Introduction: The Landscapes of Audiovisual Translation

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This issue of *JoSTrans* is devoted to Audiovisual Translation (AVT). The 14 papers that constitute the volume reflect the pace and breadth of research in this field, which only a few years ago was considered a minority specialisation. Most articles included here were presented as papers at the International Conference *Media for All*, organised by the international research group TransMedia and held in Barcelona, from 6 to 8 June 2005 (www.fti.uab.es/transmedia).

The choice of *JoSTrans* as an outlet for this publication seemed obvious. Firstly, the online format allows for the inclusion of video clips with interviews, hypertexts, URL links, photographs, etc. In short, all the tools needed for the subject matter: audiovisual translation. This should have a positive impact on the reception of the articles, since paper publications in this field sometimes have to resort to long-winded descriptions to clarify their examples. Online publishing is also fast, and by now widely accepted in academia as a publishing medium that allows for a considerably shorter timespan between the production of articles and their dissemination. The need to publish in peer reviewed journals and in the shortest possible time is a prime consideration for scholars in those countries where academic careers are measured and judged by publications and impact indexes. The free access which *JoSTrans* is still able to offer to all its readers also ensures wide availability and readership, which has important implications for the distribution of the works presented here. And, last but not least, *JoSTrans* is *The Journal of Specialised Translation*, and AVT is undoubtedly specialised translation. The maturity of the research in this field is evidenced from the fact that all the articles in this collection self-assuredly place AVT within the field of Translation Studies (TS), but also reckon with its very specific features, which inevitably have a major impact on research methodology. AVT is no longer approached from a purely linguistic perspective that does not take the subject matter's semiotic complexity into account, nor is it considered as an odd man out from TS, since the study of AVT also shares fundamental features with the study of translation more generally, which is itself evolving at a tremendous rate.

However, the term 'audiovisual translation' refers to both the translation of the format – audiovisual – and of its contents. With the incipient

general shift from analogue to digital television the meaning of the term will inevitably expand, and will no longer refer to a unique translation mode, but rather to an array of possibilities being delivered synchronically. Also, in the digital era the number of available TV channels has grown exponentially, and will presumably carry on growing. At the same time, audiences are rapidly changing their viewing habits. Some age bands – such as teenagers – no longer spend all their time sitting in front of the TV set, but rather prefer to spend time in front of their computers, watching television programmes or DVDs. Television tailored to mobile phones and portable DVD players is also predicted to make a considerable impact on the way we consume audiovisual programmes.

Another new phenomenon which broadcasters will have to come to terms with is that some viewers may prefer to consume audiovisual material created by themselves, posted and shared on the web, rather than watch commercially-produced programmes. The result may be a less professional – almost amateur – product with a different set of quality standards in terms of content, format, technology or presentation. This development may entail a further decline in traditional TV audiences and a potential growth in marginal or minority audiovisual products. An additional result of this is that traditional taxonomic classifications of both audiovisual transfer modes and content will soon be outdated and a complex multiplicity of real possibilities will become the norm, as genres and formats merge, and new ones are created. This obviously has far-reaching implications. If on the one hand the digital era helps in the handling, storage and study of audiovisual material, the down side, or perhaps we should say, the new challenge, will be the need for more technical training and expertise among translation scholars. Content always adapts itself to, or interacts with, the format in which it is presented and the market is now flooded with the computer games of films, the official webpages of films and TV series, and the amateur subtitles of some films, along with new AVT modes aimed at ensuring broader accessibility through subtitling for the deaf and hard-of-hearing, audio description, and sign language to name but a few.

In the present issue of *JoSTrans* we explore developments in the study of both more traditional and newer AVT genres, and their very specific approach to issues sometimes shared with translation, and sometimes with other research fields such as cultural studies, media studies, software development, etc. Whilst early studies tended to focus mainly on the translation of films, scholars and professionals are becoming acutely aware of the importance that other genres have in our society, both economically and culturally. AVT has finally come of age and researchers in the field feel more adventurous and ready to enter uncharted territory. This issue of *JoSTrans* bears witness to these exciting developments as can be seen from the inclusion in it of studies discussing many different audiovisual genres that have in the past received little treatment. Such

genres include video games, television sit-coms, children's programmes, and Japanese anime.

