whether this be films or TV productions. In their studies, both Moreira and Justo provide detailed analyses of technical aspects (duration, number of characters per line, channel ID, subtitle position, etc.), ortho/typographical aspects (use of capitals and quotation marks, dash and suspension marks, question and exclamation marks, etc.) and phonological elements (volume and tone of voice, emphasis, queries, unfinished sentences, surprise, annoyance...). In the conclusion to her study, Moreira attributes the lack of homogeneity and the low quality of German TV subtitling to the absence of a national policy or law laying out/stating the responsibilities of the television channels. Justo, in turn, applauds the development of subtitling for the deaf in the UK and the legal framework that has allowed the process of implementing subtitling for the deaf and audio description for the blind to progress with such enviable speed and efficiency.

Last but not least, the paper by Shaila Varela Romero (“Subtitulado para sordos: camino hacia una normativa. Análisis del éxito comunicativo de *Chicken Run (Evasión en la Granja)* y *Pinocho 3000*”) brings children to the fore again, providing a perfect conclusion to the series of contributions gathered in this volume. Focusing on the Spanish subtitles for the deaf which are to be found in the DVDs of two animated films, i.e. *Chicken Run (Evasión en la granja)*, 2000) and *Pinocho 3000* (2004), Varela Romero analyses the treatment of humour, the representation of mood, sound effects and music, as well as the strategies of semantic-syntactical synthesis and segmentation adopted for the subtitles of the two films. Varela Romero’s analysis lingers on the limitations of traditional subtitles for a deaf audience and, more importantly, it highlights the advantages of adapted subtitling as proposed by Pazó Lorenzo in a previous paper. Both Pazó Lorenzo and Varela Romero advocate the creation of more effective guidelines for SDH in Spain, which should also inform translators about the cognitive skills of their audience and their ability to understand the spoken language.

As the brief survey of the issues covered in this volume has demonstrated, translation, receivers, accessibility and children are at the core of all the papers contained here, whose multilingual and multicultural approaches stretch far beyond the languages used, and the cultures referred to, by the authors. And if an additional key word can be added to the four core issues introduced in the title of this introduction to the book, it has to be *translator*. Audiovisual translators for dubbing, subtitling or accessibility are too often neglected by scholars and

their essential role in relaying meaning (and entertainment) from one language/culture to the other is often ignored. All the papers gathered here hint at the pivotal role of the translator, which nonetheless should be more often singled out, analysed, perhaps criticized and certainly praised. And if *translation* never happens without translators, the latter are also the *receivers* par excellence in any translation process: they receive the source text and convey it in a different language while making hypotheses about the receivers of the target text. Moreover, translators are purveyors of *accessibility* and they are main agents in the process of adaptation of audiovisual contents for *children* of different ages and different cultures.

Thus, with the addition of a fifth key issue, the circle has been closed again around the issues dealt with in the fourteen papers collected in this volume which, I sincerely hope as editor, readers will enjoy and benefit from.

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Translations and Receivers / Traducciones y Receptores

Las nuevas tendencias de la traducción cinematográfica¹

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1. Introducción

El presente trabajo toma como punto de partida una serie de hechos nuevos, de tendencias nuevas, que es posible observar en el panorama actual de la traducción de textos cinematográficos. Por eso, no es este el lugar adecuado para hablar de la tan controvertida “conveniencia” de que exista la traducción audiovisual; en este sentido, adoptamos el punto de vista de Fernández Nistal (2006: 305), quien afirma:

Es preciso deshacer aquí un mito muy extendido: desde el punto de vista comercial, en los mercados de exportación, la versión original propiamente dicha no existe – excepto, naturalmente, en los que comparten la lengua en la que está producido el film – y el cine que consumimos es cine traducido: cine doblado, cine en V.O. subtitolada (es decir: traducida) o cine en “voice-over” (en el caso de los países del Este, como Polonia y Rusia)... pero, en cualquier caso, siempre *cine traducido*” [El énfasis es nuestro].

Ni es tampoco este trabajo el lugar apropiado para hablar de la “proverbial falta de calidad” de la traducción audiovisual, de cuyas diferentes modalidades se han dicho ya todo tipo de “lindezas”, por parte de personas mucho más autorizadas que nosotros, personalidades tan prestigiosas como Borges, quien, en un artículo publicado en *Sur*, en junio de 1945, habla de un “maligno artificio que se llama doblaje”, al que no duda en calificar, entre otras cosas, de “anomalía fonético-visual”, de combinación “espantosa”, de “monstruo” y de “engaño” (Cozarinsky 1981: 77-79); Giannetti, quien, en relación con los subtítulos, afirma tajantemente que: “Nobody likes to “read” a movie”, 1999: 213); Romá Gubern (2001: 83), para quien, “El arte del doblaje consiste en hacer que las infidelidades inherentes a una traducción resulten lo más tolerables posibles para el público”); o Javier Marías, autor de sendos artículos verdaderamente demoledores titulados: “¿Es Vd. el Santo Fantasma?” (2001) y “Productos Podridos” (2005).

