Workshop 1: Introduction to Audiovisual Translation (AVT)

DR CAROL O'SULLIVAN
UNIVERSITY OF BRISTOL

AMMAN, JORDAN, SEPTEMBER 2013

Introduction

There are three fundamental issues in the AV field, namely, the **relationship between verbal output and pictures and soundtrack**, **between a foreign language/culture and the target language/ culture**, and finally **between the spoken code and the written one**.

(Gambier 2003: 172)

Talking about AVT: terms

- **film translation** was the term used before TV and video became popular

- The term **language transfer** ignored the extralinguistic features of these texts (image, music, sound effects etc.)

- **audiovisual translation (AVT)** is now a widely used term.

More terms for AVT

- **multimedia translation** can also refer to games, theatre, comics and digital resources such as CD-Roms
- **screen translation** is currently a widely used term, though thought 'too narrow' by some (O'Hagan 2007, 158)
- The term **versioning** is used within the industry

Types of AVT: revoicing

- **Dubbing** replaces a SL dialogue track with a TL dialogue track. It can involve adapting a text for on-camera characters, including lip-synchronization for when the face or chest of a speaker is visible in a medium shot. (*Erin Brockovich* example http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CtGcmch4t-A)

- We usually think of dubbing as **interlingual**, but many examples of **intralingual dubbing** also exist in feature films – cf. more general phenomenon of postsynchronisation.

Voiceover (Half Dubbing)

Voice-over (**half dubbing**) occurs when a documentary, interview, feature film or TV programme, etc. is translated/adapted and broadcast approximately in synchrony by an actor or a journalist. In voice-over the original voice-sound is either reduced entirely or turned down to a low level of audibility after a few seconds.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rr48yysAu0M

Free Commentary

- **Free commentary** is an adaptation for a new audience, with additions, clarifications, omissions and comments. The synchronisation is done with the on-screen images rather than with the soundtrack. Free commentary is used for children's programmes, documentaries and corporate/promotional videos. E.g. *March of the Penguins*.

AVT also includes:

- **In-vision signing** for the deaf and hard of hearing (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tzWqbG3qF3w)

- **Audio description** for the blind and partially sighted. Audio description comprises the reading of information describing what is going on on the screen (action, body language, facial expressions, costumes etc.). (Hitchcock clip http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tzWqbG3qF3w)

AVT also includes:

- **Audiosubtitling (subtitling for the blind and partially sighted).** This involves the speaking of subtitles, either by a human actor or by a speech synthesiser. May be accompanied by AD (Braun & Orero 2010)

- **Videogame** translation (either subtitling or dubbing) for the 'pre-rendered cinematic elements known as cut-scenes' (O'Hagan 2007, 158). Now usually known as videogame localization or games localization.

Other forms of screen translation

Screen translation can also, arguably, include:

- **remakes**
- **multiple-language versions**, notably 1929-31.
- **Audiocommentaries,** delivered live to audience wearing headphones

Does not cover script or screenplay translation (more like literary translation)

- We could also consider items like these to be 'translational':

- The 'translating dissolve'

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gm2ZqOsT4jY

Types of subtitling 1

- **Intralingual** or **closed caption** subtitling is done for the benefit of the deaf and hard of hearing. There is a legal obligation on British broadcasting channels to subtitle a certain proportion of material. For live broadcast, now often automated through a combination of respeaking and voice recognition (How Subtitles Are Made - See Hear - BBC Two):

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u2K9-JPIPjg

- **Intralingual subtitling** is also used to address regional linguistic variations (politically problematic)

Intralingual subtitling

Using voice recognition can still give rise to howlers:

http://www.theguardian.com/media/2013/may/17/ofcom-crack-down-poor-subtitles

Voice recognition howlers

Types of subtitling 2

- **Interlingual (open caption)** subtitling (the focus of this workshop) involves moving from the oral dialogue to one or two written lines **and** from one language to another, sometimes to two other languages (**bilingual** subtitling).

Bilingual subtitling

Bilingual subtitling

Types of subtitling 3

- **Surtitling**, often used in opera, is one-line subtitling placed above a theatre stage or in the back of the seats, displayed during performance
- **Live subtitles** are pre-prepared but added at the time of broadcast
- **Live (real-time) subtitling** is used in interviews and in situations where no script is available beforehand. Involves respeaking and voice recognition

Subtitling and MT/CAT

- MT and CAT tools are being used to some extent in subtitling and are being energetically researched.
- We will discuss the issue of subtitling and MT briefly in the second AVT workshop

Dubbing & Subtitling Countries

- Gottlieb's 'four blocks':

  - source-language countries
  - dubbing countries
  - voiceover countries
  - subtitling countries
    - (Gottlieb 1998)

Source-Language Countries

- **Source-Language countries** are English-speaking, with hardly any non-anglophone imports. Imported material tends to be subtitled rather than dubbed, though more commercial foreign films may also be dubbed. Imported material tends to be 'art' movies, aimed at a literate audience.
- N.B. Some exceptional genres exist, notably animation and martial-arts films (**'kung fu' dubbing**).
- N.B. The DVD format has introduced greater variability here (O'Hagan 2007, 157).

Dubbing Countries

- **Dubbing countries** include mainly German-, Italian-, Spanish- and French- speaking countries in Europe and elsewhere. Nearly all imported films and TV programmes in these countries are dubbed. Some availability of original-language products, particularly in larger urban centres.

Voiceover Countries

- **Voiceover countries** include Russia, Poland and other large or medium-sized speech communities for whom dubbing would be very expensive and for whom subtitling is not favoured, e.g. for reasons of literacy rates. In feature films, one narrator interprets all the dialogue; the volume of the original soundtrack is turned down while s/he is speaking. Sometimes two narrators (one male, one female)

Subtitling Countries

- **Subtitling Countries** include several non-European speech communities as well as a number of small European countries with a high literacy rate for whom dubbing is prohibitively expensive

Subtitling Countries

N.B. In many countries different AV norms apply to theatrical exhibition and television broadcast (and differences national broadcasters vs. cable)

- AND – norms are changing!

Language status and AV norms

Gottlieb (2012: 45) draws our attention to many types of subtitling, including:

- FL → domestic majority language
- National minority languages → majority language
- Majority language → immigrant language
- Subtitling local varieties → common written language
- Revoicing FL dialogue in favoured language with subtitles in non-favoured domestic language (Latvia)

What type of AV environment is yours?