In "**Game Localisation: Unleashing Imagination with 'Restricted' Translation**" Carmen Mangiron and Minako O'Hagan look at the specific features of a new AVT genre that has affinities with both software localisation and AVT, more specifically with the translation of comic books and animation films. Like software localisation, game localisation combines linguistic transfer with software engineering, and as in the business software industry it is commonly accepted in the game industry that localised products should have the 'look and feel' of locally made products. Consequently, the authors propose the translation model of 'transcreation', in order to denote this very specific AVT variant which sets great store by creativity and originality, for instance, when resolving cultural issues.

In the article "**On the Translation of Video Games**", Miguel Bernal Merino takes a look at the terminology used in the video games industry and at how it has been imported and appropriated, with more or less success, by scholars working in the field of Translation Studies. Departing from a diachronic overview of the video games industry, and taking into account the powerful influence of economic forces, the article focuses on two major terminological areas, those of 'game localisation' and 'transcreation'. After some argumentation it seems that more work needs to be done in this field in order to coin a set of appropriate terms which will encompass more precisely the processes involved in the translation of video games and its successful integration in the field of Translation Studies.

"**Fansubs: Audiovisual Translation in an Amateur Environment**" or the subtitling of Japanese anime programmes 'by fans for fans' of the genre, the ultimate example of team work in translation, is the topic of the article by Jorge Díaz Cintas and Pablo Muñoz Sánchez. The authors also demonstrate the influence of multimedia developments on so-called traditional AVT genres. Their contribution gives an overview of the people and phases involved in the fansubbing process, discusses issues of legality and ethics, as well as translation quality, and presents some unique translation features, which may or may not lead to innovations in the AVT industry.

"**Funny and Educational across Cultures*: Subtitling *Winnie The Pooh* into Italian**" by Adriana Tortoriello focuses on the subtitling of children's programmes. The role of the translator as mediator is central in this paper dealing with yet another type of cartoons. On the one hand, on a pragmatic level, the target audience of these translations is crucial when making translation decisions, as is the case for game localisation and fansubs; and on the other, cartoons are rife with puns, songs,

idiosyncratic language and neologisms that are produced by fictional characters whose language and visual characterisation are closely related. In other words, the lexico-semantic and visual signs of the text are inextricably linked. Tortoriello demonstrates how important it is to keep the complex semiotic nature of the film text in mind when analysing translation problems and solutions.

The semiotically complex composition of audiovisual products certainly constitutes a fundamental feature of AVT that is now also well-embedded in university courses aiming to train audiovisual translators. Moreover, the study of AVT in all its semiotic complexity is aided today by technological advances and applications that have also been exerting a major influence in translation studies generally, i.e. the use of larger electronically assembled corpora and tailor-made search tools.

In "**A Multimedia Database for the Training of Audiovisual Translators**" Cristina Valentini describes the Forlì Corpus of Screen Translation, developed at the University of Bologna's Department of Interdisciplinary Studies in Translation, Languages and Culture (SITLeC). She demonstrates how the simultaneous availability of all the channels of a filmic product has substantial advantages for teaching, considering the need to continually contextualise speech from a multimedia point of view, i.e. taking into consideration the images too. The multimedia database is actually a corpus of 20 original and dubbed films, fully indexed on the basis of a set of predefined linguistic, cultural and pragmatic categories, which allows users to carry out searches for ready made solutions, and offers a repository of examples. Indeed, the tagging of the corpus makes it possible to extract concordances in the form of transcripts of film dialogues along with the original audiovisual scenes. In other words, the database is a valuable tool that can be used in the training of audiovisual translators, whereas from a methodological viewpoint, it also provides an ideal resource on which to ground empirical and quantitative research.

AVT may be exploring tools and methods that were first tested in more linguistically oriented studies in TS, such as the study of electronically managed corpora, and now the reverse is happening, as some forms of AVT lead to new developments in research areas such as language teaching. Subtitling has long been believed to be a major factor in foreign language acquisition and, in "**Audiovisual Translation and Language Learning: The Promotion of Intralingual Subtitles**", Annamaria Caimi looks closely at the potential of intralingual subtitling in this respect. She underscores the double function of intralingual subtitles as a means for improving accessibility and as a didactic aid, while considering them from a linguistic and cultural perspective. Concrete examples demonstrate the effectiveness of carefully prepared intralingual subtitled videos as language learning tools enhancing spoken word recognition and recognition memory. Empirical and theoretical insights are complemented

by data from an experimental teaching programme being carried out at Pavia University, Italy.