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Todo ello, para no recordar el conocidísimo chiste de las cabras de Hitchcock sobre la traducción intersemiótica (cfr. Truffaut 1985: 129).

Aquí vamos a analizar otros aspectos de la traducción audiovisual. Vamos a hablar de la traducción audiovisual en su ámbito natural: *el mundo de la industria*. Y, en este sentido, conviene no olvidar, en primer lugar, que la industria audiovisual es una actividad económica muy seria, que mueve cantidades de dinero ingentes, una industria tan importante que es la segunda industria de exportación internacional más grande del mundo, después de la industria armamentística y antes de la aeroespacial [<http://www.wto.org/>]; y, naturalmente, una industria que ha tenido tradicionalmente una vocación exportadora, para lo cual ha necesitado siempre de la traducción, hasta el punto de que sea posible afirmar que la V. O. propiamente dicha (i.e. sin traducción) no existe en los mercados de exportación a los países que hablan otras lenguas, porque muy pocas personas son capaces de entender un largometraje hablado en una lengua extranjera sin apoyo traductológico alguno.

Y vamos a estudiar la traducción audiovisual en *el marco de la tecnología*, que está transformando el mundo en el que vivimos vertiginosamente: comprobaremos cómo esta industria, que goza de un extraordinario dinamismo, está en proceso de cambio constante, en alianza con los nuevos avances tecnológicos, cómo está introduciendo constantemente novedades técnicas e inventando continuamente nuevas modalidades de traducción para conseguir llegar al público (a sus clientes) en su propia lengua y aumentar los sectores de población a los que vender sus productos, como las que vamos a presentar aquí y otras que se observan ya tímidamente – por ejemplo, la inclusión de pistas de audio en “voice over” en DVD para las comunidades de polacos o de rusos instalados en España – como reacción comercial inmediata al creciente multilingüismo y multiculturalismo de nuestro país. Y es, precisamente, la extraordinaria dependencia de la traducción audiovisual respecto de la industria y de la tecnología lo que explica que sea un área de la actividad humana muy cambiante, en continua evolución y con múltiples facetas, con perspectivas muy variadas.

Especificando más, habría que decir que consideramos que sería una verdadera “misión imposible” tratar de abarcar, en un trabajo como el presente, simultáneamente, la totalidad de los productos audiovisuales, además de que un estudio de semejante naturaleza no iba a llevarnos muy lejos, por lo que, de entre todos los géneros audiovisuales (largometrajes, teleseries, dibujos animados, documentales, productos multimedia, etc.), vamos a centrarnos aquí en los largometrajes de cine comercial – es decir: en el cine que consumimos todos los días en las salas comerciales y en las pantallas de televisión – por ser, indiscutiblemente, el género audiovisual más importante cuantitativa y cualitativa-

mente hablando y, naturalmente, también porque este género constituye nuestra especialidad.

Y, dentro de este marco general, como indica el título, nuestro objetivo será analizar las nuevas tendencias que es posible observar en esta área de estudio en los últimos años. Más específicamente, nuestro punto de partida serán los siguientes hechos:

1.1. No es una empresa fácil analizar la traducción cinematográfica

En primer lugar, porque, a diferencia de lo que sucede con otros tipos de traducciones, aquí aún no contamos con suficiente perspectiva histórica.

En efecto, si bien el ejercicio profesional de la traducción cinematográfica es tan antiguo como la propia cinematografía – que nació, como es bien sabido, en 1895 – conviene no olvidar que nos encontramos ante una disciplina académica nueva y que, si hacemos abstracción de la traducción intersemiótica, en las universidades españolas, esta actividad, en cuanto disciplina académica, no empezó a tener una presencia tímida en los planes de estudio de licenciatura y en los programas de doctorado hasta 1993. Aunque no sea menos cierto que se trata de una modalidad de traducción que entró en ebullición a finales de la década de los 90 – la primera monografía escrita en español fue la publicada por Agost sobre el doblaje en 1999 – y que esté muy de moda en la actualidad, como puede comprobarse, por ejemplo, consultando la lista de distribución de Internet que modera Xosé Castro y que cuenta, en estos momentos, con más de 2.700 suscriptores².

No obstante, conviene no dejarse llevar por el entusiasmo que suscitan las modas y es preciso recordar aquí, desde el principio, que nos encontramos ante una área de estudio que se encuentra todavía en una fase exploratoria y que, en nuestra opinión, los trabajos publicados hasta el día de la fecha han servido, en términos generales, simplemente para iniciar el debate y para confirmar que hay aquí una laguna científica que es preciso colmar.

En efecto, disponemos todavía de muy pocos conocimientos teóricos y trabajos de investigación acerca de las implicaciones de carácter específico del proceso de trasvase traductológico en los medios audiovisuales en general y en la cinematografía en particular y, más específicamente, podríamos decir que contamos con trabajos descriptivos interesantes de carácter puntual, pero, hasta la fecha, ningún investigador ha conseguido poner a punto una metodología, bien desarrollada y de carácter global, que permita el estudio en profundidad de

2 Cfr. <http://es.groups.yahoo.com/group/trag/> [Consulta: 15/04/2008].

esos artefactos tan complejos que denominamos films y estamos aún muy lejos de contar con un paradigma o modelo teórico, para cuyo desarrollo habría que basarse en el análisis de las obras cinematográficas como sistemas semióticos que operan en el marco de la industria cinematográfica. Por lo demás, sería imprescindible verificar la viabilidad de las hipótesis que se propongan sobre un corpus suficientemente representativo de textos cinematográficos.