Such truly interdisciplinary research is obviously one of the ways forward for AVT, but another positive development is the increased flow of communication between academia and industry, as witnessed at the Barcelona conference. Such communication and collaboration is relatively new in this field. Valentini's article (cf. supra) discusses the benefits of multimedia databases for AVT teaching, especially in dubbing, but Maria Pavesi and Elisa Perego's survey of Italian film translators in "**Profiling Film Translators In Italy: A Preliminary Analysis**" shows that not so long ago the Italian dubbing world was a rather closed and self-taught circle. The authors' profile of film translators in Italy, as well as their brief history of the profession with its complex hierarchical structure, allows them to draw connections between working habits and routines, and the development of linguistic regularities and shared translating behaviours in Italian dubbing. Their analysis has been carried out using quantitative data about productivity, together with qualitative data gathered in interviews with the most highly successful and therefore influential professionals.

In the field of subtitling, the advent of multilingual DVDs, especially those produced for the American film majors in centrally controlled circumstances, is dramatically changing working conditions for translators, as regional variation is gradually subsumed under global production. As Panayota Georgakopoulou, from the European Captioning Institute in London, points out in "**Subtitling and Globalisation**", the digital format is changing the face of the rapidly expanding subtitling industry as new demands call for a new working methodology. This includes a different division of labour, in which subtitlers are no longer required to do any spotting, and the introduction of English language 'templates' from which other translations are produced. Georgakopoulou's description of the way template files are produced and used is an account of the working methodology that has been developed at ECI Ltd, a London-based subtitling company specialising in multilingual DVD subtitling.

Even if the technical responsibilities of audiovisual translators may become more limited, at least in some quarters, their creative and linguistic abilities, as well as their capacity to match words with both images and sounds continue to be tested. This is confirmed by the challenges new genres pose, such as the localisation of software games or the fansubbing of anime discussed above, but also by AVT forms that have been around for some time and will continue to be for some time to come. Indeed, even mainstream Hollywood cinema is willing to break at least some taboos these days, and what was once considered foul language is now being unleashed quite casually on cinema audiences. Such once taboo language, and more specifically the translation of the word 'fuck' in

Catalan dubbed films, is the object of investigation in Dídac Pujol's "**The Translation and Dubbing of 'Fuck' into Catalan: The Case of *From Dusk till Dawn***". Although 'fuck' is the vulgar word *par excellence* in English, its translation into Catalan has hardly ever been studied. At a local level, Pujol's paper aims to be the first systematic analysis of the translation into Catalan of this much heard word, as well as its compounds and derivatives, especially as practised for dubbing by the Catalan national television, Televisió de Catalunya. On a more global level, Pujol's study forms a useful frame of reference for translation scholars and future translators of one of the coarsest and most transgressive words in the English language. However, it also transcends its one word scope by the way it highlights the socio-cultural implications involved in the translation of taboos, and while linguistic in approach, it also reckons with such factors as the influence of intonation and other AVT parameters. The corpus employed in the study is the 1996 film *From Dusk till Dawn / Obert fins a la matinada*, directed by Robert Rodriguez with a script by Quentin Tarantino.

The linguistics of dubbing and the by now well-known 'dubbese' it is said to produce (cf. also Pavesi & Perego) are scrutinised by Pablo Romero Fresco in "**The Spanish Dubbese: A Case of (Un)idiomatic *Friends***". Although the term 'dubbese' may have been around for some time, Romero Fresco shows that there is a danger in using it as a blanket concept. In his approach to the language of dubbing, which has often been described as contrived, stilted and, in general, unidiomatic, the study of phraseological units takes the centre stage, and it is used as a parameter to assess the idiomaticity of the Spanish dubbing language. The article demonstrates that the concept of 'calques' and the influence of Anglicisms do not suffice to explain the translations' inconsistencies. It also illustrates the benefit of combining quantitative research methods (cf. Valentini) with qualitative analysis, and displays a deep awareness of the artificial orality of (source) film dialogue when describing some of the unidiomatic features recurrent in the dubbed texts. The corpus analysed consists of transcripts of a number of episodes of the American TV series *Friends* and their dubbed versions in Spanish.

To conclude, a number of articles report on research into issues that will no doubt remain a challenge for TS generally. Translation always involves different forms of cultural and ideological transfer and/or rewriting, beside linguistic transformations, and some of the above articles (see for instance Tortoriello, Pujol, but also Mangiron & O'Hagan) have already demonstrated that such matters resurface with a special twist in AVT. Intercultural transfers are the central concern of Nathalie Ramière's "**Reaching a Foreign Audience: Cultural Transfers in Audiovisual Translation**", which focuses on the difficulties presented by the translation of cultural specifics, often considered to be simply 'untranslatable'. In doing so it questions in particular the validity of the

notions of foreignisation and domestication as a conceptual framework traditionally used to discuss the strategies applied when translating cultural specifics. Drawing on the findings of a pilot study, consisting of three French films dubbed and subtitled into English, this paper poses a theoretical challenge, proposing a more pragmatic approach to the study of cultural transfer in AVT. More particularly, it examines whether it is possible to observe any form of consistency in the strategies used for the translation of culturally-bound references and what this implies for the dialogic relationship between Self and Other, as well as the representation of alterity in AVT.

Marcella De Marco's "**Audiovisual Translation from a Gender Perspective**" introduces a socio-cultural angle to her study of AVT that also has a longer tradition in the context of literary translation studies, but has been the topic of much debate in film studies as well. In this sense her article follows the AVT trend of building bridges between disciplines (cf. Mangiron & O'Hagan, and Díaz Cintas & Muñoz Sánchez). In the case of film studies, this is most certainly a desirable development, since the gap between this area of study and AVT often appears quite unbridgeable. Concretely, De Marco's contribution examines what the dissimilarities coming out of the dubbed and subtitled translations of three British films suggest in terms of how different countries deal with gender issues, and to what extent these translations may mould the audiences' understanding of these issues, and their views on stereotypes or commonly held views on women and men.

The intercultural perspective is maintained by Silvia Bruti in "**Cross-cultural Pragmatics: The Translation of Implicit Compliments in Subtitles**", which focuses on the strategic function of implicit compliments in everyday conversation and in film dialogue, aiming to evaluate their contribution to positive and negative politeness in the source texts as well as in their translations in subtitles from English into Italian. Implicit compliments are viewed as examples of culturally-constrained speech acts of which the implicit meaning can be accessed if one shares interpersonal and contextual knowledge. But can such a careful balancing act be maintained in a strongly constrained subtitling format? The interpersonal features of conversation, even in the case of film dialogue that is written to be spoken, are often the first to be sacrificed, and even minor deletions can diminish the intended effect, as illustrated by Bruti.

The effects of utterances on viewers is also central to our last contribution: "**Verbally Expressed Humour on Screen: Reflections on Translation and Reception**" by Delia Chiaro. This article sets out to discuss the sphere of VEH (Verbally Expressed Humour) on screen and how it is received by audiences who are exposed to instances of VEH which are mediated linguistically by means of dubbing. However, the

author expands the discussion to questions relating to the supposed international nature of some forms of humour and the impact that this universality may have on the ease with which such humour travels. She wonders whether audiences worldwide laugh for the same reasons and whether or not there are variables at play that transcend the issue of quality translation. A crucial question put forward by Chiaro is whether a positive humorous response to translated VEH is dependent on cultural differences, on individual differences or on the translation itself. She therefore suggests that a link with psychology research could present a useful course to follow in TS, and this suggestion is reiterated in Caimi's very different study of intralingual subtitling, language acquisition and the study of relationships between memory and knowledge.

Interdisciplinary research is obviously the way forward in AVT as is the combination of such research with feedback from forever multiplying professional, and even amateur, AVT practices. The speed at which different forms of AVT develop, and existing ones undergo partial or complete metamorphoses, presents quite a few challenges. It has always been difficult for academic institutions to keep up with (technological) market developments when training future practitioners. The diversification of the discipline also makes it increasingly difficult for one researcher to have all the required state-of-the-art expertise at his or her fingertips. Several of the above articles are based on research by two or more scholars, or elaborate on research projects relying on the expertise of a group of individuals with different and complementary specialisations. Joint projects and research groups allow scholars to tackle issues on a larger scale, collaborate with professionals and find ways of financing research, including the funding and development of technology for conducting studies in AVT from a qualitative and quantitative perspective, an approach that is gaining popularity in TS across the board.