1.2. La cinematografía es una actividad industrial

Para poder llegar a entender lo que es la traducción cinematográfica es preciso tomar como punto de partida el hecho de que la cinematografía es, ante todo, una actividad industrial, que genera productos industriales a los que denominamos “películas” y que se enmarca dentro del ámbito de la industria del espectáculo o “show business”, que es, fundamentalmente, una industria norteamericana, cuya lengua de trabajo es el inglés y que alcanza su expresión más representativa en lo que se conoce con la denominación de “el cine de Hollywood”. Lo que significa, entre otras cosas, que se rige por las leyes de la industria, la primera de las cuales es que el productor está ahí para ganar dinero, y estamos hablando de cifras muy serias, como lo demuestran los siguientes datos referidos todos ellos al ejercicio de 2007:

- a) Sólo en EE.UU. la industria cinematográfica (la famosa “U.S. Motion Picture Industry”) daba empleo directo a más de 357.000 personas, según la oficina federal de estadística (“Bureau of Labor Statistics”).
- b) En Hollywood, el coste medio de producción de un largometraje lo que se denomina en la jerga de la industria: “negative costs” se elevaba a 70,8 millones de dólares estadounidenses, a lo que es necesario añadir la cantidad de 35,87 millones de dólares en gastos de marketing, lo que hace que el precio medio final sea de 106,6 millones de dólares.
- c) Todos los años un número nada desdeñable de films superan la barrera de los 100 millones de dólares de costes de producción, y que el resultado tenga valor artístico no deja de ser un detalle secundario. De hecho, el coste típico de los denominados “summer blockbusters” en EEUU oscila en la actualidad entre 100 y 250 millones de dólares³.

3 “The average cost to make and market a major MPAA member company film was \$106.6 million in 2007. This includes \$70.8 million in negative costs and \$35.9 million in marketing costs.” MPAA: “2007 Motion Picture Industry Market Statistics”, p. 23. Disponible en Internet: <http://www.mpa.org>.

Por otra parte, conviene no olvidar que los rendimientos económicos que se pueden conseguir mediante la explotación de los productos cinematográficos son muy elevados, como lo demuestra:

- a) En primer lugar, el hecho de que los ingresos por taquilla (un pequeño segmento de los ingresos totales del sector) a nivel mundial se elevaron en 2007 a la cantidad de 26,72 miles de millones de dólares, según datos de Nielsen/EDI, el gran experto internacional en ingresos por taquilla de la industria cinematográfica (MPAA Report p. 3).
- b) Y, en segundo lugar, como puede fácilmente comprobarse consultando, en la *Internet Movie Database* (IMDb, <http://www.imdb.com>), las tablas de las cifras correspondientes a los ingresos generados en taquilla por las películas más rentables de todos los tiempos, respectivamente, en todo el mundo, en los EEUU, y en el resto del mundo. Por ejemplo, *Titanic* (1997), el mayor éxito comercial de todos los tiempos, ha recaudado hasta la fecha, en números redondos, 600 millones de dólares en el mercado estadounidense (V.O.) y 1.235 en los mercados de exportación, la mayoría, naturalmente, en versión traducida⁴.

Otro dato muy revelador es que en 2007, 11 largometrajes producidos en EEUU superaron cada uno de ellos en recaudación en taquilla la barrera de los 200 millones de dólares en los mercados de exportación, sumando entre ellos la cantidad de más de 4.340 millones de dólares⁵. Y todo ello sin olvidar que todas las cifras que hemos venido facilitando únicamente se refieren a los ingresos brutos generados en taquilla y, por consiguiente, no están contabilizadas aquí otras fuentes de ingresos tales como los derechos de TV, el alquiler en videoclubs, la venta de DVD, el merchandising, etc.

De modo que, aunque las inversiones que debe realizar la industria cinematográfica son muy cuantiosas, los rendimientos económicos que se pueden obtener son también muy elevados, pero, dado que la industria cinematográfica internacional es fundamentalmente norteamericana, para rentabilizar las inversiones al máximo es imprescindible la traducción cinematográfica, que desempeña un papel importante, aunque no reconocido suficientemente, en el engranaje industrial del que forma parte: tiene, entre otras, la misión de ayudar a *universalizar el film*, de manera que pueda llegar, en las mejores condiciones, a la mayor cantidad de mercados que sea posible y competir con las producciones autóctonas de cualquier país. En este sentido, conviene recordar que, según los datos facilitados por el ICAA (Instituto de la

4 Datos actualizados a 17 de abril de 2008.

5 MPAA 2007 International Theatrical Snapshot. Disponible en Internet: <http://www.mpa.org>.